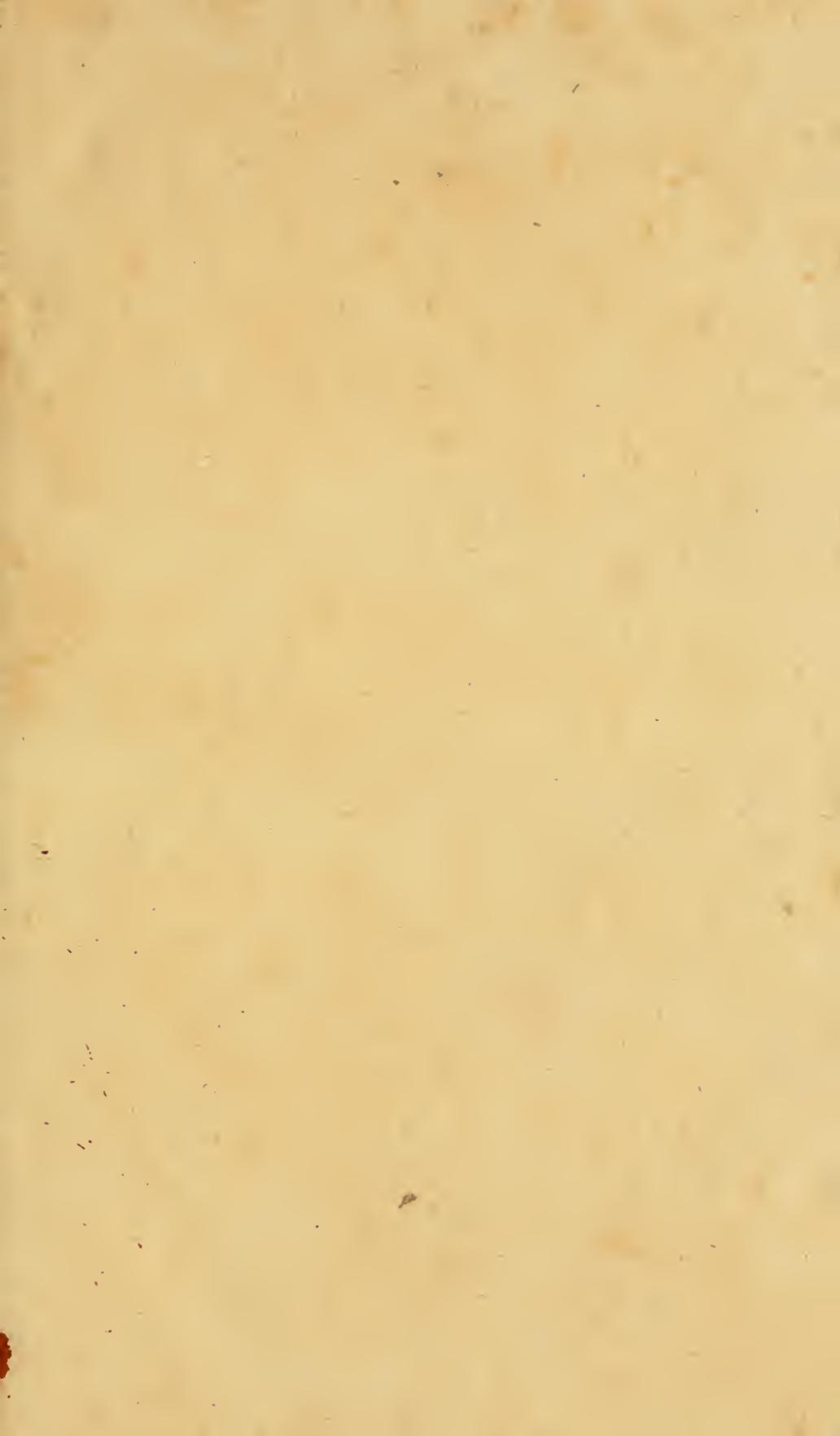
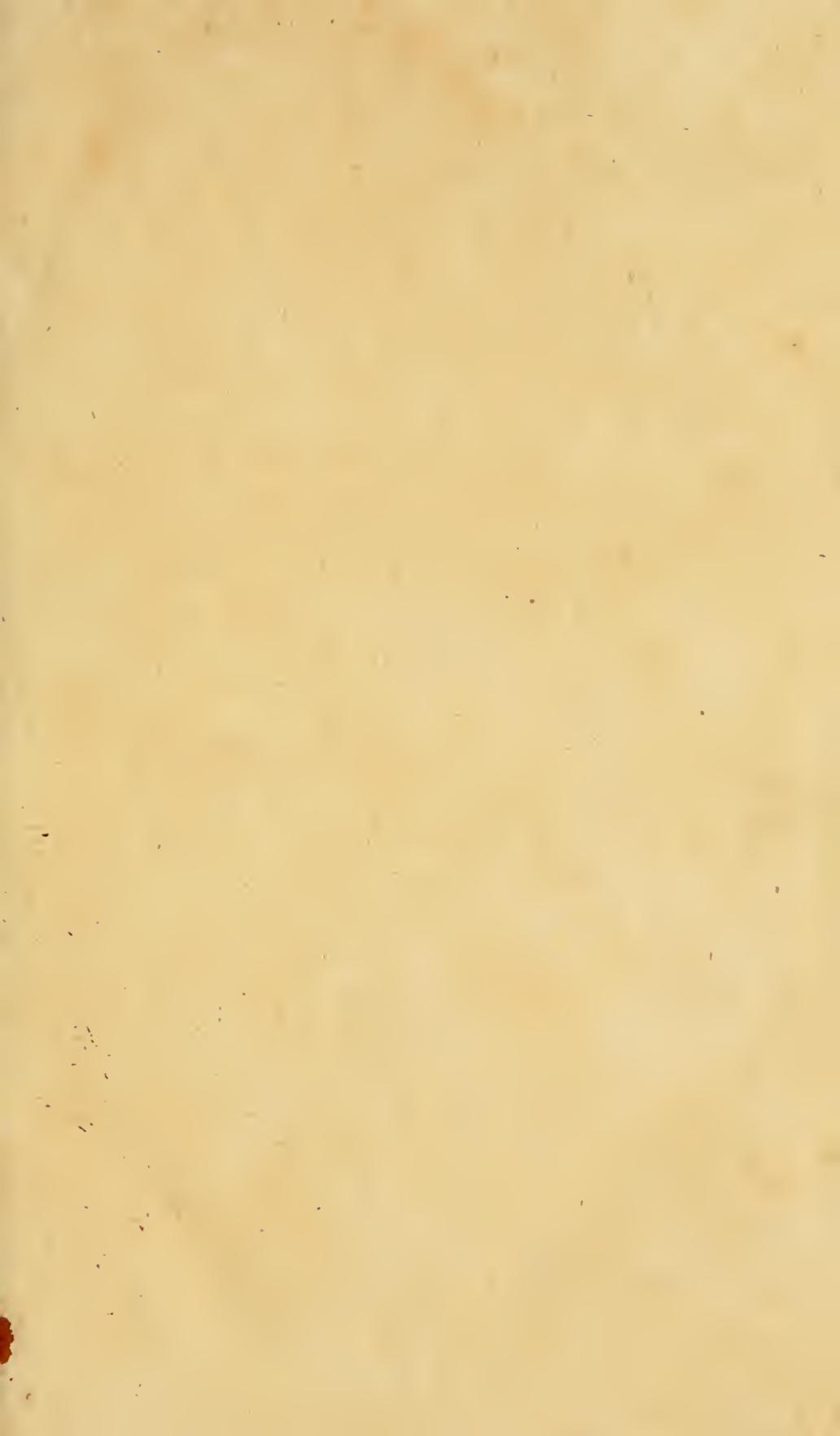


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S E R M O N S

Sam^l. Miller.

ON VARIOUS

IMPORTANT SUBJECTS.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

By JOHN YOUNG, D. D.
MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL IN HAWICK.

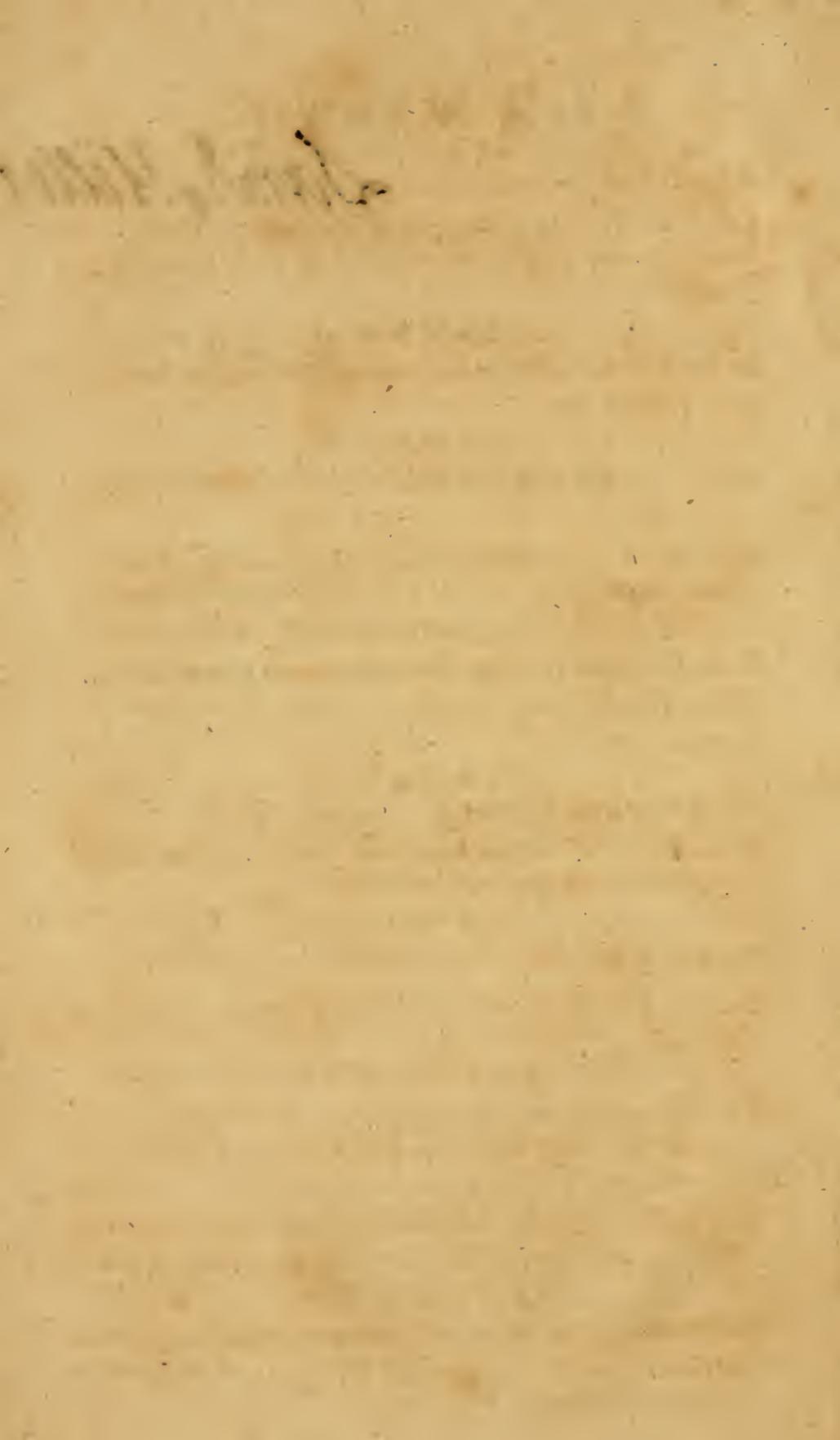
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HE HATH MADE HIM TO BE SIN FOR US, WHO KNEW NO SIN; THAT WE MIGHT BE MADE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM.

AS every one of us has, one way or other, a deep concern in that great event, which we propose, this day, symbolically to commemorate; and as there can be no proper commemoration of it, without an eye had to the end and design of it; so it cannot be unfuitable exercise, in the entry of the day's work, to take a view of the character in which Christ died, and of the design which he pursued in dying. Both these are set before us in the words of this text.

The Apostle Paul, having been informed of various abuses that prevailed in the church at Corinth, wrote his first epistle to that church, from Ephesus, about the year of our Lord 57, with a view to rectify those abuses. And being informed by Titus what effect it had upon them, he wrote them this second epistle

from Philippi, a city in Macedonia, about a year after the other. His design was, to set in a clearer light some things in the former, which they had not sufficiently understood; to encourage some among them, who were too much cast down by the other; and sharply to reprove such as continued to despise both him and his writings.

In the beginning of this chapter, the Apostle continues that discourse which he had begun in the preceding; about the manner of being supported under the trials of this life, by the happy prospect of a better life in another world. This was it that enabled Paul himself, and his brethren, the first preachers of Christianity, to *glory in all their tribulations*. And this makes every true Christian, when grace is in exercise, to *rejoice with joy unspeakable*, even while he is *in heaviness through manifold temptations*.

From the 11th verse downward, he makes a kind of apology for his severe manner of writing in his first epistle; as flowing from a zeal, which was animated by various considerations. It was animated by a sense of that solemn appearance which he, as well as all other men, was, in a little, to make before the judgment-seat of Christ, and the impartial account that he must there give of his stewardship; by the irresistible influence of the love of Christ, which constrained him to faithfulness and diligence in his work; and by the vast importance of the work in which he was employed, as an ambassador of Jesus Christ. These are motives that ought to bear out all ministers of the gospel, in a faithful discharge of the duties of their office; whatever censures they may incur, and whatever hardships they may suffer on that
account,

account, whether from professed friends or open enemies.

Having mentioned it as the main business of his office, as an ambassador for Christ, to publish, in his name, the doctrine of reconciliation to God through him; and to deal with sinners, that they might be reconciled accordingly; he takes occasion to prosecute the great end of his ministry, in a fervent address to his Corinthians, ver. 20. to the following purpose:

‘ Since *God hath committed to us*, who are Apostles
‘ of Christ, and preachers of his gospel, *the ministry*
‘ *of reconciliation*; we are, by that means, clothed
‘ with the honourable character of *Ambassadors for*
‘ *Christ*; and appointed to use our influence, in de-
‘ pendence upon his assistance, for having peace made
‘ up between God and sinners. In prosecution of
‘ that important trust, which God hath committed
‘ unto me, I take this opportunity to beseech and
‘ intreat you, in the most pressing and importunate
‘ manner, to lay aside your natural enmity against
‘ God, and be thoroughly reconciled unto him. And
‘ I certify you, that if what I say is neglected or de-
‘ spised, it will be at your peril: For, as earthly prin-
‘ ces expect the same deference to be paid to what
‘ their ambassadors speak in their name, that would
‘ be due to themselves, if they spake the same things
‘ in person; so God expects and requires, that you
‘ consider our words as his own; and yield the same
‘ attention and obedience to what we say in his name,
‘ as you would to God himself, if he were praying
‘ and beseeching you by a voice from heaven, as he
‘ now does by my mouth, to be reconciled unto him.’

What Paul said to the Corinthians, the Spirit of God as really says to us. And ministers of the gospel, being Paul's successors in office, have the same warrant as he had, to address their hearers in this manner. In the entry, therefore, of the work of this solemn day, and in the great name of God, whose ambassador I am honoured to be, however unworthy of that dignity, I earnestly call, beseech, and obtest every person in this numerous assembly, to be *reconciled unto God*. God has no objections against a present and perfect reconciliation with you. And surely it cannot be your interest to reject the offers of peace, and refuse to be reconciled to him. The call that is addressed to you is the call of God; and, if it is rejected, it is God, and not man, to whom you must be accountable.

God is, indeed, an enemy to every person who continues in a natural estate; as every such person is an enemy to him. And it would be vain to call you to be reconciled to him, if his wrath were not appeased, and he ready and willing to be reconciled unto you. But God has laid a sure foundation for the restoration of peace between him and you, and given the surest proof of his willingness to be reconciled, in that he has exposed his own eternal Son to the punishment which your sin deserved; and that with this express view, that such sinners as you are might enjoy all the blessed fruits of his righteousness.

To set this important truth before us, as the strongest argument for our being reconciled unto God; and as a satisfying answer to all our objections against a present compliance with his gracious invitation to that purpose; is the scope of what we have in ver. 21.

The

The sense of which may be summed up in the following paraphrase:

‘ In order that the way might be paved, for the reconciliation of finners unto God ; it pleased God the Father, to make his own eternal Son an offering for our sin, though he was altogether without sin in himself : that we, through him, might be accounted perfectly righteous in the sight of God.’

THE text evidently consists of two parts : It informs us,

I. What our Lord Jesus Christ submitted to become for us, according to his Father’s appointment.

II. What we may expect to be made through him ; or, what was God’s end and design in that appointment.

A FEW words concerning the first of these is all that we can expect to overtake at present. We have it in the first clause of the verse ; *He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin.* In which words, more particularly, we may take notice of the following things.

I. What Christ was, and still is, in his true and original character ; he *knew no sin.*

II. What he became, in consequence of his undertaking for us ; he was *made to be sin.*

III. How this wonderful event was brought about ; it was by virtue of a divine appointment and constitution ; *He, that is God the Father, hath made him to be sin.*

IV. On whose account, or for whose behoof this appointment was made and executed ; it was *for us.*

We shall speak a little concerning each of these, and conclude with some improvement.

I. **WHAT** Christ was, in his original character, we have in these words, *who knew no sin*. No person, surely, that knows to whom the words refer, will imagine that they are to be understood so literally, as to mean that Christ knew not what sin was, or could not discern sin from duty. Nay, he knows all things. He is the great Author of all law. He cannot but know the exact meaning of every article of the law which he made. And he is intimately acquainted with all the creatures, and all their actions. Thus he has a more perfect knowledge than any mere creature can have, what is sin, and what is not. How else should he be the final judge of the quick and the dead, at his second coming? Such is his infinite knowledge, in this respect, that no person can be guilty of sin, even in his most secret thought, but he is privy to it. And many things he knows to be sinful, which men are disposed to consider in an opposite light.

But the expression must be understood of an experimental knowledge of sin. He had no experience of what it was to commit sin. "He did no evil, neither was guile found in his mouth *." In this sense the word is frequently used in Scripture. We shall mention but one instance. "False witnesses," says David, "did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not †;" that is, things of which I was not, in the smallest degree, guilty. In this sense it was that our Lord knew no sin; never having been chargeable, in his own person, with the least transgression of the

* 1 Pet. ii. 22.

† Psal. xxxv. 11.

the law of God. In his divine nature he could not commit sin; being essentially above all law; and being absolutely free from any possibility of doing amiss. Sin being opposite to all his adorable perfections, he cannot be the author or the actor of sin, without doing violence to his own infinite and unchangeable nature. Even in human nature, he did no sin. He was not, like other men, “shapen in iniquity, and “conceived” by his *mother* in sin. That which was *born* of the Virgin Mary, being sanctified by the supernatural influence of the Holy Ghost, was an *holy thing* *. And he was as free from actual, as he was from original sin; for, during the whole course of his humbled life, he was *holy, harmless, undefiled, and separated from sinners* †.

That he should be thus free from all sin was absolutely necessary; otherwise he could have never been *made sin for us*. He who was our Surety to divine justice, behoved to perform a spotless obedience to the law, in all its precepts, in our name and stead. The least defect in his obedience would have rendered the whole unacceptable to God, and therefore unprofitable to us. The law, to which he was subject, extended to the nature, as well as to the actions of life; and, had there been the least depravity in his nature, he had been a transgressor of that law. Hence the holiness of his human nature is the ground-work of that righteousness, which he wrought out for us. It behoved him also to become a sacrifice for our sin. And every sacrifice must be pure and unblemished. Under the law, no typical sacrifice could be accepted that was not without blemish. Hereby it was plainly sig-

* Luke i. 35.

† Heb. vii. 26.

nified, that the great sacrifice, by which a real atonement was to be made, must be absolutely free from all moral pollution or defect.

Yet the consideration of his being without sin, in his own person, rendered his being *made sin for us* so much the more wonderful. It could not have been surprising, to find a person who had been really chargeable with sin, sustained a sinner in law, and suffering the punishment that was due for sin. But to see one who was absolutely without sin in himself, who was known to be so by God, and even proved to be so before men, seized and apprehended, not only by a band of murderers, but even by the hand of an infinitely holy and just God; to see him "led as a lamb to the slaughter," nailed to an accursed tree by the hands of wicked men; stricken to death by the sword of divine justice, and forsaken of God under all his sufferings: This surpasses, incomparably surpasses, all that is wonderful among men.

II. WHAT Christ became, in consequence of his undertaking for us, we are informed in these words, *he hath made him to be sin*. Concerning the meaning of this expression, interpreters are not wholly agreed. Most of them consider the word *sin*, as put, by a figure, for a sacrifice or offering for sin. It is certain that the word is sometimes used in that sense in Scripture. So it is, for instance, in that passage, where the Spirit of God complains of the priests thus, "They eat up the sin of my people; and they set their heart on their iniquity*." By the law of Moses every sin-offering was to be eaten by the priests,

* Hof. iv. 8.

priests, except that part of it which was to be burnt in the fire *. The priests in Hosea's time considering this, took pleasure in the sins of the people; because, by that means, their tables were plentifully supplied. Because "they *did* eat up the sin-offerings of the people; therefore they set their heart upon their iniquity." We have no objection against understanding the word in this sense here, provided the nature and use of a sin-offering be properly attended unto.

Under the law, when any person had sinned, and brought a sin-offering unto the Lord; it was required that the beast, which was to be offered, should be brought to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. There the sinner was to lay his hand upon the head of it, and to confess his sin over it; hereby to signify the transferring of his guilt to it, and the substitution of it in his place. In consequence of this the beast was to be slain; to signify the execution of the judgment of God upon the beast, which would otherwise have been due to him that offered it. Thus, by God's appointment, the sin-offering was dealt with as the sinner himself deserved to have been. The guilt of the sin was typically transferred from the sinner, to the sacrifice; and the punishment due for the sin was laid upon the beast which was offered, that the sinner himself might go free.

What was done typically and symbolically to the beast that was made a sin-offering, was really and truly done to Christ, when he was *made sin for us*. Our sins were imputed to him. The guilt of them was transferred from us to him. He was esteemed, declared,

* See Lev. xiv. 13.

declared, and dealt with as a sinner in the eye of God's law. And, in consequence of this, he suffered all the punishment that was due to us for all our sins. Though he had no sin of his own, justice considered him as a sinner; and inflicted upon him all that punishment which would have been due, if, in his own person, he had committed all those sins that ever were or will be committed by all those whom he represented, and for whom he was *made sin*. Have you not good reason, believer, when you "look upon him whom *you* have thus pierced, to mourn for him?" You are welcome to make use of his atonement, and to claim all the benefits that result from his being made a sin-offering for you: And you have reason to praise God because that is the case. But it is your indispensable duty, at the same time, to mourn, and mourn deeply, for those sins that made such an atonement necessary.

III. How it was that he who was himself without sin was made a sacrifice for sin, we may gather from the first words of the verse. *He bath made him to be sin*. It was God the Father, who, by a free and voluntary constitution, made him so. In the making of the covenant of grace, from all eternity, God the Father, as therein representing the Deity, proposed and stipulated that Christ should be *made sin for us*. This proposal being cheerfully assented to by Christ; a decree was past, in the council of peace, appointing and ordaining that it should be so. Accordingly, "when the fulness of the *appointed* time was come, *Christ* made his soul an offering for sin." And God the Father not only accepted this offering, but he actually

actually made him to be an offering; by inflicting upon him, with his own hand, that punishment which was due to us. He came into the world, and continued in it all the time of his humbled life, under the legal imputation of our guilt: And God exacted of him the full payment of our criminal debt. It is said, that when God accepted a sacrifice of old, he testified that acceptance by sending fire from heaven to burn it. We are sure this was sometimes the case. Perhaps it was so always, unless while the sacred fire was kept burning in the tabernacle, and afterwards in the temple. This was a lively type of what took place in relation to Christ. In token of his being fully pleased with this glorious sacrifice, and in consequence of that divine appointment by which it was provided, God himself struck the blow by which the sacrifice was cut off; he consumed it by fire from heaven. With his own hand he inflicted upon Christ the punishment that was due for all those *sins*, which he "bare in his own body on the tree." You cannot have room to doubt of God's being perfectly pleased with this wonderful Sacrifice for sin, while there is such work in the church as that about which we are now met. While you commemorate the death of Christ, you may therein see the fire of God coming down from heaven, and consuming the great Sacrifice. And it is your duty, on such an occasion, to follow the example of the people of Israel, in Solomon's time: Who, "when they saw the fire come down, and the glory of God upon the house, bowed themselves with their faces upon the pavement; and worshipped and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever *."

But,

* 2 Chron. vii. 3.

But, though Christ was thus made sin by an appointment of God the Father, it was not without his own free and voluntary consent. As soon as the proposal was made, when the "council of peace *was*" "between them both," he cheerfully assented to it. "Lo! I come," said he, " (it is written of *him* in the " volume of God's book) : I delight to do thy will, " O my God ; and thy law is within my heart." When the appointed time came, he did not repent of his undertaking. " He was not rebellious, nor " turned away back : *but* gave his *blessed* back to " the smiters ; and his cheeks to them that plucked " off the hair : he hid not his face from shame " and spitting." So far from it, that he was even *straitened, till his bloody baptism was accomplished.* As Isaac freely suffered himself to be bound, and laid upon the altar, in the *land of Moriah*, while his godly father lifted the knife to slay him ; so our Lord Jesus Christ, the first-born child of the promise, willingly suffered himself, not only to be bound, and laid upon the altar ; but actually to be slain, and consumed by the fire of God's wrath, as a sacrifice for our sin. Indeed, such a thing could never have taken place, if Christ had not been as willing as his Father. Being God equal with the other persons of the Trinity, none had power to compel him. But, on the other hand, it was equally impossible that he should refuse his consent to his Father's proposal. What was the Father's will, could not fail to be his also : for he and his *Father are one.*

What a strange and astonishing event is this? The eternal Son of God, the Father's equal and his darling, made a victim for sin ! The sword of divine justice sheathed in the heart of him who used to wield it !

it ! The supreme object of the Father's love become the supreme object of his tremendous wrath ! Is not this he, concerning whom the voice from heaven was heard to say, and to repeat it, " This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased ? " Does God, then, cease to be well pleased with him now ? Does his eternal Father delight in him no more ? Or " what meaneth the heat of this great *anger* ? " Nay, Christian : It was not any defect of love to him, but an excess of love to you, that produced all this. God so " loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son " to the death ; " that whosoever believeth in him " should not perish, but have everlasting life." Without this there could have been no egress for the love of God to you ; nor was there any other method of averting his wrath from you. And, rather than suffer you to lie for ever under the stroke which your sin deserved, God would level that stroke at the heart of his only begotten Son ; that you, and such as you, might escape.

But, is the love of God to sinners stronger than his love to Christ ? Or, is the rage of his justice beyond the yearning of his bowels towards his beloved Son ? By no means. Even while the vials of his wrath were poured into the soul of Christ, he still continued to be the supreme object of his love. Abraham never loved his Isaac more than when he stretched out his hand to slay him ; and never did God love *his* Son more than when he slew him indeed. Yea, his love to Christ, as the Head of the body mystical, as well as his love to the members, moved the Father, thus to " make his soul an offering for sin." The mediatory glory of Christ is the genuine fruit of his sufferings.

ings. The splendor of his crown rose from the ignominy of his cross. And God brought him to the cross, that he might bring him to the crown. He brought him "to the dust of death," that he might exalt him to the "right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. He made him," for a very short time, "to be sin for" the church; that he might make him *to be head*, and that through all eternity, "over all things to the church."

IV. ON whose account, or for whose behoof this wonderful appointment was made, we see in the last words of this clause of the verse. It was *for us*. The apostle includes himself, and all the believing Corinthians, and all believers in Christ, from the beginning to the end of the world. It was not only *for us*, as being intended for our good and benefit. It was also *for us*, as being in our room and stead. He was made a sacrifice to *put away sin* from us; in such a manner that "his own self bare our sins, in his own body on the tree." He substituted himself in our place. He was considered, by the law of God, in the same light as we should have been. Our sin was reckoned to his account. And that same punishment was inflicted upon him, which was originally due to us.

It is no wonder, that some men speak of sacrifices for sin, as apparently inconsistent with reason; when they make a sacrifice to be something widely different from what God ever intended it to be: and something that no reason whatsoever is able to comprehend. What can they mean by a sacrifice to *put away sin*, when they do not allow it to make any proper satisfaction for sin? Who, in the Jewish church,

or even in the heathen world, ever offered a sacrifice, with a view to put away sin; unless in a way of having his guilt, and so his punishment, transferred from himself to the victim? Or in what other manner is a sacrifice capable to take away sin? If Christ had meant to take away sin from us, without making satisfaction for it; what need was there for his subjecting himself to the curse, and to the Father's wrath at all? Or how can it consist with the justice of God, to inflict such miseries upon his own eternal Son, if there was not a proper imputation of our guilt to him? It is true, the Scripture says that he "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself:" and who goes about to deny it? But it says also, that God "laid on him the iniquities of us all; *that* his own self bare our sins; and *that* he was made sin for us." And surely the Scriptures do not contradict themselves. It is easy to understand his putting away sin from us, in a way of bearing it *in his own body*. But how he should bear our sins, without a formal imputation of them to him; or how he should be made a sin-offering for us, and yet make no proper satisfaction for our sin, is perfectly unintelligible. It is worse—It is highly injurious to the wisdom, the goodness, the justice, and all the other perfections of God.

If it should be asked, more particularly, for whom, or in whose stead Christ was thus *made sin*? We cannot now stay to discuss the question at large, so as to obviate all the cavils of adversaries on this head. What may satisfy the conscience of every exercised person, we shall endeavour to comprize in the following propositions.

1. God, in appointing Christ to be a sacrifice for
sin,

sin, and Christ himself, in undertaking to that purpose, had their eye, from all eternity, upon a certain select number of mankind, who were and still are known to God only. For these only was this sacrifice strictly and properly intended: And for them only it shall be finally and ultimately effectual. As Christ *prayed not*, so he died not “for the world; but “for them whom God had given *him* out of the “world.” These are *the sheep, for whom he laid down his life* *.

2. The sacrifice that Christ offered was, in itself, sufficient to make atonement for the sins of all mankind, had it been so intended. While he bare all that was due to the elect for their sins, he bare as much as was due to all the seed of Adam. Indeed, his sacrifice could not have been sufficient for any, if it had not been sufficient for all. An atonement of infinite value was necessary for every individual. And more could not be necessary for all the world. This intrinsic sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice was, doubtless, attended to, in the divine appointment concerning it. God purposely made provision of such a sacrifice as was not only sufficient effectually to take away the sins of all the elect; but also sufficient to be laid before all mankind, in the dispensation of the gospel. If this is all that some have understood by an *ordinate sufficiency* of the death of Christ for all men; the sense might be admitted, though the expression would be dangerous

3 The sacrifice of Christ, thus all-sufficient in itself. is, by God's appointment, offered to all that hear the gospel. All mankind are invited to make use of it,

* John x. 15. compare chap. xvii.

it, in their dealings with God for pardon and acceptance, as freely and as fully as if they knew that God had designed it for them from all eternity. In the gospel-offer, no mention is made of election or reprobation. No difference is made between one sinner and another. Without any distinction, the call is addressed, and a gracious welcome proclaimed, to all the children of Adam, "Unto you, O men; I call," says divine Wisdom; "and my voice is to the sons of man *."

4. As it is impossible for any creature to know who are elect, or who are reprobate, till the event declare it; so neither election nor reprobation can have any casual influence in bringing any person to Christ, or in keeping any from him. They ought to have no influence upon us, in making use of the sacrifice of Christ; and they will have no *judicial* influence with God, in admitting us to enjoy the benefit of that sacrifice, or keeping us from it. God will, doubtless, execute his own eternal decree, in bringing all the elect to salvation; and likewise in the final condemnation of all others. Yea every man will execute God's purpose; either in making use of Christ's sacrifice, or in rejecting it. But in no part of God's judicial procedure towards us does he pay any regard to his own decree, or to the intention of Christ's death, as the ground of his decisions; but solely to our receiving or rejecting of Christ. It is not said, he that is elected, but "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Neither are we told that he who was not elected; but that "he who believeth not shall be damned." The first, indeed, would have been true; but

the last only is capable to have any influence upon us, as a motive of our conduct. And it only will be attended to by God, in his judicial dealings with us. Therefore,

5. It is the immediate duty of every sinner that hears the gospel, presently to accept the gracious offer that God makes him of Christ, as a proper sacrifice for his sin: and that without ever thinking whether he be elect or reprobate; any more than a drowning man would think whether it was decreed from all eternity, that he should perish in the water or be saved out of it, before he would catch at a rope that were thrown in for his relief. For such a man to lie still in the water, till he could resolve such a question, would evidently be the greatest folly. Every person would see it to be so. Yet it was as really decreed from eternity, whether the man's life should be saved, by means of the rope, or not; as whether any soul shall be saved by Christ, or be finally condemned. Yea, the man, by neglecting, on such a foolish account, the means of his preservation, would certainly contribute to the execution of God's purpose, in the destruction of his life. But if he should immediately grasp at the rope, without asking questions, as every rational man would do; then his life would be saved; and he would be sure that God, from all eternity, fore-ordained it to be so. In like manner, it is our present and indispensable duty to lay hold, by faith, upon the sacrifice of Christ, as God holds it forth to us in the gospel; to hold it up to God, as the only ground of our reconciliation and salvation; and firmly to trust the promise of God, that, on this footing, he "will be merciful to our unrighteousnesses:

"nesses:

“ ournesses ; and will remember our sins no more.” When any person is determined to take this course, it shall assuredly be to him according to his faith. And this he shall have as a sure evidence, that God had an eye to him in particular, when he appointed Christ to be a sacrifice for sin : or, in other words, that he was elected from eternity. Having thus, in the manner that the Holy Ghost prescribes, made our calling sure ; our election will come to be sure of course. Having secured an interest in the sacrifice of Christ, we may be firmly assured that he was intentionally *made sin for us.*

And who were we, or what was our house, that the Son of God submitted to become *sin for us?* Were we friends to God? Nay ; but enmity itself against him. Were we persons, from whose salvation God could derive any advantage ; or whose ruin would prove any loss to him? Nay ; to every one of us it might justly have been said, as Elihu said to Job, “ If thou sinnest,” and diest for ever in thy sin, “ what dost thou against him? Or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what dost thou unto him? If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? Or what receiveth he of thine hand *?” Were we persons of such value in ourselves, or of any such rank among the creatures, as to entitle us to all, or any part of this? By no means. Justly might David say ; justly may we all say after him, “ What is man that thou art mindful of him? or the Son of man that thou visitest him?” In our best estate we were but vanity. In our fallen estate we are less than nothing and vanity : the vilest, the most despicable, the worst things in

* Job xxxv. 6, 7.

all the visible world ; and yet God “ hath made him “ to be sin for us, who knew no sin !”

We have heard of Abraham giving his son, his only son to God ; and surely God was worthy of such an offering. Yet this is the only instance that ever the world produced, of such love among men, even to him who deserves it above all others. We have heard of wicked idolaters giving their children to Moloch, in the vain hope of keeping their own souls from misery : and “ what will *not* a man give in exchange for his soul ?” We know, the king of the children of Ammon offered his first-born son upon the wall ; with a view to procure deliverance from an imminent danger, that threatened himself, his country, and all the rest of his kindred. But can any of these, or any thing else that ever took place among men, deserve a comparison with what is mentioned in the text ? God gave his eternal, his only begotten, his well-beloved Son ; he gave him to the death, and made him a sin-offering ; not for his best friends, not for his own safety or advantage ; not for his dutiful subjects, or for those who were allied to him ; but for his most inveterate enemies, who were utterly worthless in themselves, and utterly unprofitable to him. Herein, indeed, is the love of God magnified, and the riches of his condescending mercy, that while we were yet sinners, and we can never be called by a worse name, “ he made him to be sin for us, who “ knew no sin.”

WE shall conclude for the time, with the following inferences for the improvement of the subject.

- I. From what you have heard, you may learn, what

what is the dismal condition of all mankind by nature. We stand in absolute need of a sin-offering: otherwise there had been no reason why Christ should have been *made sin for us*. The elect of God are not in better circumstances than the rest of mankind in this respect. They “were, by nature, children of wrath, “even as others*.” Yes; every person in this assembly, and every other person upon earth, came into the world a sinner. As such you were subject to the curse of God’s broken law. A sentence of eternal condemnation had passed against you; and the wrath of God *abode upon* you. You were in imminent danger of the full execution of your sentence, and so of becoming eternal victims to the devouring justice of God. Nor was there any way for you to obtain deliverance, unless by means of the glorious sin-offering mentioned in the text. If any person among you has escaped that condemnation, under which you naturally lay, and is restored to the favour of God; let it never be forgotten, that you owe that happiness, and all that you expect in consequence of it, to his free and unmerited love and goodness, who *made Christ to be sin for you*.

2. You may here see, how rigorously strict and severe the justice of God is. He “spared not his own “Son,” when our sin was imputed to him; but “delivered him up,” without relenting, to that fearful stroke, which, had it fallen upon all the rational world, would have reduced the whole to a state of inconceivable and endless misery. Who are they, after all this, that dare affirm, that if God had pleased, he might have forgiven our sin, and restored us

to his favour, without any satisfaction to justice? Surely, if God could have pardoned sin without a satisfaction, he would not have exacted a satisfaction from his own eternal Son. If the whole punishment of sin, or any part of it, could have been remitted at all, it would have been remitted to Christ. And now, sinner, “if these things were done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?” If Christ himself could not be discharged, till he had paid the last farthing of that criminal debt, which his voluntary undertaking had made his; how shall you be released, without a full payment of that debt, which is originally your own? Your sins, being an infinite evil, can never be expiated but by an infinite satisfaction. And is it possible that ever you should make payment of such a debt? “Can you drink of that cup which *Christ* drank; or be baptized with the baptism that he was baptized with?” Yes; you certainly shall, if divine mercy prevent it not. But the cup which he drank up at once, you shall never be able to exhaust: and therefore you must eternally drink of it, and be drunken. Nor can inexorable justice admit of your exemption from this dreadful doom; unless you are determined to lay hold, by faith, of this sacrifice, and to improve it as the foundation of all your hopes of deliverance.

3. You may see the absolute vanity and unprofitableness of all methods of creature-invention, for appeasing the wrath of God, which is kindled against sinners. *God has made Christ to be sin for us*; and he has neither appointed nor approved any other sacrifice. In that mournful breach, that sin made between God and us, God was the party offended and injured.

injured. He might justly have refused to admit of any satisfaction, and insisted upon the inflicting of punishment upon every sinner in person. And surely, if a satisfaction was to be admitted, it belonged to him only to determine what the satisfaction should be. Under the law, no typical sacrifices could be accepted, but such as God had appointed. Even under the New Testament, no acts of worship can be pleasing to him, but such as wear the stamp of his own authority. All will-worship is superstition and idolatry. And, surely, no sin-offering, properly so called, might be accepted with God, which himself had not provided. Even the sacrifice of Christ might have been rejected, if God himself had not made him to be sin for us.

But if it had been lawful for the sinner to have proposed a method of appeasing divine justice, it would not have been possible. All the wisdom of men and angels could never have devised, either that method which God has provided, or any other. No sacrifice could have been accepted that was not of infinite value. No other sacrifice of infinite value, but that of Christ, has ever been thought of, nor ever will. And this, which infinite wisdom has found out, was as far beyond creature-conception as any thing else can be. Who but God himself could ever have conceived it possible, that the second person of the blessed Trinity should "make his soul an offering for sin?" If it could have been thought of, who durst have mentioned it? The very thought had been blasphemous in the highest degree, if God had not been the author of it.

If any other method were possible, it would be alto-

gether superfluous. This answers all the ends of God's glory, and all our spiritual necessities, in the most perfect manner. And, seeing this is the only method that God approves, every other must be rejected with disdain. It was because "sacrifice and offering *God* would not;" because, "in burnt-sacrifice, and sacrifice for sin, *he* had no pleasure," that Christ said, "Lo! I come; I delight to do thy will." "O my God." Beware of attempting to "come before *God* with burnt-offerings;" to bring your own righteousness in your hand, as the price of your restoration to his favour, or to make peace with him upon any other terms than those which the gospel reveals. If you truly wish to have his wrath appeased, and to be reconciled unto him, be concerned speedily to betake yourself to him whom *God bath made to be sin for us.*

4. You see how low the Son of God was pleased to stoop for our sakes. Not only did he take upon him our nature, and suffer all the miseries of an abased and afflicted life: not only did he condescend to encounter all our spiritual enemies, and to subject himself to the law of God in our room: not only was he brought to the dust of death, and continued three days and three nights in the heart of the earth: He even submitted to become a sinner, that we might be made righteous through him! A sinner he could not be—in himself considered. In this respect, you have heard, *he knew no sin*; no sin was ever inherent in him. But he was made a sinner in our name, in the same sense in which we are made righteous through him. Our sin being imputed to him, he was reckoned a sinner in the eye of the law; and, as such, he

was punished to the death. Indeed, when we are made righteous in law, through the imputation of his righteousness,—a principle of inherent righteousness is likewise implanted in us by his holy Spirit; whereas, he continued still *holy* and *harmless* in himself, absolutely free from all inherent sin, even when he became a sinner by imputation. But, in respect of guilt, he became a sinner, as really as we are made the righteousness of God in him. To become man for us was much; to become a dead man was still more: but that he should be made sin for us, or become a sinner in our stead, was a step of condescension surpassing all others. Men and angels will admire it eternally, without ever being able to admire it enough.

5. Here you may obtain the clearest discovery of the love of God to mankind; that love which *passeth all understanding*. Turn aside, then, gospel-hearer: turn aside, intended communicant, and see this great sight. Behold how he loved you! Behold the love of the Father, manifested in appointing his own eternal Son to be a sin-offering for you; in imputing your sin to him; and inflicting upon him that punishment which was due to you on account of it. Such was God's love to you, Christian, and such his resolution to make you happy; that, rather than suffer you to be miserable for ever, he made his Son miserable in your stead! Rather than you should be eternally shut out from his presence, he withdrew his comfortable presence from him, who had been, from unbeginning ages, his bosom-delight! Rather would he pour out his wrath upon his Christ, till law and justice should be satisfied; than have you subjected, through eternity, to that wrath, without ever being able to satisfy it.

Behold,

Behold, in the same glass, the no less amazing love of the Son of God, who submitted thus to be *made sin for you*. He loved you to such a degree, that he not only died for you, while you were yet enemies; tho' this had been more than ever took place among men: He even submitted to his Father's wrath, and to the hidings of his face, which were worse than ten thousand deaths, for you. But who can tell the strength and vehemence of his love! It was not only *strong as death*; the strength of it was equal to *the power of God's wrath*. Even the *floods* of Almighty vengeance could not *drown it*. Through these he voluntarily swimm'd, that he might snatch you from that tremendous ocean, in which you were ready to sink eternally, and bring you home, a spotless bride to himself, into those chambers where you shall abide for ever. Continue to look, with wonder and admiration, at this love; till you find your heart kindled with the flame, in such a manner as that *the love of Christ* may *constrain* you, not only to go forward to his table, over the belly of much unworthiness, and of many doubts and fears about your condition; but likewise to encounter reproaches, and persecutions, and dangers, and devils, and death for his sake, whenever he shall call you to it.

6. From hence you may learn your duty, on such an occasion as this. Let me, therefore, take an opportunity to exhort every person before me, always to maintain a lively sense of your indispensable need of Christ, as a sin-offering for you; and of the absolute impossibility of regaining the favour of God in another way. Keep ever in view the exact suitability of this sacrifice; both to restore the honour of
 God's

God's law and justice, and to supply all the necessities of your souls. And see that you accept of this atonement, as offered to you in the gospel. Offer it up by faith unto God, as the ground of all your pleadings with him: And trust him for the pardon of sin, and for a complete salvation, on that footing. You "have *all* sinned against heaven, and in" God's sight. None of you can make the smallest reparation to God on that account. The arm of divine vengeance is lifted up against you in your natural estate; and neither you nor any creature can do any thing to divert the stroke. But, behold! the eternal Son of God, equal in glory, blessedness, and perfection, to the Father, hath interposed to avert it. He averts it, not by opposing force to force, though he "hath an arm like God, and can thunder with a voice like him;" but by subjecting himself to it in your room: and suffering that unrelenting fury to vent itself upon him, which would otherwise have fallen upon you. And now, on account of what Christ has done, a free pardon of all sin, a full indemnity for all your crimes, is exhibited, by God's authority, to every one of you. Thus saith the Lord to every one in this assembly, communicant and spectator, saint and sinner, man and woman, old and young; he says it to every one alike; every one has an equal warrant to apply it to himself, and to look for the present accomplishment of it; "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins *."

You that have received tokens of admission to the Lord's table, see that you forget not in what character

* Isa. xliii. 25.

rafter and capacity it was, that Christ accomplished that decease which you are about to commemorate. He died as a sin-offering for you. Forget not the promise, by which God has secured you a free pardon on Christ's account. And while you consider both what God hath promised, and what a broad foundation is laid for the accomplishment of the promise, by the sacrifice of Christ; beware of suffering any sin that ever you committed, or any corruption that you feel prevailing against you, or any thing else whatsoever, to deter you from using all that holy boldness and freedom with the King, at his table, that he graciously allows and requires. But come forward with cheerfulness and joy; and cast in your mite, small and inconsiderable as it may be, to keep up the remembrance of that death which made a full atonement for your sin; of that love which bound the sacrifice as "with *invincible* cords, to the horns of the " altar;" and of all that power and wisdom, justice and faithfulness, grace and love, which were manifested in that glorious constitution, by which God "made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin."

I must not conclude without a word to you, who still continue in your natural estate, and have *the wrath of God abiding* upon you. Such there undoubtedly are in this assembly, though we cannot point them out. O sinner, consider the miserable situation in which you are. The flaming sword of divine justice is brandished over your guilty head; and is ready, every moment, to strike the blow that shall render your condition eternally desperate. Neither is there any other remedy, but this which God hath provided. If, therefore, you love your immortal
soul,

soul, and would not have it lost for ever; if you fear the wrath of Almighty God, and wish to escape from it; if you have any desire to be happy, in this world, or in the world to come: we earnestly call and beseech you, in the great name of the Lord our God; yea, we charge you, as you shall answer to Christ himself at his second coming; that you persist not a moment longer in rejecting *so great a salvation*. God is so far pleased with the sacrifice of Christ, that he has no further claim upon you; if you are but willing to owe your pardon and salvation to the merit of this sacrifice. He is as willing to make you righteous; yea, to “make *you* the righteousness of God in *Christ* ;” as ever he was to “make him to be sin for us, who knew no sin.” He says to the greatest sinner among you, what he said, long ago, to the people of Israel, by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah, “Come and let us reason together: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool*.”

* Isaiah i. 18.

S E R M O N II.

*Guilty Sinners made the Righteousness of God in
Christ.*

2 COR. V. 21.

HE HATH MADE HIM TO BE SIN FOR US, WHO KNEW
NO SIN; THAT WE MIGHT BE MADE THE RIGH-
TEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM.

WHATEVER God requires of us is not only our reasonable service, it is likewise our interest to perform it; and we have reason to do it with pleasure and satisfaction. This is not the case more remarkably with regard to any other duty, than it is with respect to the work about which we are now met. It is natural for a person to think, with pleasure, of those whom he loves, though at a distance from him. It is equally natural to remember with pleasure any event, from which one has reaped, or expects to reap, any considerable advantage. A loving wife thinks with pleasure on her absent husband: and she commemorates, with delight, the day when she was united to him; or the day when he first made proposals

propofals of love to her. And why ſhould not the ſpouſe of Chriſt take pleaſure in remembering her abſent Lord, and in commemorating that remarkable day, in which the foundation of her union to him was laid, in the ſhedding of his precious blood? Surely the criminal, who had obtained a free pardon from his prince, after having been condemned to ſuffer death, would count it no hardſhip to commemorate the day when his pardon was ſealed. And why ſhould we think with indifference about that wonderful de- ceaſe, by which our glorious ſurety procured our free- dom from condemnation and wrath? Or why ſhould we give ourſelves up to diſcouragement, when about to commemorate that event in the ſacrament of the ſupper? Surely the dying command of Chriſt will not be grievous to any, who duly attends to the end and deſign of his death; as it is expreſt in the words of this text. He died in conſequence of his being *made ſin for us*. He died *that we*, who were the moſt atrocious finners, *might be made the righteouſneſs of God in him*.

It will, doubtleſs, be remembered by ſome, that we read theſe words, on the laſt occaſion of this na- ture that we had in this place. And, after ſome ſhort account of the Apoſtle's ſcope in the context, we en- deavoured to give you the ſenſe of this verſe in the following paraphraſe.

‘ In order that the way might be paved, for the
 ‘ réconciliation of finners unto God; it pleaſed God
 ‘ the Father, to make his own eternal Son an offer-
 ‘ ing for our ſin; that we, through him, might be
 ‘ accounted perfectly righteous in the ſight of God.’

We

We told you that the text plainly sets before us two things,

I. What our Lord Jesus Christ submitted to be for our sakes, according to his Father's appointment; as we have it in the first part of the verse. *He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin.*

II. What was God's end and design, in this solemn transaction; as in the last clause. It was *that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

We spake at large concerning the first of these: and now propose, through divine assistance, to offer you some thoughts concerning the second.

IN the last part of the verse, as in the first, there are four particulars deserving consideration.

I. What God intends that we should be, in consequence of Christ's being *made sin for us*: He designs that we should be *righteousness*.

II. What kind of righteousness it is, with which he proposes to endow us; *the righteousness of God.*

III. How we obtain an interest in this divine righteousness; intimated in the word *made*.

IV. In what right we are to enjoy it. It is only *in him*; that is, in Christ.

After some short explication of each of these, we shall conclude with some improvement of the subject.

I. It is proposed to speak of what God intended us to be, in consequence of Christ's being *made sin for us*. He became what he was not, that we might be the opposite of what we were. He who knew no sin was made sin, that we, who knew nothing but sin, might become righteous; yea, righteousness in the abstract.

Righteousness

Righteousness, as well as sin, is something relative. As sin consists in the want of conformity to the law of God; so righteousness, the opposite of sin, consists in conformity to that unerring rule. That law which was first written upon Adam's heart, and afterwards summed up in those *ten words*, which were delivered by the voice of God, from mount Sinai; being a transcript of the holy nature of God, and agreeable to all his moral perfections; is the supreme rule, and original standard, of all moral rectitude and perfection among men. Every action that is conformable to this law, is a work of righteousness; and every thing contrary to it is an act of sin. And, as that law extends to those habits and dispositions that belong to the constitution of the nature, as well as to outward actions; it is the standard by which we should judge ourselves, and by which we must be judged in the sight of God. The man, therefore, whose nature and actions are conformable to that law, is righteous; whereas he who is deficient in this conformity, in whole or in part, in his nature, or in any of his actions, must be deemed a sinner.

Now, it is manifest, that a person may live conformably to any law, or yet contrary to it, without being tried in a court of justice, so as to be pronounced either righteous or wicked. Among men, it is but a small number of those who are subject to the law, that ever have been tried before any judge. Indeed no person, in ordinary cases, is so, till he is suspected of some crime. And of those who are tried, some who have lived according to law may be pronounced guilty; while others are declared righteous, who have really acted contrary to law. Hence arises a plain

distinction, betwixt a *real* and a *legal* righteousness. That man is *really* just and righteous, whose life is conformable to the law; and he who has committed any transgression of the law, is *really* guilty and a sinner. On the other hand, he is *legally* righteous, who has been judged and declared to be so in a court of justice; whether he has indeed lived according to law or not. And he is *legally* guilty, who is judicially pronounced and declared to be so; even though his life has been agreeable to law and equity. And, because all human judges are liable to err, and capable of being imposed upon by false evidence; it frequently happens, that the same person is *really* guilty and *legally* righteous: while another, who is righteous *in fact*, may be *legally* guilty; having been declared to be such in a court of justice.

With God it is not as with men, in this respect. All the subjects of his government are not only bound by his laws; they are also tried in a court of justice,—even in the supreme court of heaven. A sentence of that court has actually past, and stands on record, concerning every man and every woman. Some, being sustained righteous in law, are adjudged to life and happiness: while others, and these by far the greatest part, are found guilty in judgment; they are declared to be sinners, and, as such, are “condemned already, *and* the wrath of God abideth on them.” God himself, being the omniscient witness of all actions; yea, having an intimate knowledge of all hearts, is incapable of erring in judgment, or of being imposed upon by any means. His judgment, therefore, “is always according to truth.”

If we were to judge of God's procedure, in this respect,

spect, by the rules of human reason; we would readily apprehend, that the just *Judge of all the earth* would pronounce all those to be guilty, and deal with them as guilty persons,—who are really guilty in themselves; and that none should be pronounced righteous, or sustained such in law, but them whose natures and actions had been found, upon trial, to be perfectly agreeable to that law which is the rule of judgment. Indeed it would have been so, if the covenant of works had stood; or if men had only been judged by the law of nature. And it will eventually be so, with regard to all those who continue under the covenant of works, and all who shall finally be judged by the law of nature only. But, by the covenant of grace, a new method of procedure is introduced; a method far above the reach of unenlightened reason. By this method, persons who are really guilty, and sinners in themselves, are sustained, pronounced, and declared righteous in the eye of the law. They are dealt with as righteous persons, and entitled to all the privileges that are connected with that character; in the same manner as they would have been, if they had never sinned: yea, in a manner far more ample and glorious than, in that case, they ever could have been. Yet all this is done in a full consistency with all the rules of justice; and with all the adorable perfections of that holy and just God, who is the supreme *Judge of all the earth*.

It is true, indeed, that no person is thus made legally righteous, who is not made really and personally righteous at the same time. Every person who is pronounced righteous in law, is likewise endued with a principle of inherent righteousness, and enters upon

a course of obedience to that law which is the supreme rule of righteousness. But, contrary to all the dictates of human reason, and to all the course of human procedure, in the administration of justice; our personal inherent righteousness is so far from being the ground of that sentence, by which we become legally righteous, that it is only a fruit and consequence of that sentence. All our actions, before we are declared righteous in law, are so egregiously sinful, that any one of them would have been sufficient to condemn us. And, in the passing of our sentence, no respect is had to any works of righteousness that we are to perform afterwards. Our justification, our being assolizied and declared righteous, proceeds upon a very different, an infinitely more sure and noble footing.

This wonderful sentence is solely owing to Christ's having been *made sin for us*. It is founded upon that righteousness which he wrought out for us. All they, for whom Christ was made sin, are, in due time, brought, in the manner that shall be explained in a little, if the Lord will, to enjoy an actual interest in what Christ did and suffered, when our sin lay upon him. On that footing, they are absolved from the curse of the law; that dreadful sentence by which they stood condemned before. A new sentence is passed in their favours, by which they are sustained and declared righteous in the eye of God's law, and entitled to all that happiness which they might have expected to enjoy if the covenant of works had stood, and much more. In the same instant the Holy Ghost takes up his residence in the soul, and begins to make it really and inherently righteous. And, under his influence,
they

they grow in conformity, both of nature and actions, to the law of God; till their inherent righteousness also is made perfect, and they are completely freed from all the remainders of their natural corruption. Both these may be included in the text,—our legal and our real or personal righteousness; as both are the fruits of Christ's being *made sin for us*. But it is undoubtedly the first that is primarily and directly intended.

Thus it is, that we become righteous through Christ; yea, *righteousness* itself, as the text expresses it, by an usual figure; the *abstract* being put for the *concrete*, as grammarians speak: and this figure may be here used to intimate the two following things.

I. The perfection and excellency of that righteousness, with which we are endued. We are made righteous in the eye of God's law, in the very highest degree, so that it is impossible for us to be more so than we are. This is the usual import of the figure. Thus, the *carnal mind* is said to be, not only an enemy, but *enmity* itself *against God* *; as if the whole substance of the soul were exhausted by that one quality. Carnal men are enemies to God in the very highest degree. They could not be more so, if they had no other quality belonging to them; but their whole nature and constitution were made up of nothing else but this enmity. So, when we are here said to be *made righteousness*, the meaning is, that we are made righteous in such a degree as admits of no addition. We could not be more righteous if our whole nature and constitution were made up of this one attribute, and there were nothing about us but righteousness.

2. The similitude of the manner in which we are made righteous through Christ, to the manner in which he became guilty for us. His righteousness is transferred to us, in the same manner in which our sin was transferred upon him. He is said to have been made not only sinful, but sin; and, therefore, we are said to be made righteousness. The same form of speech is used in both parts of the verse; because both the wonderful changes mentioned in it were brought about in the same manner. Our character was originally the opposite of Christ's: He knew no sin; and we had no experimental knowledge of any thing but sin. But he was put into our place in law; and we are put into his. He was pronounced a sinner, and dealt with accordingly. And we are judicially declared to be righteous; and as such we are dealt with. Christ bore all the punishment that was due to us for all the sins that were imputed to him; and we enjoy all the blessings and benefits that were due to the merits of Christ, when he *fulfilled all righteousness*. He was made sin by the imputation of our sins to him, though he continued to be without sin in himself. And we, even while we continue sinners, are made righteous; by having his righteousness imputed to us, and reckoned to our account.

II. WHAT kind of righteousness it is, with which the people of God are endued, in consequence of Christ's being made sin for them, was the next thing observed in the words. It is *the righteousness of God*.

This strange expression some take to signify no more, than that this righteousness with which we are endued is most noble and excellent. By an usual Hebraism,

Hebraism, that which is most excellent in its kind is ascribed to God, or called his, in Scripture. Thus, the cedars are called *the trees of God* *; because they are the most noble and stately of all trees.—In this sense, indeed, our righteousness may, with the greatest propriety, be called the righteousness of God. No other righteousness is comparable with it; unless the essential righteousness of the divine nature. The righteousness of Adam, in his estate of original integrity, could not be compared with it. Though perfect while it continued, it was so short lived, that “man in honour lodged not a night †.” The personal righteousness of the saints deserves not to be mentioned along with it. While they are in this world, it is but *as filthy rags*; it is both imperfect and defiled. And though it shall be perfect in another world, none of them will ever be disposed to compare it with this. Even the righteousness of confirmed angels is not like it. Their righteousness can be profitable to none but themselves, as it barely corresponds to the demands that the law of their Creator has upon them. Nay, all the righteousness that can be found among mere creatures must be infinitely inferior to it. All creatures must be finite and dependent. Their righteousness can never be wholly their own; as they must depend upon the great First Cause, in this, as in every other respect. It must be finite, in itself and in its value, as proceeding from a finite nature. But this righteousness, being wrought out by an infinite person, is itself infinite in value and in duration. It not only answers all the demands of the law; it even exceeds them. By it the law is “magnified and made

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* Psal. civ. 16. † So the word might be read, Psal. xlix. 12.

“honourable *. The law had demands upon every mere man, for all that obedience that a finite nature could perform. But that the great Author of the law should subject himself to it, and yield an obedience, infinite as the person who yielded it, this surpassed all that ever the law could demand; and hereby was an honour conferred upon it, beyond any thing that could have taken place if it had never been dishonoured by sin. Thus the righteousness which is conferred upon us is infinitely more noble than any other; and, on that account, may, with propriety, be called *the righteousness of God*.

But I apprehend it is so denominated chiefly on another account; because it is a righteousness in which God has a principal interest and concern. And, indeed, in whatever light we view it, it is, in the strictest sense, God's righteousness. If we view it in the original spring of it; it was God alone that contrived it. None but he had any right to make Christ a sacrifice for us; and none but he had sufficient wisdom to find out so strange and wonderful an invention. View it in the actual fulfilment of it; and it was God who wrought it out. Our glorious Surety, though made a partaker of flesh and blood, like his brethren, was from all eternity, and to all eternity is, the supreme and self-existent God, equal in every respect with the Father and the Holy Ghost. Consider it in respect of its end and tendency: it was a righteousness designed for God; to promote his glory as the righteous Judge of all the earth, and to restore the honour of his broken law. To God, therefore, it was offered by Christ; as the full payment of all that debt
for

* Isaiah xlii. 21.

for which he became surety. To God it is offered by the Christian, in the day of believing, as the sole ground of his pardon and acceptance. And God has accepted it, from the hand of the Surety first, and then from the sinner himself. Of this he has given assurance, in that he hath raised Christ from the dead; and in that he blesses every Christian, “with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus.” In a word, take a view of this righteousness in its actual communication to us, and it is the gift of God. It is God who exhibits it to us in the gospel. And it is he alone by whom it is actually conferred upon us, and made ours. By him it is that we are *made the righteousness of God in Christ*. This naturally leads us to enquire,

III. How it is that we obtain an interest in this incomparable and truly divine righteousness. This is expressed, in the text, by our being *made righteousness*.

It was hinted above, that we are *made* the righteousness of God in Christ, in the very same manner in which he was *made* sin for us. Now, in Christ’s being made sin for us, four things may, and ought to be attended to.

The proposal made to Christ from all eternity; wherein the Father declared it as his will, that he should be made sin for us.

The Son’s consent to that proposal; whereby he undertook to satisfy justice in our name.

The actual imputation of our sin to him, in the fulness of time, when God laid on him the iniquities of us all. And,

His being dealt with as a sinner, in consequence of all

all this; and subjected to the punishment that our sin deserved.

Corresponding to these, there are four things, that may be considered as so many steps, by which we are brought forward to be the righteousness of God in Christ.

1. Corresponding to the proposal which the Father made to Christ from all eternity; there is the gracious proposal that God makes to us, in the dispensation of the gospel, of making us righteous through Christ. The righteousness of Christ, having first been accepted at his hand, by God the Father, as the full accomplishment of his undertaking, is, by God's authority, freely offered, exhibited, and *brought near* to every hearer of the gospel; and every person is warranted, invited, and intreated, to receive and use it; as the sole ground of his acceptance with God, of the pardon of his sin, and of his title to eternal life and happiness. We, then, have the honour to be "ambassadors for Christ: as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead," to accept this precious righteousness, as the ground of your reconciliation unto God. You need not bring any thing in your hand, with which to purchase it; it is offered "without money and without price." You have no occasion to wait for any previous qualifications or endowments to recommend you; it is brought near even to them "that are stout-hearted and far from righteousness." The very offer of this righteousness to you necessarily supposes you to be unrighteous and guilty in yourself. You could have no need of this, if you had a sufficient righteousness of your own, or any thing that could effectually recommend you to God.

God. Come, then, just as you are. And, if you are a descendent of Adam, and have a rational soul, in union to that body which we see; you are as welcome as God can make you, to this precious, this inestimable, this *unspeakable gift*.

2. There is the act of justifying faith; whereby the sinner, in the day of his effectual calling, lays hold of this righteousness, as it is thus offered to him in the gospel. This may be viewed as corresponding to Christ's acceptance of the Father's proposal, whereby he undertook to become *sin for us*. The poor sinner, finding himself pursued by the fiery law, with curses and denunciations of vengeance; seeing the sword of divine justice ready to strike him to the lowest hell; having tried all methods to appease the justice of God, to satisfy the demands of the law, and to allay the terrors of his guilty conscience; and having found all methods of his own devising in vain: his ears are opened by the Holy Spirit of Christ; he hears the voice of God in the gospel, to which he was altogether inattentive before; and now, for the first time, he considers that offer of Christ and his righteousness, which the gospel contains, as made to him in particular, and as made by God himself. His will, being, at the same instant, subdued by a day of almighty power, consents, with cheerfulness, to the gracious proposal; and he says, "Surely in the Lord have I righteousness*." Thus he actually receives what God offered to him before, and makes it his own. He holds it up to God, as a full and satisfactory answer to all the cravings of his law, and a sufficient atonement to his incensed justice. He pleads for the pardon of his
sin,

* Isaiah xlv. 24.

fin, the acceptance of his person, and an interest in all the benefits of God's covenant, solely on that footing; and says, *Behold, O God, my shield; and look upon the righteousness of thine anointed.*

3. There is the actual communication of this righteousness to us, corresponding to the laying of our sins upon Christ. This includes two things.

(1.) The actual imparting of it unto us, upon our receiving it by faith, in the manner just now described. You can easily perceive, that when any person has something valuable offered and held out to him by another; he can never get possession of it, unless there is an act of giving on the part of him that offered it, as well as an act of receiving on his part. So it is here. When the sinner, by the assistance of divine grace, puts forth his hand to receive this righteousness, God actually makes good his offer. He gives him the real and personal possession of it, and it becomes his indeed. *The best robe is put upon him;* and he is accordingly qualified to partake in the marriage-feast that God has made for his Son; to lift up his face with confidence in the presence of God, and before that throne of which "justice and judgment are made the dwelling-place."

(2.) The judicial imputation of this righteousness to us, sustaining it as ours in law, to all intents and purposes, as really and effectually as if it had been wrought out by our own hands. *Imputation* properly signifies the putting of any thing to a person's account; and it is usually understood in a forensic sense. The imputation of Christ's righteousness to us is that *judicial sentence, or judgment of the court of heaven, whereby it is declared to be ours in law.* Now, as
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the judgment of God is always according to truth ; it is manifest that this righteousness cannot be sustained as ours till it be received by us, and put upon us in the manner above explained. But a moment does not pass, after we have received it by faith, or after it is put upon us by God, till it is likewise sustained for us in law, and we pronounced righteous by him who is the supreme and sovereign Judge of all the earth. Yes, believer: however guilty you are in yourself, and however much your conscience may be burdened with a sense of your guilt, God accounts you righteous in as high a degree as if you had never committed a sin. Yea, in the eye of his law, you are incomparably more righteous, than, in that case, you could have been; for you are considered as *made the righteousness of God in Christ*. In consequence of all this,

4. There is God's dealing with us as righteous persons; and bestowing upon us all the fruits of that righteousness which is judicially put to our account: corresponding to Christ's being dealt with as a sinner, in consequence of the imputation of our sin to him. In making "his soul an offering for sin," God had no respect to the unspotted holiness and righteousness of his personal character; but punished him in the same unrelenting manner, as he would have done if he had been the greatest of all sinners; because he stood before God as our Surety, and all the guilt of our sins was found upon him. In like manner, Christian, from the moment that you are clothed upon with the righteousness of your Redeemer, God pays no regard at all, in judgment, to the sinfulness and vileness of your real character: but, in all his judicial dealings with

with you, he conducts himself in the same manner as he would have done if you had never been guilty of any sin; yea, in the same manner as if you, in your own person, had performed every article of that which Christ performed in your name. Having freely *forgiven your iniquities*, he remembers not, he never "will remember your sins *any more* *." The reason of this is assigned in the text. Christ having been *made sin for you*, you are *made the righteousness*, not of a mere man, but of a divine person, for such Christ was. You are even *made the righteousness of God in him*

Wonderful change! amazing dignity! a vile, sinful, cursed, condemned worm *made the righteousness of God!* Is every true believer then made so absolutely righteous? Is he considered, by law and justice, in the same light as Christ is? Or, is it possible that the righteousness of an infinite person can be imparted to a sinful creature; and that creature made such in law as Jesus Christ is, with regard to perfection of righteousness? Rejoice, Christian, in your privilege. But beware of suffering a licentious imagination to lead you into blasphemy and absurdity. Christ has not done for you what the devil said the forbidden fruit would do, made you equal with God. The words of the text, when understood in their proper sense, contain a precious and consolatory truth; abundantly consistent with all the distance that must ever subsist between the Creator and the creature. But, if stretched, they may seem to give countenance to the blasphemous absurdities of some ranting sectaries, who spake of being *Godded with God*, and *Christed with Christ*:

* Jer. xxxi. 34.

Christ: as if Christians were incorporated with the essence of God, or made partakers of his incommunicable perfections. Nay, the thing is simply impossible. And the very thought is injurious, in the highest degree, to the infinite and inaccessible majesty of God. You are *made the righteousness of God*; not by a participation of the essential righteousness of God's nature; nor by having the righteousness of God, in any respect, inherent in you. Nay; at the same that you are thus righteous in the eye of the law, your inherent righteousness continues to be as filthy rags. But you are made so, in the manner already described; by being interested in that righteousness, which was wrought out by a person who is God; and by having that perfect, infinite, and truly divine righteousness judicially put to your account. No change is hereby made in your real and personal character. You still continue that sinful, unrighteous, and filthy creature that you feel yourself to be. But you are considered, and dealt with, by the law and justice of God, as a person interested in an infinite righteousness. You are intitled to all the happiness that a divine righteousness can procure, and are as free from any possibility of condemnation as *the righteousness of God* can make you. You are interested in a better inheritance than a finite obedience could ever have procured; and so are entitled to hope for a higher degree of glory and blessedness, through eternity, than any of mankind could have enjoyed if sin had never entered. You have and hold this inheritance, by the very same right by which it is held by Christ your Head. And you have the same security that he has, against ever falling under the wrath or curse of God a

second time. The infinitude of his righteousness, or its being *the righteousness of God*, gives you a title to the one, and a security against the other, as unchangeable as the divine nature itself. But this arises from nothing inherent in you: it is wholly owing to Christ your Surety. You are *made the righteousness of God only in him*.

IV. To consider the meaning of these last words of the text, or to enquire in whose right believers are *made the righteousness of God*, is all that remains of the doctrinal part of our subject. We are made thus righteous *in him*. The expression imports two things.

1. That no persons can be thus *made the righteousness of God* till they are really *in Christ*, and enjoy a vital union to his person. There is a twofold union that subsists between Christ and the believer; a *legal* and a *vital* union. The legal union is our being sustained in law as one with him; and so entitled to be dealt with according to his merits. This is much the same with what, in the text, is called a being *made the righteousness of God*." The vital union consists in our being partakers of the same spirit with him; and being endued with that faith by which we hold him as our Head. Our real union commences in regeneration, and our legal union in justification. Hence it is manifest, that, though there is no difference in point of time, yet, in the order of nature, regeneration must be prior to justification. Till we be really united to Christ, we cannot be judicially declared to be one with him; otherwise the judgment of God would not be according to truth, nor could we be said to be made the righteousness of God *in him*.

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2. That when any person is thus *made the righteousness of God*, being accounted righteous in the eye of God's law ; it is only in Christ's right, and on his account. As Christ could not be accounted a sinner, or dealt with as such, unless on our account ; so neither can we be accounted righteous, nor entitled to any part of the reward due to a righteous person, unless on his account. In our justification God has no more respect to any righteousness of our own, than he had to any sin inherent in Christ, when he subjected him to his wrath and curse. We are justified on account of his righteousness imputed to us, in the same manner as he was condemned for our sin imputed to him ; and for the same good and sufficient reason. He *knew no sin*, and we knew no righteousness. He could not be punished for his own sin ; because he was " holy, harmless, undefiled, and separated from sinners." And we cannot be justified on account of our own righteousness ; because it is but *filthy rags*.

It is true, that, in consequence of Christ's being made sin for us, a principle of inherent personal righteousness is implanted in us, as has been said already. And it is equally true, that this inherent righteousness begins to be wrought in us in regeneration ; which is prior, as we have just now seen, to the legal imputation of Christ's righteousness to us in justification. We are not made the righteousness of God in Christ, without having an image of God's righteousness and holiness stamped upon us. But it is equally true, and a truth that can never be too much attended to, that this our personal righteousness comes not at all into consideration before God, when he judicially declares

us to be righteous persons. Indeed, it is utterly impossible that it should. Nothing that is about us when we are justified, nor any thing that we can attain to in any after period, can so far answer the demands of the law as to procure acceptance for itself; or to be pronounced, in strict justice, a righteous action: much less can it procure acceptance *for us*; or be any part of the ground upon which we are pronounced righteous persons. The truth is, we never could be justified, unless every thing wrought in us, and done by us, were wholly out of the question. As all our sins, whether committed in a natural, or in a gracious state, are wholly overlooked, on the one hand; so are all our righteousnesses on the other: whether that which we vainly pretend to in our unregenerate state, or that which we really attain to, under the influence of divine grace, in our estate of union to Christ. Imputed righteousness is only attended to, in God's judicial procedure towards us. We are *made the righteousness of God, only in Christ.*

WE are now to conclude with some improvement of the subject. We shall satisfy ourselves, at present, with the following inferences: reserving any further application, till it can be overtaken, if the Lord will, in the progress of the work of this day.

I. From what has been said, we may see what is the true spring of all that legality which does so much harm in the Church, and in the hearts of professed Christians. It is nothing else than mens attempting to measure the great things of God by the standard of human reason. We know that, among men, there is no way of being acquitted in a court of law, or being pronounced

pronounced righteous by a just judge, upon standing a legal trial before him; unless the person is really innocent, or else the proof of his guilt fails. We are disposed to think that God is such an one as ourselves; and therefore we have no prospect of acquitment in his presence, unless upon the footing of our own personal righteousness or innocence. The method of justification by the imputed righteousness of another, is not fit to be practised among men. It lies beyond the reach of human wisdom; so far, that it appears to be *foolishness* in the carnal eye. Therefore it is, that carnal men reject it in their dealings with God. Never will a sinner be reconciled to it, till he find the bottom beaten out of all his own schemes; his refuges of lies swept away, his own wisdom befooled, and all hopes of satisfying the demands of God's law by his own doings utterly cut off: never—till he be determined, by divine grace, to deny himself; and have his eyes supernaturally opened, to see the infinite wisdom of God, appearing in the mystery of redemption through the blood of Christ. Hence every natural man is a legalist; and every Christian has a remainder of legality about him, proportioned to the prevalence of the unrenewed part.

Whence is it that so many of those who profess to be *masters* in our *Israel*, substitute a system of legality or Arminianism in the place of the gospel of Christ? Men are early taught to set up human reason, as the touchstone even of revelation itself. A doctrine so flattering to human pride is readily drunk in. And, being greedily received, is afterwards retailed even from the pulpit. The doctrine of imputed righteousness they consequently reject, as one of those which

reason explodes. All other doctrines which exceed their shallow comprehension share the same fate; and one argument serves to confute them all—‘ They are ‘ contrary to reason, and God is the Author of reason; ‘ he cannot therefore be the Author of such doctrines, ‘ because he cannot contradict himself.’ Some other sense must be sought for those passages of Scripture where these doctrines are taught; and invention is put to the rack, to get the word of God perverted from its genuine and obvious meaning. Would it not be more honest, and equally native, to reason as others do, from the same principle, that the Scriptures cannot be the word of God at all; because they contain doctrines that seem inconsistent with human reason? Truly, whenever reason is set up as the judge of revelation, *Deism* is the native consequence.

But knowest thou not, O vain man, that God’s “ ways are not as *our* ways, nor *his* thoughts as *our* “ thoughts?” Hast thou no experience of the imperfection of *human* reason, and of its liability to err, even in natural things? Are the *deep things of God* more within the reach of this boasted reason, than the things of this corporeal world? Or are *these* the only things about which *thy* reason cannot err? God is, indeed, the Author of *right* reason; and cannot be the Author of any thing that is really contrary to it. But art thou sure that *thine* is that very reason, of which God is the Author? Or art thou such a complete master of *right* reason, as to know infallibly what is agreeable, and what is contrary to it? A much better method of arguing would be this; God has expressly told me, in his word, that “ there is no salvation in any other *name but* the name of Jesus; *that* “ by

“ by the works of the law no flesh living shall be justified;” and that, “ as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous:” And, seeing these are the very words of God, I must believe them to be agreeable to right reason, though to my shallow apprehension it would seem to be otherwise. Much better suspect my own reason, which I know to be erring and imperfect, than bring any imputation upon the veracity of the unchangeable God, or any of his other perfections. This we are sure of, that you must learn to argue in this manner, and to have your practice influenced by such reasonings, in relation to this and many other doctrines in the Christian system, if ever you enjoy real and saving advantage by divine revelation. And we are equally sure, that, whatever be the views of carnal men, this doctrine of imputed righteousness, in particular, will ever be precious in the eyes of every genuine Christian. The doctrine of salvation through the merits of a crucified Redeemer may be, as it ever has been, “ to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but still it *will be* the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth *.”

2. We may see, that neither faith nor repentance, nor sincere obedience, nor all these together, nor any thing else that is wrought in us, or done by us, can be the proper condition of that covenant which God makes with believers through Jesus Christ. Indeed, there is a covenant entered into between God and every believer; as really as between God the Father

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* 1 Cor. i. 23.

and his eternal Son. But, in this covenant, no mention is made of any condition to be performed by us, as the ground of our title to the promises of it. Nothing is required of us, but freely to receive what God as freely gives; and to give ourselves and our services to him, not as the ground of our title to what he bestows upon us, but as a testimony of our gratitude on account of it. The reason of this is manifest. The covenant that is made with us is the same that was made with Christ from eternity. The whole condition of this covenant was to be fulfilled by Christ, and he has fulfilled it accordingly. What he did, in fulfilling the condition of it, is graciously imputed to us, when we are brought within the bond of the covenant; and on that footing we are not only absolved from guilt and from punishment, but likewise adjudged to the possession of all the blessings of the covenant. Our faith, our repentance, our evangelical obedience, instead of being the condition of the covenant, are all contained in the promise of it; and are all graciously bestowed upon us, as the fruits of Christ's purchase. These are not the righteousness on the footing of which we are justified; but they are all bestowed upon us through Christ, as so many branches of that happiness to which we are adjudged, when we are made the righteousness of God in him.

3. We may hence be informed, in what sense it is that God sees no sin in his people. Balaam was constrained, under the unwelcome influence of the Spirit of God, to say, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel." If our translators have given a proper version of this passage, it surely means, that, in some sense or other, God sees no

sin in his people. No person, who has any competent acquaintance with himself, will pretend to be without sin in this world. And it cannot be apprehended, without blasphemy, that there can be sin any where, to which an omniscient God is not privy. Nay, Christian, your mournful experience testifies that there is still much sin about you. And the many chastisements that you suffer may assure you that God sees it; for by these he takes *vengeance* on your *inventions*. But he sees no sin in you, or about you, as he is the supreme Judge of all the earth. He takes no judicial notice, or cognizance of it. It is all covered, from the eye of vindictive justice, by the garment of your Surety's righteousness, with which you are clothed. And it is impossible that any judicial knowledge should ever be taken of it in the court of heaven. In all God's legal procedure towards you, he must deal with you as if you had never sinned; for himself has graciously made you *the righteousness of God in Christ*.

4. Though our sin was imputed to Christ, in the same manner as his righteousness is imputed to us; yet there is a very great difference, in regard to the duration of the effects of these two transactions. Christ was *made sin for us*, only for a short time: we continue to be the righteousness of God in him; not only while time remains, but even through all eternity. Christ was reputed a sinner, and dealt with as such, only during the continuance of his humbled state: and as soon as, by his death, he had "finished transgression and made an end of sin," he was freed from all the dismal effects of the imputation of our sin to him. But we shall continue for ever to be dealt

dealt with as righteous persons; and when death shall have put an end to all the remainders of sin in us, then only shall we begin to enjoy, in perfection, all the happy fruits of his imputed righteousness. The reason of this is manifest. No sentence of the court of heaven can be abolished, or cease to have effect, till it be executed to the full. When our sins were imputed to Christ, a sentence past in that court, appointing him to suffer all the punishment that was due to them. Being an infinite person, he bare a punishment by which the whole contents of his sentence were exhausted, and that in a short time. When we are *made the righteousness of God in him*, a sentence in like manner passes, appointing us to enjoy the full reward of Christ's obedience unto death. And the full reward of an infinite righteousness must needs be infinite. But we, being finite creatures, are as incapable to exhaust an infinite inheritance, in any limited space of duration, as we are to suffer an infinite punishment. Our sentence, therefore, can never have its full effect, unless we continue, through all eternity, in possession of the fruits of this divine righteousness.

5. We may see a ready method for intended communicants to be properly dressed out for the banquet of wine, to which the great King is inviting them. If you, who propose to join in the great work of this day, have not been greatly deficient in your duty, you have been endeavouring previously to examine yourselves. And the great enquiry, with you, has been, whether or not you have on that wedding-garment, in which alone you can sit with acceptance at the King's table? And, perhaps, it is still matter of
doubt,

doubt, whether you have it or not. But here is a ready method to have all such doubts resolved. You have heard in what manner we obtain an interest in the righteousness of Christ; and this righteousness is the very garment which you want. This righteousness God presently offers to you, as well as to every other hearer of the gospel. We are expressly commanded by him to “bring forth this *robe*, and put it “on you.” And, whether ever you had it before or not, it is your indispensable duty *now* to put it on, by the renewed actings of faith. In this way, no sin of which you are conscious, nor any sin that may have escaped your memory, shall stand in the way of your enjoying the most intimate communion with God at his table. Yea, in this way, you may have all your doubts, relative to your state, resolved: you may have *the Spirit of God bearing witness with your spirits, that you are the children of God*: and may come to the Lord’s table, in full assurance of your being the genuine friends of Christ. Reflecting upon the present exercise of your faith, you may have that as an infallible mark of your present interest in Christ, and of your present right to partake in this solemn ordinance. “Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ,” therefore: put on the *wedding-garment* of his righteousness. And so go forward “to the altar of God, and “to God *your exceeding joy*; that *you* may publish “with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all his “wondrous works:” but chiefly of this most wonderful of all his works, that *he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

6. Here is a door of hope set open before the greatest

est and most atrocious of all finners. It is " a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came to save sinners," even *the chief* of them. He came to save them by being *made sin for them*; *that they might be made the righteousness of God in him*. To every sinner in this assembly, even to him that has been guilty of the greatest sins, and to him that has continued in sin the longest, is Jesus Christ offered, as *made of God unto you righteousness*. God is now giving you an opportunity to chuse, whether you will be dealt with, both now and hereafter, according to what you deserve, or according to the merits of Christ. If you choose the last, you shall inherit all that Christ has purchased, and is now in possession of: but if you finally choose the former, you must dwell, for ever, among " snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest;" which justly belongs " to sinners as the portion of their cup." And perhaps this may be the last time that ever you will have it in your power to make the choice. Let your present choice, therefore, be such as you would wish to stand for eternity; and beware of trifling in a matter of such vast importance.

Perhaps you are still dreaming of salvation by your own righteousness. But have you never any suspicions that it may fail you? If there is but a possibility that it may fail, it must be your wisdom to renounce it, and take up your standing on the righteousness of Christ; for this can never fail you. Surely you can never dream that your righteousness is equal, in any respect, to the righteousness of God. And is it not the greatest folly to trust your eternal happiness to a righteousness that is finite and imperfect,

fect, when you have one that is infinite and absolutely perfect in your offer? If you will be saved by the works of the law, you must fulfil all its demands. If you fail in the least article, you are exposed to the curse; nor will any punctuality in your after-services make atonement for the least offence. “Curst is every one that continued not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.” Be not deceived. It is as impossible for you to be saved by your own righteousness, as it is for any person to perish who embraces and puts on the righteousness of Christ. As soon may you see a real Christian in hell, as see one who lived and died a legalist in heaven. Neither is it possible that you can retain your own righteousness, and yet have an interest in Christ’s. This spotless robe needs no patching—It admits of none. Either you must receive Christ, and renounce your own righteousness; or, by retaining it, you renounce him.

Neither have you any reason to be afraid, that the greatness of your sin will be a bar in the way of your being saved by Christ’s righteousness. Surely your sin can never bear a comparison with the infinite holiness of Christ’s person. Yet God made him to be sin; and why should he hesitate to make you righteous? Your sin can never deserve the wrath and curse of God more richly than the righteousness of Christ deserves eternal life. Even to the *stout-hearted*, and them *that are far from righteousness*, is the righteousness of God brought near in this gospel. And the greater your sin is, the more glory will redound to the merits of Christ, and to the grace of God through him, by your salvation. Be concerned, therefore,

while

while it is called to-day, to lay hold on Christ's righteousness, by an appropriating faith; and improve it as the sole ground of all your expectations from a God of grace, either in time or through eternity. For, by God's authority, we declare unto you, that "he that believeth not in *Christ* is condemned already; *and* the wrath of God abideth on him." But, on the other hand, *there is no condemnation*, through eternity there never will be any, *to them who are in Christ Jesus*. How should there? "It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather that is risen again: who is even at the right hand of God; who also maketh intercession for us."

*The Discourse in fencing the Tables: containing
an Use of Trial, drawn from the Subject of the
foregoing Discourse.*

NO person can partake acceptably in the solemn ordinance, which is about to be dispensed among us, unless in the way of carefully examining himself; that he may cast out all *the old leaven* which he finds about himself, and be in a condition to keep this New-Testament passover “with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” The subject, from which we have been speaking, affords you various marks by which you may try yourselves. We shall endeavour to set a few of them before you. And we charge every person, who has a token of admission to the Lord’s table, to apply them to his own conscience as we go along. Nor is there any person present who has no concern in what we are about to say. It must be the interest of every man to know himself, and of every woman. And if the glass is faithfully held up, every person may see his own face in it, on the one side or on the other.

The great question, then, with every one in this company should be, Whether you have been *made the righteousness of God in Christ*, in the manner that has
been

been spoken of, or not? If you have, and come forward in the exercise of the sacramental graces, Christ makes you welcome to a feast upon his body that was broken, and his blood which was shed, when God *made him to be sin for you*. But if it is otherwise with you; in coming to this holy table, you will become accessory to the sin of those who murdered him: you will be *guilty of the body and blood of the Lord*. Would you desire to avoid this sin; and know whether you have on the wedding-garment, in which alone you can be welcome to participate in this feast, or not? Then ask your consciences, as in the sight of God, the following questions.

1. What knowledge have you of Christ, and of the method of justification through his imputed righteousness? You have heard, that this whole device is foolishness to the natural man; and if it continues to be so in your eye, you cannot be welcome at his holy table. But if your eyes have been opened to see this method of salvation to be worthy of all the perfections of God, exactly suitable to all your necessities, and free from all those defects that you have found about every other method that ever you tried or thought of; and if you are presently disposed to say of it, as David in his dying day, It "is all my salvation, and all my desire;" then your knowledge of it is saving; and you may be welcome at this table. I only say you *may* be welcome; I dare not say you *shall*. For, though your knowledge be saving in its nature, you cannot be a worthy communicant; unless, for the degree of it, it be such as may qualify you to discern the Lord's body through the outward elements. Not only those hypocrites whose know-
ledge

ledge is all carnal and speculative ; but also those Christians, whose knowledge of the nature, ends, and uses of this ordnance, is incompetent, are debarred from the holy table of the Lord.

2. Have you ever been determined to accept the offer that God makes to you in the gospel, of Christ and his righteousness; and to improve that righteousness, as the sole ground of your pardon and acceptance in the sight of God? You have heard, that this is one thing necessarily included in the manner of our being made the righteousness of God in Christ. Have you therefore, when pinched with a sense of sin, and of your dangerous condition while exposed to the wrath and curse of God, been enabled to hear the voice of God in the Gospel, as addressed to you? Have you been satisfied that the offer of Christ and salvation through him was made to you in particular, as really as ever it was to any other of Adam's lost family? And was you determined, in a day of almighty power, to accept the gracious proposal; and to say, in raptures of love and joy, "in the Lord have I righteousness?" Was you disposed to renounce all dependence upon your own righteousness, whatever was your attachment to it before; and to cast it away as *filthy rags*? Are you of the same disposition still? and is it your present desire and aim, to lay hold on Christ anew; as *made of God unto you*, not only *wisdom and righteousness*, but also *sanctification and redemption*? In a word, do you propose to go forward to the Lord's table in the faith of being accepted in that service, and strengthened for it, only in Christ, your beloved? Then we are warranted to invite, and we hereby do kindly invite you to a seat at this holy table.

ble. But if you are a stranger to this faith; if you have never seen your indispensable need of this divine righteousness; if you are disposed to accept of Christ, only as he is *made righteousness*, but not as *made sanctification*; if you put all the calls and offers of the gospel from yourself; or if you content yourself with having embraced them some time heretofore, and are not concerned to renew the actings of faith upon Christ and his righteousness *now*: we declare you unfit, for the present, to partake in this solemn feast. For, not only all habitual unbelievers, but all faithless and unbelieving Christians; that is, all who are not in the present exercise of faith, are debarred from this holy table of the Lord.

3. What views have you of that evil and bitter thing, which brought the eternal Son of God to suffer his Father's wrath, when *he made him to be sin for us*? Has God *poured upon you*, according to his promise, *the spirit of grace and of supplications*; enabling you to *look upon him whom you have pierced, and to mourn for him*? Do you not only fear sin and abstain from it, on account of its dangerous consequences to yourself; but also hate and abhor it for its loathsome and abominable nature, for the dishonour it does to God, and for the wounds that it gave to Christ? Do you turn from it with a sincere abhorrence; and even lothe and abhor yourself on account of it? Do you turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavour after new obedience? Are you presently in the exercise of repentance? And is it your resolution, through grace, to eat the New-Testament passover, this day, with these bitter herbs? Then we invite you to partake in this feast, as a genuine

nuine friend of Christ. But if you still continue to love sin, though you fear the punishment of it; if you resolve to continue in some sins, while you resolve to forsake others; if you would choose to continue in sin, provided you might with impunity; if you have never been grieved for the injury that sin has done to Christ, nor affected with shame and self-lothing on account of it: then there is sad reason to conclude, that you are still in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity; and while this is the case, you must be debarred from this holy table of the Lord.

4. What think you of Christ, whom God *hath made to be sin for us?* Have you got such a view of his glory, his excellency and beauty, as convinces you that he is *altogether lovely?* And do you love him above all creatures whatsoever? Is your love to himself productive of love to his law, to his ordinances, and to his people? Do you study to give proper evidence of your love to him, by keeping his commandments? And is it this love that powerfully constrains you to set about keeping his dying command to-day, over the belly of many doubts and fears, and discouragements? In a word, are you presently humbled in the sight of God for the weakness of your love; and earnestly longing for an increase of this grace, that your love to him may correspond, as far as your finite nature will admit of, to his incomparable love to you? Then he warrants us to invite you to his holy table; *there will he give you his loves.* But, on the other hand, if you are no lover of the Lord Jesus Christ, nor ever saw him “fairer than the children of men;” if you love not his laws, but count his service a burden; if you love not his ordinances, but are *detained*, like

Doeg, *before the Lord*; if you imagine that you love him, or ever loved him enough; if you have never been sensible of your natural enmity against him, nor disposed to mourn on account of it, but apprehend that you have loved him all your days: then you are still under that dreadful *anathema*, which an inspired apostle pronounces against all them who “love not the Lord Jesus Christ;” and, while that is the case, you can have nothing to do with this love-feast, this pledge of his dying love.

5. Are you made really and inherently righteous, as well as righteous by imputation? You have heard, that when a person is *made the righteousness of God in Christ*, then the Spirit of Christ takes up his residence in his soul, and begins to imprint upon him an image of the righteousness of God: which he will make perfect in due time. Are you, then, a partaker of that Spirit? Is it your daily endeavour to “walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;” keeping always in your eye the law of Christ as your rule, the example of Christ as your pattern, and the glory of God in Christ as your ultimate end, in all that you do? Are you careful to obey every precept of the divine law, and that on every occasion? Do you consider it as the law of Christ, and obey from respect to his royal authority, as well as to the authority of God his Father? Do you obey in the strength of borrowed grace, and count yourself still an unprofitable servant after all that you can do? Then you are *made the righteousness of God in Christ*; and your *garments are of wrought gold*; for you prove yourself to be the king’s daughter, by being *all glorious within*. We, therefore, invite you to this holy table. But if
you

you indulge yourself habitually in any sin; if you satisfy yourself with obedience to the letter of the law, and do not consider its spirituality, nor its *exceeding breadth*; if you obey from a principle of slavish fear only, or in the vain hope of procuring for yourself a title to eternal life; if you pretend to obey by your own power, and *go not in the strength of the Lord God*; if you are not humbled for the legal and slavish principle that too often influences your obedience, for the many imperfections that attend it, and for the many sins that are intermixed with it;—then you are a stranger to the righteousness of Christ; for you have no principle of inherent righteousness in you; and you have no warrant to touch the sacred symbols of his body and blood with such unclean hands.

It is necessary that we be a little more particular here. You ought to examine your obedience by the several precepts of the law of God; and to consider what respect you have to each of them, in their order.

Is it your sincere desire, to *love the Lord your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind?* Have you chosen Christ's God for your God and Father; for your portion and everlasting inheritance? Are you concerned to worship, love, fear, obey, and honour him, as God; to believe and rejoice in him as your God; to take up the rest of your soul in him, to look for eternal happiness only in the enjoyment of him; and presently to cast away all your idols, of every kind, "to the moles and to the bats?" Have you a due respect for all the ordinances of his worship? And is it, through grace, your study to keep them pure and

entire? Do you consider it as your duty to contend earnestly for the purity of that doctrine and worship, and for the preservation and exercise of that government and discipline, which Christ hath instituted in his church? Do you make conscience of attending the dispensation of the word, and partaking in the sacraments, as occasion requires; of performing secret duty, and performing or attending family worship, morning and evening? And, in whatsoever act of outward worship you are engaged, are you concerned that the exercise of your heart correspond to your outward appearance? Are you careful, at all times, and in all respects, to make a holy and reverend use of all that whereby God makes himself known; avoiding all profane or irreverend mentioning of his names, titles, attributes, ordinances, words, or works? Are you peculiarly careful to avoid all false, needless, profane, or superstitious swearing; and all use of lots, in gaming or in trivial matters? Do you make conscience of vowing to the Lord your God, and paying your vows daily in the presence of his people? And are you concerned to sanctify the Sabbath to the Lord: calling it a "delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable;" and to honour him on that day, "not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words?" Then you are made the righteousness of God in Christ; for you love and honour the God of righteousness: and we invite you to his holy table.

But if you are under the power of habitual enmity against God; if you continue to pursue happiness among the creatures; if you allow that place in your heart and affections to any other, that is due to God only;

only; or allow yourself in applying to creatures, good or bad, for what God alone has to give; if you believe not God, nor trust in his salvation; if you indulge yourself in the neglect of any divine ordinance; if you satisfy yourself with a formal, careless, drowsy, or hypocritical attendance upon them; if you allow yourself, or countenance others, in adding to them, or taking from them; if you dare profane the name of God, by swearing, or imprecations, in ordinary conversation; by swearing false, unnecessary, or contradictory oaths, whether imposed by public authority, or required by any private society or corporation: if you are an avowed enemy to the duty of vowing and swearing to the Lord of Hosts, either publicly or personally; or are not careful to *perform to the Lord* your *oaths*, and other engagements; if you are a habitual breaker of the Sabbath, indulging yourself in profaning that holy day, by idleness, by carnal conversation, by worldly employments or recreations:— if any of those sins lie on your conscience, not repented of; or if you are not presently disposed to mourn before God for every breach of any of the precepts of the first table, that your heart is privy to; then you have not yet “attained to the law of righteousness:” and therefore we debar you from this holy table of the Lord.

In vain will you pretend to perform the duties of the first table, if you live in the neglect of those of the second. “If a man love not his brother whom he hath seen, how shall he love God whom he hath not seen?” Is it, therefore, your concern to *love your neighbour as yourself*; and to give evidence of it, by doing good, according to your ability and opportunity,

portunity, to all men, especially to them that are of the household of faith? More particularly, Are you conscientious in the performance of relative duties, according to that station in which adorable Providence has placed you; as husbands or wives, parents or children, masters or servants, ministers or people; as superiors, inferiors, or equals; in church, state, or family; taking the word of God for your rule, and performing your duties to one another, *as unto the Lord?* Are you careful to use all lawful endeavours to preserve your own life and the life of others; avoiding all immoderate use of meat, drink, physick, labour, or any thing that may tend to shorten your own life, or to hurt its well-being; and using every lawful mean to preserve your bodily health or restore it; guarding against all striking, quarrelling, and every thing that may tend to the taking away of your neighbour's life, or rendering it uncomfortable; and striving, by the exercise of meekness, gentleness, compassion, charity and forbearance, to contribute all in your power to make your neighbour's life easy and agreeable? Have you, like Job, *made a covenant with your eyes;* watching over them and your other senses, shunning all occasions and appearances of uncleanness, and all provocations thereunto; hating the garments spotted with the flesh, and counting yourself defiled, even by unclean imaginations? Are you conscientious in rendering to every man his own; and ready, according to your ability, to use every endeavour for promoting your neighbour's wealth and outward estate; being diligent, at the same time, in a lawful calling, and otherways careful to *provide* for yourself, and "for those of *your own house, things*
 " honest

“ honest in the sight of all men?” Do you wish and endeavour always to speak the truth to your neighbour, especially in matters of judgment and justice; “ to be valiant for the truth upon the earth;” to rejoice in your neighbour’s good name as in your own; and, in every respect, to follow the things that are true, honest, lovely, and of good report? And, in one word, Do you rejoice in all the good that your neighbour possesses, as if it were your own; and submit, or strive to submit, without repining, to all the evils that are in your lot; *committing* yourself, in all things, “ to him that judgeth righteously?” Then you bear the image of him who “ did no evil, neither was guile “ found in his mouth.” This is a sure evidence that you have been *made the righteousness of God in him*; and you are welcome to his holy table.

But if you hate your brother in your heart, and habitually shew that hatred in your practice, by the neglect of relative duties, or by the commission of the opposite sins; particularly, if you are an undutiful husband, a disobedient wife, a cruel or too indulgent parent, a prodigal or rebellious child, a rigid master, or a mere eye-servant; if you are a haughty superior, an usurping inferior, or an equal void of brotherly love: if you shew your hatred of your brother, by giving way to sinful anger, wrath, strife, sedition, or desire of revenge; by oppression, quarrelling, striking, wounding, or whatever else tends to render his life short or unhappy: if you indulge yourself in outward acts of uncleanness, in unclean imaginations, in filthy or obscene discourse; in wanton looks, immodest apparel, the use of lascivious songs, books, pictures, dances, stage-plays, or any thing else unbecoming the character

character of a *chaste virgin unto Christ*: if you are habitually guilty of theft, fraud, oppression, extortion, or injustice of any kind, whereby you may hurt the outward estate of your neighbour; or yet indulge yourself in idleness, luxury, drunkenness, wasteful gaming, vexatious law-suits, or any thing else tending to hurt your own: If you are a liar, a slanderer, a backbiter, a tale-bearer, a false witness, or perjured person; if you are an open enemy to any of the truths of God; if you receive not the truth in the love thereof, or if you hold the truth in unrighteousness: If you allow yourself in discontentment, envy, repining at the disposals of Providence, or “covetousness which is idolatry.”—In one word, If your conscience tells you, that, in any part of your past life, you have been guilty of any of these sins, and have never truly repented of them; if you think you have repented sufficiently already, and are not desirous presently to be humbled for them; or if you think you have always been so innocent, in all these respects, as to need no repentance on any such account;—then you are a stranger to inherent, and therefore to imputed righteousness; and we should do an injury to you, as well as be unfaithful to our great Master, if we did not, as we now do, debar you, while in your present condition, from this holy table of the Lord.

Now, if any of you that have received tokens find yourselves characterized among them who are unfit for a seat at the sacramental table, we charge you, as you shall answer to Christ himself, at his coming, that you venture not to partake in this holy ordinance, without first betaking yourselves, by faith, to him whom

whom God has made to be sin for us; that you may be made the righteousness of God in him. We call every intended communicant, to renew the actions of faith, repentance, love to God, to Christ, and to one another, and true evangelical obedience. In that way, let them who find themselves invited, come forward with cheerfulness; to get their graces confirmed and strengthened, their interest in Christ and his righteousness sealed, some comfortable fruits of this righteousness communicated; and both Christ himself and his Father manifested to them, as they never manifest themselves to the world.

The

*The Discourse at serving the first Table: Con-
taining an Use of Consolation.*

COMMUNICANTS,

THE approach that is made to God in this ordinance is very near and very solemn. The advantage of an acceptable participation in it is unspeakable; but the danger of eating and drinking unworthily is proportionably great. If you are accepted guests at this table, you shall have reason, through eternity, to praise God for the seat you occupy; but if you are not, there is danger that you shall eternally bewail what you are now employed about. God "will be sanctified in all that draw near unto *him*; and before all the people will *be* glorified." If he is not glorified by you in an active manner, by an acceptable performance of your duty, you have reason to fear lest he sanctify himself upon you, by consuming, with the fire of his jealousy, those who presume to offer strange fire upon his altar. How is it, then, that you hope to be accepted, or on what footing do you expect to "stand before this holy LORD God?" If you have any dependance upon your own doings, your attainments, or any grace that you have received; if your hopes are founded upon
any

any thing that ever was done by you, or any thing that ever was wrought in you; we can assure you, that you stand upon a wrong bottom. And after all the length you are come, we charge you that you provoke not the jealousy of the Master of the feast; by partaking of his provision that has been prepared at such a vast expence, in a way of hugging his rivals in your bosom. Either, therefore, give up with your own righteousness presently, and betake yourself to the divine righteousness of him whom God *made to be sin for us*; or rise from his table, and be gone.

But methinks I hear some poor soul *bemoaning himself thus*: ‘Alas! I dare not say that I have no dependence upon any thing of my own; but God is my witness that I desire to have none. I feel about myself a strange prevalence of legality; but it is matter of sincere grief to me: and I mean to offer my petition at the banquet of wine, for the destruction of it. Though heretofore I have counted my own works and attainments gain; henceforth it is my sincere desire to *count them loss*. Yea, doubtless, I wish to *count all things but loss for the excellency of Christ Jesus my Lord*; and to *count them but dung that I may win him, and be found in him*; not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ; the righteousness which is of God by faith.’ If this is your language, communicate; if you are but aiming to lisp out such language within yourself, however sensible you are of the prevalence of an opposite disposition; it is a sure evidence that you have been *made the righteousness of God in Christ*: and we are warranted to dispense unto you the symbols of his body

dy which was broken, and of his blood which was shed, when God *made him to be sin for us* : For,

Our Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, &c.

‘ *Do this in remembrance of my having been made*
 ‘ *sin for you. And do it in the grateful remembrance*
 ‘ *of that grace, by which you are made the righteous-*
 ‘ *ness of God in me. Do it in remembrance of that*
 ‘ *love which I bare to you, when I made my soul an*
 ‘ *offering for your sin; and of that tender care which*
 ‘ *I had of you, when I prepared you such a feast :*
 ‘ *even while I was struggling with the weight of your*
 ‘ *guilt, which I had taken upon my shoulders; and*
 ‘ *with the weight of that wrath, which my own eter-*
 ‘ *nal Father poured into my soul on that account.*’
 Yes, believing communicant; he knew that the traitor had struck his infamous bargain with the chief priests and elders, and sought an opportunity to betray him. He knew that it was but a few moments till his bitter agony would begin. Already was he sensible, that the prince of this world was a-coming. He came against him, armed with all his infernal rage; which was not now restrained by any exertions of the power of God, as it is when he makes his assaults upon you. He saw the bloody sword of divine justice already drawn; and the arm of omnipotence lifted up, to fetch the terrible stroke, that was to bring him to the dust of death; a stroke that would have driven the whole creation headlong into the lowest hell! Yet even in this situation he did not forget you. In this dreadful crisis it was, that he appointed for you this pledge of his dying love. And, that you might have a full feast,

In like manner, after supper, he took the cup, &c.

Now, communicant, you see, you feel, you taste what it is to be *made the righteousness of God in Christ*; and what is the unspeakable advantage of being *in him*. All the dainties of a sublunary world are not sufficient to constitute such a feast as that which you now enjoy. Nor can the hypocrite or the worldly man, amidst all their gains, and profits, and pleasures, and honours, and baubles of every kind, enjoy as much real happiness, as much solid delight and satisfaction, as you may have, in thus feeding upon the flesh and blood of a slain Redeemer. In this ordinance you have God's seal appended to that happy sentence, by which you was declared to be *the righteousness of God in Christ*. And as really as you have that bread and that cup among your hands, you have an inviolable security for all the fruits of Christ's purchase. You have no more reason to be afraid of condemnation than Christ himself has: He got up your discharge from the hand of divine justice, along with his own, in his resurrection from the dead.

You have full security for a complete and final victory over all your spiritual enemies, within you, as well as without you. When Christ was *made sin for you*, he *trod* those enemies "in his anger, and *trampled them in his fury*." Their *blood*, as well as his own, "was sprinkled upon *his vesture*;" and with it he "stained all his raiment." He now goes out against them, on your head, as *the Captain of salvation*, to subdue them all under your feet; and to make you "conquerors, and more than conquerors, through *him that loved you*." And surely, if he was a match for them all, when he had the wrath of an angry God

to conflict with, and had *none to help* or *uphold* him ; he cannot fail to be a match for them now, when he sits on the throne of his glory, and has all the hosts of heaven at his back.

You have security for the everlasting continuance of the love and favour of God towards you ; for it was to procure a vent for this love, that Christ was *made sin* for you. And now, “ this thing is as the “ waters of Noah unto *God* ; for as *he bath* sworn “ that the waters of Noah shall no more go over the “ earth, so *bath he* sworn that *he* will no more be “ wroth with *you*, nor rebuke *you*.” He may be wroth, in the manner in which a loving Father is angry with offending children ; and he will assuredly “ visit *your* iniquities with the rod, and *your* sins with “ chastisements.” But he will never *rebuke you in* judicial *wrath*, nor *chasten you in* vindictive *displeasure*.

You have security for a competency of the good things of this life, while you continue in life ; though you may, perhaps, be straitened in obtaining it. This also is contained in that covenant, of which the righteousness of Christ was the condition, and this sacrament is the seal. “ Bread shall be given thee, and “ thy water shall be sure.”

You have security for the gracious presence of God with you, and the perpetual inhabitation of his Spirit in you ; till your wilderness journey be finished, and your warfare wholly accomplished : for thus saith God the Father to Christ, “ My Spirit which is upon thee, “ and my words which are in thy mouth, shall not “ depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of
“ thy

“ thy feed, nor out of the mouth of thy feed’s feed,
 “ from henceforth even for ever.”

You have security for all necessary strength and grace, to enable you to perform all that is required of you; and to bear, in a becoming manner, all the trials and afflictions that shall be laid upon you: For thus saith he in whom you have been made righteous, “ My grace is sufficient for thee; and my strength is made perfect in weakness.”

You have security against the sting of death, and against a perpetual continuance in the state of the dead; for Christ, by that death which was the finishing part of his righteousness, and which you now commemorate, hath overcome and destroyed death itself; as well as “ him that had the power of death, that is, “ the devil.” And now he himself has “ the keys “ *both* of hell and death.”

You have security for the eternal and uninterrupted possession of “ an inheritance, incorruptible, and “ undefiled, and that fadeth not away;” of which Christ has taken possession in your name, and which is *reserved*, under his hand, *in heaven for you*.

You have security—But why should we attempt to enumerate the great things that are secured to you by your interest in the righteousness of Christ, and sealed over to you in this ordinance? The tongue of no mortal can recount them. The heart of no mortal can conceive them. “ Eye hath not seen, “ nor ear heard; neither have entered into the heart “ of man, the good things which God hath laid up “ for them that love him.” Eternity shall be spent in recounting, to the praise of divine grace, the happy fruits of this righteousness which you shall enjoy.

And

And eternity itself shall never see the theme exhausted. God himself, an infinite, eternal, and all-sufficient God, is the portion of that inheritance which you shall possess, in consequence of the wonderful transaction mentioned in the text. And surely neither men nor angels, nor any creature, nor all creatures together, shall ever be able to declare the value, the extent, the pleasantness, nor the glory of such an inheritance. *Comfort ye yourselves, and one another, with these words.* And, in the faith of all this, go from the table where all has been sealed to you. And the God of all grace and consolation shall not fail to go with you.

An

*An Use of Exhortation, delivered at the conclusion
of the Solemn Action.*

MY FRIENDS,

THE sacramental table is now drawn. And we shall conclude the work with a few exhortations, suitable to what you have been employed about, and natively arising from the subject of which you were hearing in the forenoon. The words of exhortation shall be addressed, first to communicants, and then to those who have been spectators only.

As for you that have been communicants, we charitably hope, that most of you have come to this solemn ordinance in obedience to the dying command of Christ; and with a view to "seek Jesus who was crucified." And some of you, we trust, have not missed your errand. Let such be thankful for their privilege, and remember to what they owe it. All has been bestowed upon you for his sake, who was *made sin for you*. And all is the fruit of your having been *made the righteousness of God in him*. "Not for your sakes, do I this, saith the LORD God; be it known unto you, but for mine holy name's sake." You have no reason to be proud of your attainment: it is none of your procuring. All is the gift of free

and fovereign grace. “Where is boasting then? It “is *totally* excluded.”

Beware of resting in your privilege, or fondly talking, like Peter, on the mount of transfiguration, of *building tabernacles*. It is but a transient visit that you can expect here. What you have attained, of this kind, will quickly be gone. Perhaps it is gone already; and you have begun to suspect that all was delusion. But your righteousness endureth for ever. You shall never be cut off from God’s favour, nor shut out of his family. Never shall you want a share in his love, nor an interest in any of the happy fruits of this righteousness with which you are clothed. You must learn, therefore, to be denied to such manifestations, as well as to every thing else that you enjoy in this world; and to live always *by faith on the Son of God*. Even these you must count “but loss and dung, for the excellency of Christ,” and of his righteousness. Nor must you have any dependance upon them, or make any mention of them, as any part of the ground of your pleadings for after benefits. Yet you must not think yourself at liberty utterly to neglect what God has done for you, or to make what use of it you please. It is a part of the talent which he has bestowed upon you, and of which he will require a strict account. One end of all such visits is to encourage weak faith. And you ought to improve them as an argument, by which you may put unbelief to silence. You have seen the promise of God accomplished in part; let it embolden you to hope for a full accomplishment of it in due time. You have seen him present to-day in his ordinances; let it encourage you to depend upon him for his promised

mised presence in every case. And since he has begun to do this for you; trust in him, that he *will not fail you, nor forsake you; till he have done all for you that he has spoken to you of.*

Some of you may be complaining, that hitherto you have not seen him, nor had any comfortable fellowship with him on this occasion. But beware of denying his goodness, and so depriving him of any part of that praise which is due to him. He may have been graciously present with you, though you have not sensibly perceived it. And he has been present, if your desire after him is increased; if you are grieved for the apprehension of his absence, and disposed to persevere in seeking him. Persevere in seeking him; and in due time you shall assuredly find him. Sometimes he “withdraws himself and is gone,” even when his presence is most confidently expected; that he may rouse his people from their bed of sloth, and set them to seek him in earnest. *Ask then, till you receive. Continue to seek, and you shall find: persist in knocking, and it shall be opened unto you.* While you mourn for the want of his sensible presence, rejoice in the inviolable security or the ground of your faith. The righteousness of Christ is of uninterrupted and perpetual efficacy. And therefore, if you are really clothed with it, the want of sensible communion does not expose you, in the smallest degree, to divine wrath; nor, in the least, invalidate your title to eternal enjoyment. The promise of God is as sure as ever; and the channel, through which promised grace vents, is as open. “God spared not his own Son; but, *having made him to be sin, he delivered him up*” to wrath and the curse

for you : “ And how shall he not with him also freely give *you* all things?”

You have all been witnessing a good confession before God, angels, and men, at the communion table. You have been saying, in the most solemn manner, “ In the Lord have I righteousness and strength; “ and in him alone will I glory: My beloved is mine, “ and I am his.” While you took Christ for your Lord and Husband, your Prophet, your Priest, your King, your All; you likewise gave away to him, yourself, and all that you possess, and all that you can do, either in time or through eternity. See that you never go back, nor turn from him at all. You will go back, and attempt to alienate what you have now devoted; if ever you employ yourself, your time, or your talents, in the service of another. You will be guilty of the same sin, if ever you find fault with the manner in which he shall dispose of you, or of any thing that is yours, in the course of adorable providence. Having given all over to him, you can have no right to dispose of any part, unless for promoting his glory in the manner that himself requires; nor can you have any right to repine, because he disposes of what you have called his own, in the manner that seems good in his sight. Nay, you have good reason to be pleased with his disposals; for he will assuredly manage all in the manner that shall tend most to your advantage. And you shall have a good account of all that is “ committed to him against that day.”

It is more than probable, that some of you may never have another opportunity of joining in this solemn ordinance. You may never “ more drink of the fruit “ of this vine, till *you* drink it new with *Christ* in his
“ Father’s

“Father’s kingdom.” But this need be no bad news to you. You shall have no reason to lament the loss of sermons or sacraments, when admitted to the table above, where you shall see and enjoy, and feed upon those things immediately, that are only seen darkly, and at a distance, through these glasses. Keep, therefore, your evidences always in view. I do not mean only those marks of a gracious state that you see, or have seen about yourself; but chiefly that full security which God has given you, in his word of grace and promise, for the enjoyment of eternal happiness; and that spotless righteousness which is the sole ground of your title to all. Being *made the righteousness of God in Christ*, you need neither be afraid to “walk through the valley of the shadow of death,” nor to stand before the tribunal of God, nor to enter upon an eternal and unchangeable estate; for still you are safe under that covering. In this “garment of wrought gold, *you shall infallibly* be brought “into the palace of the king;” even into his presence-chamber, and there you shall abide for ever.

As to you that have only been spectators of this solemn action, we likewise charitably hope, that many of you have come hither with the language of the Greeks in your heart, if not in your mouth, *We would see Jesus*. Let all such rejoice; he is really here to be seen. And you cannot be more desirous to see him, and to enjoy communion with him, than he is to be seen of you, and to hold the most intimate communion with you. If you wish to feed upon him in his word; there he has made “unto all people a feast of fat things.” And you shall have yourself to blame, if you go away without your errand. You

have reason, indeed, to beware, lest you provoke him, by your sin, to with-hold from you the sense of his presence. And, particularly, you had need to beware, lest your being mere spectators of this work be one reason why you have not seen him so clearly as you desire.

We know there are some of you who have joined in such work in time past, who yet for a good while bygone have not joined in it, either with us or with any other society. And surely, though such persons may be real friends of Christ, they act a very unfriendly part in this matter. Can it be your duty to continue in the neglect of the dying command of Christ? Is his death unworthy to be remembered? Or, are you satisfied, for your part, that the remembrance of it should be lost? Were every person to follow your example, this ordinance would cease in the church; and the public commemoration of Christ's death would cease with it.

I know there are others of you, who have not only attended with us to-day; but who attend ordinances in this congregation almost every Sabbath, unless when they go to join in sacramental work, perhaps once a-year, in another communion. Their conduct is not more reasonable than that of the others. If you can, with a safe conscience, receive the seals of the covenant in that communion, why should you leave it in other respects? If you cannot have satisfaction in your conscience, to attend other ordinances in that communion, how can you be safe in attending and partaking in this most solemn ordinance? Can they have a right to dispense the sacrament, who have no regular call to preach the gospel? Can you be justified

tified in receiving the symbols of Christ's body and blood, from the hands of those from whom you hear not, nor expect to hear the doctrines of the cross of Christ? Can you hope that they should be the instruments of feeding your souls in the sacrament, who administer poison to them in their doctrine? Or how can it be for the glory of Christ, or of his Father, that you should receive the seals of the covenant of grace from those who would send you back to the covenant of works for salvation; by teaching you to seek righteousness, "as it were by the works of the law?" Is this an ordinance of less importance, or an ordinance that may be more safely trifled with than any other? Nay, my dear brethren. While your conduct is so inconsistent with itself, you need not be surprised that you have little success in seeking Christ, either with us or with them. You even have matter of thankfulness, if he *make not a breach upon you*; for surely you seek him not "after the due order."

Some may, perhaps, have attended on this occasion, with no other view than to satisfy a vain curiosity; from the same motive which would have induced them to attend a puppet-show, or the tricks of a mountebank. Such have reason to be thankful that they live under the mild and gracious dispensation of the New Testament. Such a curiosity might, one day, have cost you dear. The ordinances of God are of too much importance, God himself is a Being of too much majesty, to be waited on for mere pastime. You shall find, in a little, that your attendance here was really a serious matter, whether you meant it so or not. It will either contribute to your eternal happiness, or to your everlasting misery. The word of
God,

God, which you have heard, will not *return to him empty*. It will either be “the favour of life unto life, *or the favour of death unto death,*” in every person present.

But there is a method by which you may both obtain what you came for, and be accepted with God in your attendance. There has been set before you something that as much deserves your attention, and is as much calculated to gratify a sanctified curiosity, as any thing in heaven or in earth. Come, then, behold a fight that never was equalled in God’s creation, nor never will! The eternal Son of God *made sin for us; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*. And this is something in which you are deeply interested; it ought not to be looked upon with indifference. You, too, are a guilty sinner in the sight of God, however little you ever thought about it. As such you stand condemned, while in your natural estate, by the dreadful sentence of the law-curse. And there is no other way to escape the execution of that sentence, but by having an interest in this amazing transaction. The sacrifice of Christ is exhibited to you, as a full atonement for all your sins. His righteousness is in your offer, as a garment that will cover all the shame of your spiritual nakedness, and effectually screen you from the tempest of divine ire, to which you will otherwise stand exposed through all the ages of an endless eternity. Take this righteousness home with you: God makes you welcome to it for nought. And improve it in all your dealings with the great Judge of all the earth; for deal with him you must, however little inclination you have for it; and you can never deal with him comfortably

fortably on another footing. In this way you shall never have occasion to attend upon divine ordinances, in time to come, without a better motive than that which brought you hither.

In one word, Whoever you are, whatever you have been, or whatever is the motive of your attendance; you are by no means unconcerned in what you have seen and heard to-day. Perhaps you may have "stood all the day idle in the market-place;" but you were not your own friends in continuing so. The market of free grace is not yet over. And we conjure you not to depart, till you take *the righteousness of God* along with you. Perhaps you have never been sensible of your need of it; but you will assuredly be sensible of it another day. He, whom God *has made to be sin for us*, is likewise constituted, by the same authority, the final Judge of the quick and the dead. It is but a short time when he will "come with clouds; and every eye shall see him:" and you shall see him among the rest. He will come to "take vengeance on all that know not God," and a more dreadful vengeance on all "that obey not the gospel." Now he stands among you, with the arms of his mercy stretched out; making a free and full offer of his righteousness, and of all the rich fruits of it, to every son and daughter of Adam that now hears me. But then he will sit upon his "glorious high throne, *with his weighty rod of iron*" in his hand; ready to "break in pieces, as a potter's vessel," every person who shall be found to have finally rejected his gracious offers. Nothing else will then stand you in stead, if you are found without that righteousness which is now offered you. And you must appear without it

then

then, if you continue to despise it *now*; for there are no offers of it in the grave, whither you are going. For any thing that you know, this may be the last offer that ever you may enjoy. And how will you raise your guilty head, or look your inexorable Judge in the face at that day, if you despise it? Thus saith the Holy Ghost, “Now is the accepted time: behold, “now is the day of salvation. To-day, if ye will “hear his voice, harden not your heart, as in the pro-“vocation.” If you do, your blood shall be upon your own head: God is free of it; I trust so are his messengers. And you shall eternally curse yourself, for your obstinacy in unbelief. But, whatever be the case with you then, be it known unto you, that “God’s righteousness is brought near, *even to those* “among you that are stout-hearted and far from right-“eousness.” And as truly as *God has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin*; so truly shall it be your own fault if you are not, this very evening, *made the righteousness of God in him.*

The God of all mercy grant that it may be so; and to his name be praise.

S E R M O N III.

*God's Covenant with the New Testament Church
considered.*

P A R T I.

HEB. viii. 10.

—I WILL BE TO THEM A GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE
TO ME A PEOPLE.

ALL the genuine *saints* of God are persons that *have made a covenant with him by sacrifice.* And none but such shall be gathered to him, in that general assembly which Christ will summon to attend him at his final coming to judgment; though, alas! there are many of a very different character in the worshipping assemblies of his people here. I presume there are none present who are not in covenant with God by visible profession and appearance; all the members of the visible church are so. Many of us have professed to recognize and adhere to our covenant with God, in the most open and explicit manner.

ner. And this day we are met to have it ratified and confirmed, both on God's part and on ours, by a solemn sacrifice. It is fit that, in the entry, we should take some brief view of the tenor and substance of that covenant which subsists between God and us. You have it in the words of this text. God has graciously engaged, in this covenant, to be our God; and we, by our acceptance of it, become engaged, through his grace and strength, that we shall be his people.

The scope of the Spirit of God in this chapter is, to illustrate the superiority of Christ's priesthood to that of Aaron and his family. And this he does by two arguments.

The *first* is taken from the place where his priesthood is finally exercised; and he insists upon it from the beginning to the sixth verse. The substance of his reasoning is this: That must needs be the most excellent priesthood, which belongs to, and is exercised in, the most excellent temple or sanctuary. Aaron's priesthood was exercised in a tabernacle which was made by the hands of men, according to a pattern given from heaven. But the priesthood of Christ belongs to the heavenly sanctuary, of which the other was no more than a type, a model or figure: And therefore the priesthood of Christ must excel the Aaronical priesthood, as far as the house itself excels the model of it; as far as the type excels the antitype; as far as the "true tabernacle, which God pitched and not man," is superior to the tabernacle which Moses erected in the wilderness.

The *second* argument, and that upon which he mainly insists, is drawn from the difference between the two covenants, to which these two priesthoods did

did respectively belong. Upon this he insists from verse sixth to the end of the chapter, and reasons in the following manner: No person will refuse, that the most excellent covenant must have the most excellent priesthood. But the covenant to which the priesthood of Christ belongs, is incomparably superior to that with which the priesthood of Aaron was connected; as being "established upon better promises," and as being introduced on account of the faultiness of the other, to the utter superseding of it. If the second covenant had not been superior to the first, there had been no occasion to set aside the one, and introduce the other. The priesthood of Christ, therefore, must be as much superior to that of Aaron, as the clear and spiritual dispensation of the covenant of grace, which obtains under the New Testament, is superior to that typical, shadowy dispensation, under which the church of Israel lived; from the time that the priesthood was settled in Aaron's family till the coming of Christ.

In the illustration of this argument, he introduces a quotation from the prophecy of Jeremiah*; wherein it is expressly foretold, that God would make a new covenant with the church in New Testament days, widely different from that which he made with the people of Israel when he brought them out of Egypt, and incomparably superior to it; as being incapable of being broken or dissolved; of waxing old or fading away; and as containing promises the most excellent and precious.

In the words of Jeremiah, which are quoted by the Apostle, we have the substance of the covenant, which was

* Jer. xxxi. 31,—34.

was to be made with the church in gospel days, contained in various promises, which are recited in this and the two following verses; whereby it appears, that no other covenant is intended but the covenant of grace, which was originally made with Christ from all eternity; and is now exhibited in its naked simplicity, without types and shadows, and actually made with believers through Christ. These promises are four in number.

1. A promise of conformity to the law, and so to the image of God, of which his law is a transcript. "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts;" that is, 'I will have my law so incorporated with their nature, that they shall run with pleasure in the way of new obedience. I will imprint the knowledge of these laws in their understandings; and I will give them a disposition of will, sincerely to love, and cordially to obey them.'

2. A promise of a new and permanent relation to God; in the words of the text. By the Aaronic covenant he became related to the nation of Israel, as his *peculiar people*: but they cast him off from being their God; and he was, at last, provoked to say to them, *Lo-ammi, ye are not my people*. But by Christ's covenant, a relation is constituted between him and the members of the New Testament Church, as permanent as that everlasting covenant itself. Still he continues to be their God; and they shall never cease to be to him a peculiar and chosen people.

3. A promise of the saving and experimental knowledge of God; arising, not barely from human instruction, but from endearing intimacy, fellowship, and communion with him. "And they shall not teach every

“ every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least even to the greatest of them:” That is, they shall not need to teach one another, as if any of them were totally ignorant of God; for every one of them shall attain, through happy experience, such a knowledge of him as a man has of his intimate friend, whose face he frequently sees, and with whom he converses familiarly. Thus they shall have a knowledge of him much superior to any thing that can arise from human institution or instruction.

4. As the foundation of all the rest, there is a promise of restoration to God’s favour; by the abolition of all that guilt, which formerly separated between him and them. “ For I will be merciful to their unrighteousnesses; and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” It is manifest that this promise, though last express, must be first accomplished. The particle *for*, with which it is introduced, plainly imports so much. It is the accomplishment of this that paves the way for the performance of all the rest.

It is the *second* of these promises, of which I propose, through divine assistance, to speak a little at present. It may be viewed as comprehending all the rest: and, indeed, as containing the whole substance of the covenant of grace; as it is exhibited to us in the gospel, and actually made with us, in the day of our union to Christ.

The promise consists of two parts: for here we are told, *1st*, What God will be to the church, and to particular members of it, in New Testament days;

I will

I will be to them a God: and, 2dly, What the Church, and her particular members, shall be to God; and they shall be to me a people.

Were we to attempt a more particular division of the words, we might observe, in the first part of them, the four following things.

1. The party speaking, or promising, in the pronoun *I*; meaning God himself. He it is who proposes to make a covenant with us: And to him it belongs, to prescribe and determine all the contents of it. It was an act of divine condescension in him, to make a covenant with Adam in his innocent estate: much greater is the condescension that appears in his making a covenant with us. That ever he would condescend so far, none had a right to promise but himself.

2. The party spoken of, or concerning whom the promise is made, in the pronoun *them*; referring to "the house of Israel and the house of Judah," mentioned in ver. 8. This is to be understood of the New Testament Church, of which the house of Israel and of Judah were typical. And of that privilege, which is here promised to the church at large, every genuine member of the church is honoured to partake.

3. The relation in which God promises to stand to the church. He will be to her *a God*. He does not only mean, that he will always continue to be God; and to exercise such a dominion over the church, as his being the supreme God entitles him to exercise over all the creatures. But he will be *her God*, in a manner peculiar to herself; and, as God, will stand related to her in another manner than he does to any other part of the world.

4. The

4. The certainty of the event, intimated in the word *will*. God's words are not yea and nay. His promise, therefore, affords the most ample security for the thing promised. "Hath he said, and will he not do it? Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"

The other branch of the text might be divided in the same manner. But, passing this, we proceed to discourse a little more fully from the subject, by enquiring,

I. What is imported in the words more generally?

II. What is more particularly importd in God's promising to be our God?

III. What—in our being his people?

Having briefly considered each of these, we shall conclude with some improvement of the subject.

I. WE return to consider the general import of the words. And the manner of expression here used, plainly imports the following things:

I. That a covenant shall be made, and a covenant-relation shall subsist, between God and every member of the New Testament church. At Sinai, God made a covenant with the whole family of Israel; not only with the generation then present, but with their posterity "till the promised Seed should come." In virtue hereof, every member of the Jewish church was in covenant with God, in respect of his outward and visible state. In like manner, though the covenant of grace was originally made with Christ from all eternity, and all the terms of it fixed unalterably; yet he graciously exhibits that covenant to all who are within the church, proposing to make the same co-

venant with every one of them. Hence that gracious promise; *I will make with you an everlasting covenant, even the sure mercies of David* *. And he actually makes it with every believer, by granting them an interest in all that it contains; while they are said to make it with him, by freely consenting to all the terms and articles of it, as they were fixed, and agreed upon, betwixt the Father and the Son from eternity. By virtue of the external dispensation of the covenant, under which he lives, and of his own Christian profession, every member of the visible church is externally and visibly in covenant with God. But, alas! this will avail us nothing, when we cease to be members of the visible church, as we must all do at death, unless we are really and savingly brought "within the bond of the covenant;" and so related to God as our God in Christ.

This is it that God promises in the text. Not only does he engage to make an offer of the covenant of grace to us; he likewise engages to enable us to embrace it. And in this light should the promise be considered by all that hear the gospel. You are not to apprehend, that when God has made the proposal of being your God, and taking you for one of his people, he has done all that to which he has bound himself by this promise. Neither must you think, that it lies upon you, by any any strength or ability of your own, to lay hold of God's covenant; to embrace his gracious offer, and so to enter into a saving relation to him. This would leave you in a condition as dismal as if the covenant had never been published in your ears: for you are as incapable, of yourself, to exercise that faith by which you are interested in God

as

* Isa. lv. 3.

as your God, as you are to perform all that obedience which the covenant of works requires. But God has engaged to make the relation complete, and to do all that is necessary, in order to your being interested in him as your God, or to your being accepted of him as one of his people. And you ought to trust him for all that is included in your being brought within "the bond of *his* covenant."

Indeed there are many, to whom this promise is directed, who never enjoy any saving relation to God; being neither interested in him as their God, nor brought in among the number of his people. But, in this case, the promise is not accomplished to them. Nor is there any promise in the Bible that is accomplished to all to whom it is directed. Every promise is directed to all who hear the gospel. All are equally welcome to embrace it. And God is ready and willing to accomplish it to all. But, in the event, no promise is accomplished, save only to those who receive it. So it is with this. In the dispensation of the gospel, God is proposing, offering, and declaring his willingness, to bring every sinner into such a relation to himself as the text expresses. And he will make good his offer to all but such as obstinately refuse it. If there is any person among you, to whom this promise is not this day accomplished, it will be owing to one of these two things; either your unwillingness to be so related to him, or your attempting to bring yourself into that relation, by doing some part yourself of that work which God alone can do, instead of depending upon him for all. Your only method is to say *Amen* to the promise, as the word of God; and to look to him for the full accomplish-

ment of it. You should aim at taking God for your God, and giving yourself away to him as one of his people; but still you are to trust him for that faith by which you may do so, as well as for every thing else that you may expect from him, in the character of your God. "By grace are ye saved, through faith; *but that faith is not of yourselves, it is the gift of God*.*" Yet, instead of deferring the exercise of faith, because it is *not of yourselves*, you ought rather to set about it with the greater confidence of success; as being assured, that seeing God has promised to complete the relation between him and you, he will not fail to give you that faith which is essentially necessary to such a relation; but will enable you to exercise it in such a manner that he shall really and eventually be your God, and you shall be one of his people.

2. The words import, that both parties, so related to one another, shall behave in a due and becoming manner, agreeable to the relation in which they stand. It is observable, that the LORD says not only "I will be their God, and they shall be my people." The expression is much more emphatic: *I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.* In the original languages it is still more so. Both here, and in the passage from which the words are quoted, it literally runs thus, *I will be to them for a God, and they shall be to me for a people.* If we compare this with other passages, where a similar mode of expression is used, we shall find it to mean, not only that he will be related to us as our God, and we to him as his people; but also, that he will be to us, and do for us, whatever

* Eph. ii. 8.

whatever may be justly expected from a God, in behalf of those whom he acknowledges as his people; and that we, on the other hand, shall behave towards him in a manner corresponding to the relation; performing all that worship and obedience, and giving him all that honour and glory, that is due from any people to their God.

On God's part, there is no reason to suspect any failure as to the relation. It is impossible for him to act inconsistently with any relation in which he stands. And therefore his engagement to be our God, affords unquestionable security that he will do all for us which that relation requires. But he knows our frailty; and, in condescension to the weakness of our faith, explicitly binds himself to do all that for us, which is proper to be done by a God for his people. This was the more necessary, because he "knew that *we* would "deal very treacherously;" and would fall egregiously short of a regular performance of our duty to him. Though this can never provoke him to withhold from us any part of what he has promised us, if once we are really in covenant with him; yet it often proves an occasion of suspicion on our part. When we are conscious that our behaviour towards him is undutiful, and justly deserves that he should cast us off; we are in danger of apprehending that he will do so. But to remove all suspicions of this kind, and to encourage us, even when iniquity prevails against us, to depend upon him for all the happy fruits of our relation to him; he has bound himself to *be to us for a God*, and still to deal with us according to that character, even when we seem very

unlike his people, and behave in a very undutiful manner towards him.

Even this is not all, believer, that this promise warrants you to expect. You have in it likewise a full security, that you shall be enabled to walk in agreeableness to this relation; and to behave towards God as becomes his covenanted people. You are very sensible that such a security is necessary. You are no Christian if you know not that you can neither behave dutifully to God nor to men in any relation in which you stand, unless you are assisted by divine grace. And therefore to bring you into a saving relation to God, without affording you grace to be dutiful in that relation, would only be to afford you daily opportunities of dishonouring him more atrociously than you otherwise could have done. But neither your weakness, nor your remaining wickedness, shall ever be suffered to prevent your behaving, in some acceptable degree, as God's people. It is true, that, while you continue in this world, you will always have imperfections and corruptions about you. You will ever find, in your conduct towards God, much matter of mourning and humiliation before him. But he has graciously promised to overlook all these, in his judicial procedure with regard to you. Having *forgiven your iniquity, he will remember your sins no more*, as the context assures you. It is equally true, that whenever you begin to be confident of your own ability, on the one hand; or, on the other hand, to be diffident of his promised assistance; he may, by such means, be provoked, to leave you to catch a fall; that you may learn to be the more dependent upon him for the future. But you may be assured, that he

he will never suffer you totally or finally to fall from your dutifulness. And, as often as you are enabled to renounce your own sufficiency, and to "go in the strength of the LORD God;" you shall find yourself assisted and helped in such a manner, that you shall perform the duties of your relation, with acceptance before God, and with comfort to your own soul. Having *put his fear into your heart*, himself will take effectual care, that you *shall not depart from him* *.

3. The words import, that the relation itself, and the due behaviour of the relatives, on both sides, shall be wholly the work of God. God hath promised, without reserve, both that *he will be our God, and that we shall be his people*. And he does not suspend his faithfulness, either upon the power, or upon the will of any other. Having made a promise, he does not leave the accomplishment of it, in whole or in part, to any creature. What he has said, himself will also do; and upon him only should be our dependance for all.

That he only must accomplish the promise on the one part, is apparent at first view. None can make him our God but himself, neither can any other oblige him to act in agreeableness to the relation. It is matter of deep wonder, that he should condescend to become your God, or lay himself under any engagements to that purpose. But when he has come under such engagements, and is your God in consequence thereof; it is manifest, that none can do that for you which corresponds to the relation, but himself. He has not engaged to be your God by proxy; nor will he leave it to any other to perform those
acts

* Jer. xxxii. 40.

acts of grace and goodness to you, which that relation warrants you to expect.

But what is most wonderful is God's engaging for your part as well as his own. When a man makes a proposal of marriage to a woman, however advantageous the match be for her, he has not power to incline her to it; she may reject it, however strongly he may press her to accept it. But when God proposes to *betrothe* you to himself, he does not barely make the proposal, and leave you to deliberate and determine upon it by yourself. Finding you so blind to your own interest, that you would certainly reject his offer, though the most advantageous that ever could be made you, and though it is enforced with the most cogent arguments; he powerfully inclines and determines you to embrace it. He does not oblige you to it against your will. Neither does he subdue your will only by such force as would be necessary in dealing with "the horse or the mule, that have no understanding." He sets before you those motives that are proper to influence you in accepting his gracious proposal. He opens your understanding to perceive the weight of them. He kindly subdues your will; at the same time, destroying that enmity which was in it, against himself, and against all that is like him. He thus makes you sensible what is your true interest; and, at the same time, determines you to fall in with it, in a rational manner. Thus it is, that a *willing people* is brought to Christ *in the day of his power* *.

When the marriage relation commences, the man engages to perform his duty to his wife, according to the

* Psal. cx. 3.

the nature and intimacy of the relation. But, on the other hand, the wife also becomes engaged to perform her duty to him. And the performance of her engagements lies wholly upon herself, as much as the performance of his engagements lies upon him. It would be absurd to expect that the husband should perform the wife's duties as well as his own, or that he should lay himself under any engagements to that purpose. But here, in this wonderful covenant, God engages his faithfulness for the performance of our part as well as his own. Not only does he engage to do all that for us, that is agreeable to his relation to us, as he is our God; he likewise engages for all those duties that we owe to him, as being his people. And he is as good as his word; for he both does all that for us that a God may be expected to do for his people; and enables us to do all that which a people ought to do for their God. In respect of the first of these, he does all by himself, and we do nothing; and, in respect of the last, though we labour and are active in the performance of our duty, still "it is God" that worketh in *us*, both to will and to do of his "good pleasure." And when our duty is performed, the work is much more God's than our own. As Paul says of his life; so may every Christian say of all the duties of his calling. *I live, says he, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.* 'I do my duty,' may you say, 'as becomes one of God's people; yet not I, but my God does it in me, and by me; to him be all the glory.'

Christians, indeed, when they enter into covenant with God, not only consent that he be their God, and do for them what corresponds to that relation; they also

also make a dedication of themselves to him as his people, and engage to perform to him all those duties that a people owe to their God. But then their engagements are founded, not upon any apprehension that they have of their own strength or sufficiency for the performance of them; but solely upon the grace and faithfulness of God, as pledged in his word of promise. They engage to nothing but what God has previously engaged to work in them and by them; and they engage only because God has engaged before them. Their engagements, therefore, are all on God's head, not their own; and may be considered as a profession of their faith, as well as a declaration of their resolution. They declare it as their resolution, only because they know and believe that God has given it as his promise, and will see to the accomplishment of it. As this is the exercise of every Christian, in the day of believing, so it is the open and explicit language of every acceptable covenanter. And it is this language to which every worthy communicant sets his seal at the Lord's table. Let this be the language of your heart, intended communicant, in the view of a solemn ratification of your covenant, by a symbolical commemoration of the sacrifice of Christ. And through your whole life, in all your endeavours to pay your vows, keep the same promise of God in your eye, as your only security for all that grace and strength, by which they may be paid acceptably. Trust him confidently for the communication of that grace in the moment of need. Stand not at a distance from any duty, on account of your inability to perform it; but go forward, at the call of God, to "break through troops," however numerous, and to "leap over

“over walls,” though high as heaven; go forward
 “in the strength of the Lord God, making mention
 “of his righteousness, even of his only*.”

II. THE next thing proposed in the method was, to enquire, more particularly, what is imported in God’s being our God; or what we are to expect, as an accomplishment of this part of the promise? We shall only consider it, at present, as importing the two things following.

I. That God will graciously bring us to have a real and saving interest in him, as our God. This is far from being the case with all mankind. It is so with none but those who are brought “within the bond
 “of *this* covenant.” Even they who enjoy this privilege do not comprehensively understand it. And, as for others, no language can give them any tolerable idea of. The person who has God for his God, has an interest in him, as the fountain of being, and of all blessedness; an interest in all that happiness which consists in, or arises from the enjoyment of him. He is interested in every perfection of the divine nature; and, therefore, whatever imperfections, corruptions, and infirmities, he finds about himself, he considers himself as complete in God. Though foolish and ignorant in himself, he fears not the effects of his own folly; for eternal Wisdom is his guide. Though he is weak in himself, and without any help of man, he can work, and fight, and conquer, like a champion; for his strength is omnipotence. He is disposed to “deal very treacherously, and was called
 “a transgressor from the womb;” hence he knows
 himself

* Psa. lxxi. 16.

himself to be in continual danger of breaking God's covenant; and yet he is assured, that his covenant with God shall never be broken; he dare both vow and hope to pay his vows, because infinite faithfulness is his stay and his security. All the perfections of the divine nature are his; and it adds greatly to his happiness, that the improvement of these perfections for his advantage lies not upon himself. God, who has made a gift of all to him, has likewise engaged to employ and improve them all for him, in the manner that shall most effectually conduce to his spiritual and eternal welfare. All that God possesses is likewise made his, by virtue of this covenant; and God has bound himself to manage all for him to the best advantage. It is often but little that he commits into his own hand, and gives him the actual possession of for the present. But whatever the wide creation affords, God so disposes of it, that the person could not enjoy so much benefit by it, if he had it immediately under his own hand. Yea, the uncreated treasures of eternity are all his: "An inheritance, " incorruptible and undefiled, and unfading, is reserved in heaven for *him*." God himself is this inheritance. And because he is *his God*, he will make him completely and eternally happy in the enjoyment of himself. *This honour, this hope, have all his saints.* Now, in order to our having such an interest in God, two things are necessary; both which are secured by this promise, and both are accomplished in behalf of every one who is brought within the bond of this covenant.

(1.) That God make a gracious grant and offer of himself to us, declaring us welcome to claim an interest

terest in him, and to look for the rest and happiness of our souls in the enjoyment of him. Without such an offer it would be impossible that ever we should be interested in him as our God. Such a happiness is incapable of being purchased by any creature. Much less can it be purchased by any of mankind, in our present impoverished state. As it cannot be purchased, neither can it be given by any other but God himself. Therefore, if he is to be our God, he must first make a free grant and offer of himself to us in that character. Such a grant he really makes in the dispensation of the gospel; not only to all who are within the covenant, but to every person who hears the gospel, or has a Bible among his hands. This grant is so often repeated in the Scriptures, that to produce particular instances of it were superfluous. One is contained in the text. And every sinner in this assembly may consider it as made to himself, as well as every sinner. In giving you such an offer, God exhibits to you all that you need, all that ever you can possibly enjoy; and infinitely more than you are able, or ever shall be able, to comprehend. He is the infinite, the eternal, the immutable, and all-sufficient Jehovah; the heaven of heavens cannot contain him; the conceptions of angels cannot comprehend him; to that light in which he dwells, no created eye can approach: yet he makes you a free gift of himself! He is *the possessor of HEAVEN and EARTH*, yet along with himself he gives you all that he possesses! "He doth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of *the earth*;" yet he freely engages to do all that he can do for your advantage! He is the only portion that is adapted

ed to those extensive desires that are implanted in every rational soul; and he engages to be our portion, to communicate himself to you in the highest degree that your capacity will admit of; and to make you perfectly and eternally happy in the enjoyment of himself. You are not, indeed, to look for the full enjoyment of him in this world; because, while sin hangs about you, you are not capable of it. But if you are determined to accept this wonderful grant, he will allow you even here, a foretaste of that enjoyment with which you shall be blessed hereafter. He will gradually *subdue* your *iniquities*, and bring you gradually forward to a state of fitness for unrestrained enjoyment. And, as soon as you are capable of it, you shall assuredly be “filled with all the fulness of “God*.

(2.) It is likewise necessary that he enable us to accept this gracious offer, and really to chuse him as our God and portion. There can be no covenant without the consent of both parties. God has here engaged that there shall be a covenant between him and us, by virtue of which he will be our God. And surely this contains an engagement, that both parties shall give their consent to the happy compact. God gives his consent in this promise itself; and he likewise engages that we shall give ours. This engagement cannot be founded upon any trust that God has in us, as being, of ourselves, disposed to give such consent: he well knows that we have neither power nor will to do so. It is founded on his own gracious purpose and resolution, powerfully and efficaciously to determine us to do so. Nor does he ever become
our

* Eph. iii. 19.

our God, till his promise is accomplished in this as well as in the former respect. Every person who is brought within the bond of the covenant, is, that moment, enabled to make choice of him as his God, on the footing of the condescending grant above mentioned,—and to take up the rest of his weary soul in him. The great Head of the covenant has set the example that is followed by all the members of his body. He is represented as saying, with unspeakable satisfaction, “God is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup; thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; and I have a goodly heritage*.” And the Scriptures afford various instances, in which this language has been imitated by the spiritual seed of Christ. Asaph, when recovered from temptation, expresses himself thus: “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but (adds he) God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever †.” In the same manner speaks the prophet Jeremiah, in the name of the church. When deploring the sad calamities that had befallen her, he introduces her as comforting herself with this consideration, “The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him ‡.”

Is there any soul in this company convinced of the vanity of all earthly things, and desirous to make choice of God as his portion; yet sensible of the deceitfulness of his own heart, and therefore hesitating whether to utter his desire, and speak out his choice or not? Let not any thing discourage you from attempting

* Psal. xvi. 5, 6.

† Psal. lxxiii. 25.

‡ Lam. iii. 24.

tempting to make the choice, to express it in words; and practically to abide by it. In this text he has promised that he will be your God; and he cannot be so unless you consent to it. You may, therefore, consider him as engaging that you shall consent. And you ought to trust him for the accomplishment of his engagements. In a dependence upon his promised grace, aim at a present saying with your heart, "This God is my God for ever and ever; and he will be my guide even unto death." As an evidence that you wish to say it with your heart, be not ashamed to say it with your mouth, or to say it practically at the Lord's table. God will graciously strengthen you for the whole. If you have any doubt about the promise in the text, whether it warrants you to expect such a thing or not, you may find another more express to the purpose; a promise which has been accomplished in the Head, and in many of his mystical members already, and which God is presently offering to accomplish in you;

Thou art my Father, he shall cry,
 Thou art my God alone;
 And he shall say, thou art the Rock
 Of my salvation*.

2. This part of the promise imports, that God will do all that for us, that any people has reason to expect, or usually does expect from their God. He would be ashamed to be called our God, if he were not to act up to the character. And his allowing us to claim him in that character, may be viewed as an engagement that he will do for us whatever corresponds unto it. It is impossible, Christian, to enumerate

* Psa. lxxxix. 26.

rate all the great things that you may expect him to do for you, in consequence of his being your God. We shall mention the four things following, as comprehending many of the rest.

(1.) He will set you free from all spiritual bondage, oppression, and misery of every kind; and put you in ample possession of the glorious liberty of the sons of God. When Israel, God's chosen people, sojourned in Egypt, and were oppressed with an intolerable yoke of bondage; "God looked upon their affliction, *he* heard their cry, and came down to deliver *them* *." And when he speaks of what he wrought for them on that occasion, he very often joins his account of it with a declaration of his being their God. In this manner he spake, with an audible voice, from mount Sinai. "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt; out of the *house of bondage* †:" plainly importing, that, in bringing them out of the house of bondage, he acted in a manner corresponding to his character as their God; and that it would have been inconsistent with that character to have suffered them always to continue in that *iron furnace*. Israel also had such a persuasion of the agreement and connection between that action and that character, that they seem to have thought it shameful to acknowledge any other for their God, but him who brought them out of Egypt. Hence, when they turned aside from the true God, they usually ascribed this deliverance to the false gods whom they worshipped. When they made the calf at Horeb, they said, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt ‡." Hereby

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they

* Exod. iii. 7, 8.

† Exod. xx. 2.

‡ Exod. xxxii. 4.

they expressed a conviction, that it would be unreasonable in them to worship any other but the author of their freedom; and that they could not pretend to justify themselves in their abominable idolatry, otherwise than by ascribing that deliverance to the calf that they worshipped. The same method took Jeroboam, five hundred years afterwards, to persuade their posterity to worship the calves at Dan and Beth-el*. That deliverance was so like an interposal of *their God*, that there was little more necessary to engage them to acknowledge even a gold calf in that character, and to give it that worship which was due to their God, but only to persuade them that the calf was the author, or represented the author of that deliverance.

All mankind are naturally under bondage to sin and Satan. And such is the misery of that state, that the slavery of Israel in Egypt was but a faint emblem of it. From this bondage, and from all the misery that arises from it, God graciously delivers all those whom he takes into covenant with himself. There is such an opposition between your natural estate of bondage, and a state of covenant-union to him, that the one can never commence without the abolition of the other. He must bring you out of the one, that he may bring you into the other. So he spake concerning the deliverance from Egypt, and so he speaks concerning your spiritual deliverance: "I am the Lord, which bringeth you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. I am the Lord*." You cannot expect to be completely delivered from the tyranny of your oppressors, so long as you continue in the world.

* 1 Kings xii. 28.

† Lev. xi. 45.

world. Though you are delivered from their reigning power, the moment that you obtain an interest in God as your God; they will doubtless pursue you as Pharaoh the Israelites, and attempt to *entangle you again* with the yoke of bondage. But your God will never suffer them to attain their purpose. And it is but a little, when you shall have occasion to sing, as Israel on the other side of the Red Sea, *Thine enemies whom thou hast seen to-day, thou shalt see them no more for ever.* Surely, if God's bringing you out of your bondage is necessary, in order to his being your God; you may safely consider his promise of being your God, as including a promise of complete deliverance from the house of your spiritual thralldom.

(2.) He will guide and conduct you through this weary wilderness, in every step of your journey towards the land of promise. When he had brought Israel out of Egypt, he led them through the wilderness of Arabia, for the space of forty years, by a pillar of cloud in the day, and a pillar of fire by night. Thereby he proved himself to be their God, in such a manner as to strike terror on all their enemies round about. To be our God and our guide are expressly joined together in Scripture. Yea, his being our guide is mentioned as one happy consequence of his being our God. "This God is our God for ever and ever;" and therefore we need not hesitate to promise ourselves that "he will be our guide, even unto death*."

You have many dark and dreary steps, Christian, in your journey through the wilderness of this world; many intricate paths, many hard and rocky passages. Many snares are laid for you by your enemies; it is "a land of deserts and of pits." There are many

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by-paths,

* Psal. xlviii. 14.

by-paths, tending to lead you aside out of the way ; and many dangerous quick-sands, in which you will be in danger of being totally overwhelmed. You are ignorant and unskilful in the way. You may have many dark nights before your journey be finished. And, on all these accounts, your *soul* may be often in danger of being “ much discouraged because “ of the way.” But see that you give not up yourself to unbelieving anxiety on any such account. God has appointed one to be your *Leader and Commander*, who is both acquainted with the way, as having travelled it before, and is likewise infinitely skilful to conduct you in it. Yea, God himself considers it as his own province, in consequence of the relation that subsists between him and you, to *lead you on safely*, till you come “ to the borders of his sanctuary, and to “ the mountain which his right hand hath purchased.” He is your God, and you are one of his people. And it is given, with justice, as one essential branch of his standing character, that he “ led his people through the wilderness; for his mercy endureth “ for ever*.”

(3.) He will lead you forth against all your enemies, and make you completely victorious over them in due time. When Israel was set upon by the Amalekites in the wilderness, it was God that fought for them, and gave them the victory. Accordingly, “ when Moses held up his hands,” in token of supplication to God for Israel, and as an emblem of the lifting up of God's Almighty hand in their behalf, *Israel prevailed*; but when the hands of Moses were down, and God, of consequence, withdrew his assistance,

Amalek

* Psal. cxxxvii. 16.

Amalek prevailed *. In all their wars, not only did Israel depend upon God for success, when rightly exercised; but even the neighbouring nations ascribed Israel's success to their God. And, in the same manner, they looked for their success from the assistance of the false gods whom they respectively worshipped; and to them they ascribed it when they were successful; as might be shewed by various instances were it necessary.

Besides all the other dangers and difficulties of your way, believer, you have many enemies, both powerful and cunning, within you, and without you; who set themselves in opposition to you, in your passage through the wilderness. You are always to march sword in hand. You must fight every inch of your way. And, till your journey be finished, you must never put off your armour. Of yourself, you are both weak and unskilful. You are not a match for one of the least of those numerous enemies that set themselves in array against you round about. On this account also, you are in danger of being cast down; and apprehending, as David with regard to Saul, that "one day *you* shall fall by *their* hands." But your "Redeemer is *infinitely* strong; the Lord of "hosts is his name." Your covenanted God has all the armies of heaven under his command. Yea, he has all the hosts of your spiritual enemies in his chains. He has promised to fight your battles, and to bring you off the field "a conqueror, and more than a conqueror, through him that loved you." This promise is expressly connected with his declaration that he is your God. And you are to look for the ac-

* Exod. xvii. 11.

complishment of it, as a fruit of his relation to you. The "LORD thy God will drive out *all* these nations "before thee, by little and little."

4. In a word, he will bring you home, in the event, to the possession of a plentiful and pleasant inheritance. When God chose Israel to be his peculiar people, he not only promised, but swore, that he would give them the land of Canaan, "a land flowing "with milk and honey." And when they obtained it, themselves acknowledged to his praise, that it was not "their own sword *that* got them the land in possession; neither did their own arm save them; but "*his* right hand, *his* arm, and the light of *his* countenance; because *he* had a favour unto them." Yea, it was usual, even with the heathen nations, to ascribe to their idols, the putting them in possession of the several countries which they inherited. This is manifest from that heroic message of Jephtha, to the king of the children of Ammon. "The Lord God of Israel hath dispossessed the Amorites from before his "people Israel, and shouldest thou possess it? Wilt "not thou possess that which Chemosh thy god giveth thee to possess? So whomsoever the Lord our "God shall drive out from before us, them will we "possess."

But he has promised and sworn to give us an inheritance, far more rich and glorious than that which he gave to the literal Israel in Canaan. Hence the covenant, by which he stands related to us, when compared with that which he made with them, is preferred before it, as being "established upon better "promises*." To us he has promised "an inheritance

* Heb. viii. 6.

“ tance, incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth
 “ not away; *which is reserved in heaven for us**.”
 And this is so necessarily connected with his being
 our God, that he would be ashamed to take that de-
 signation to himself, if he had not provided for us such
 an inheritance. This was the case, even with respect
 to those fathers, to whom the promise of the typical
 Canaan was made; for to them also was this inheri-
 tance promised, and secured by the pledge of the o-
 ther. Though Abraham and his seed had the pro-
 mise of the earthly Canaan, and God, as their God,
 bestowed it upon them; yet that inheritance was
 so far below God’s character, that, if he had pro-
 vided no better for them, especially for the fathers
 themselves, who never obtained the possession of Ca-
 naan in their own persons; he would have been a-
 shamed to be called their God. But now, having
 provided for them a “ city that hath *everlasting* foun-
 “ dations,” in the other world; he considers this as
 doing something for them that is worthy of himself,
 and of that relation which he allows them to claim
 to him; and therefore he is not ashamed to avow the
 relation, or to suffer himself to be called their God.
 So reasons an inspired apostle—“ But now they de-
 “ sire 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 †.”

And now, Christian, when he openly calls himself
 your God, as in the text, you ought to consider it as
 importing, that he hath provided for you a city; and
 that he will assuredly bring you to the possession of it
 in due time. The city is the new and heavenly Je-
 rusalem,

* 1 Pet. i 4.

† Heb. xi. 16.

rusalem, where you shall dwell for ever, in the presence of God and the Lamb. The inheritance, which he will bring you in to possess, is no other than his own infinite self. He will communicate and manifest himself to you, even in this world, by means of these ordinances of his own appointment, in a manner far superior to any thing that he allows to the men of the world. And when death shall have demolished this clay tabernacle in which you dwell, and thereby abolished and destroyed the body of sin and death under which you groan; then he will admit you to the immediate and unrestrained enjoyment of all his fulness. You shall dwell for ever in his presence-chamber. You shall behold his glory in the face of Jesus Christ, without any vail, or any glasses intervening; you shall have an opportunity, uninterrupted and undisturbed, to hold the most intimate and familiar communion with him. You shall bask for ever in the rays of the Sun of righteousness, who, without either setting or being beclouded, enlightens that happy region. You shall be satisfied, not only with beholding, but also with enjoying, and being perfected in his likeness. Eternally shall you be ravished with that *fulness of joy*, which is *before his face*; and eternally have all your desires satisfied, in the complete enjoyment of all those exuberant *pleasures* that are *at his right hand for evermore*. Have you not, even while these things are yet at a distance, good reason to join, with satisfaction, in that song which was sung by David, personating the glorious Head of that Covenant, by whom God has become your God:

God is of mine inheritance
And cup the portion,
The lot that fallen is to me
Thou dost maintain alone.
Unto me happily the lines
In pleasant places fell;
Yea, the inheritance I got
In beauty doth excel.

I thought to have proceeded to the next head in the method. But I see I cannot, without encroaching too much upon your time. I shall therefore conclude, at present, with a few inferences from what has been said. And from it we may draw the following conclusions.

I. There is a clear warrant for the solemn work in which some of you have lately been engaged,—the work of covenanting with God. We are sure it was practised, with divine approbation, under the Old-Testament dispensation; and it is not less warrantable under the New. One reason why so many are enemies to that work, whom yet charity obliges us to look upon as within the bond of God's covenant, is, that they do not attend duly to the nature of it, nor consider wherein it consists. They know that God is a Being infinitely superior to us; that it is great condescension in him to enter into a covenant with us; and that, when he does so, it belongs to himself only to prescribe all the terms of that covenant, by which he condescends to be related to us. They know that the Scriptures speak of no covenants, properly so called, by which he proposes to be related to sinners, in New Testament days, but the covenant of grace; that everlasting covenant, the substance of which is expressed in this text. And they justly conclude,

clude, that it must be the highest presumption in sinful dust and ashes, such as we are, to propose entering into any covenant with God which is not of his own making. — ‘But,’ say they, ‘your covenant is altogether different from the covenant of grace. It is wholly of man’s contrivance. The terms of it are all of your own devising. And therefore the very proposing of such a thing is, in the highest degree, presumptuous.’

But all the force of this reasoning will vanish, however plausible it appears, if it is considered, that, by the duty of covenanting, we intend no more than an open, formal, and explicit acceptance of the covenant of grace, as it is offered in the gospel, and is compendized and summed up in this text. Far be it from us to pretend to make another covenant with God, distinct from the covenant of grace, and independent upon it; or any covenant of mens-devising. Thanks to the riches of divine grace, no other is necessary. This is abundantly sufficient for all the purposes both of God’s glory and of our salvation. But surely it must be proper, that we take hold of God’s covenant in a manner corresponding to that in which it is offered to us. God has promised that he will be our God, and we shall be his people. And these are the gracious terms upon which he proposes to “make an everlasting covenant with *us*, even the sure mercies of David.” But while these are only the words of God to us, they are a promise which he makes to us; but no covenant between him and us; because a covenant necessarily includes the consent of both parties. It only becomes a covenant made with us, when we consent that it should be so; and say, upon the credit

credit of God's promise, what he has said before us, that "he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture." This every believer says in his heart the moment of his entering within the bond of the covenant; and public covenanters say no more. We challenge all the enemies of covenanting to find a sentence in that bond, which was publicly sworn in this place three days ago, that is not comprehended and necessarily included in a simple consenting to what God promises in this text. Every believer is materially a covenanter. And a public covenanter is no more than a believer, making an open profession of his faith; declaring his acceptance of God to be his God, and avouching his dedication of himself to God as one of his people; by that very covenant which God, so long ago, promised to make with the Church in New Testament days.

'But,' may some say, 'what need is there for this open, public, and formal acceptance of the covenant? Is it not enough that persons be really and savingly in covenant with God? Surely every person that takes hold of the covenant of grace by faith, will be saved; and what do covenanters expect more? Public covenanting will not bring any person into a saving relation to God, unless he believes with his heart; and if he does this, he will have an interest in God as his God, though he be no covenanter. Why then should persons bewray their hypocrisy and vain-glory, by thus openly telling all the world that they take hold of God's covenant; when perhaps they continue strangers to God still?'

If any person joins in public covenanting in a way of continuing a stranger to God, or to the covenant
of

of grace, he bewrays his hypocrisy indeed; and lies, in the most solemn manner, unto the God of truth. But is this a sufficient reason why they who are really in covenant with God should not avouch him to be their God? When a man “believes with the heart “unto righteousness; is it not fit, that “with the “mouth confession be made unto salvation?” It is true that every believer will be saved, whether he be a covenanter or not; and that no covenanter will be saved, unless he is a believer. But the same will hold equally true with regard to communicating. Will any person argue, that therefore communicating is no duty?—If Christians are to do nothing in obedience to the command of God, but that which is so necessary that they cannot be saved without it, their duties will be reduced to a very small number; and the glory of God, which should be the ultimate end of all, will be entirely out of the question.

God's external revelation of his covenant of promise, can have no efficacy for bringing any person within the bond of it; unless he call them effectually by the saving operation of his Spirit. And the working of the Holy Spirit will be effectual, even though the person had no external call. But dare any man therefore affirm, that the outward offer and proposal of the covenant of grace is unnecessary; and that God might have contented himself with bringing us into covenant, by the secret working of his Spirit, without it? Such arguing would be manifestly blasphemous; but it is not more absurd or inconclusive than the other. If God makes a public offer of his covenant to us, why should not we take hold of it in a manner equally public? If his part of the
blessed

bleſſed compact is openly avouched and ſworn to by him, is it not the leaſt that we can reaſonly do, to avouch our part of it, and ſwear to it in the ſame explicit manner.

When God's peculiar people covenanted with him ſo often under the Old Teſtament diſpenſation, did they make any covenant with him that was of men's deviſing? Or, if they had, would they have been leſs guilty than they who ſhould do ſo now? Surely that preſumption had been equally ſinful then as now. But they did no ſuch thing. God made a covenant with their " fathers, when he took them by the hand, to " lead them out of the land of Egypt;" and all their covenanting, while that diſpenſation continued, was no more than a ſolemn declaration of their acceptance of *that covenant*, and of their adherence to it. They did not make any new covenant of their own; but only took hold, in an open, formal, and explicit manner, of that covenant which God made with them at mount Sinai. And this was the only ſpecies of covenanting with God, that was lawful even at that time. Had they bound themſelves, by any of their covenants, to any thing that God had not required of them, in the publication of his covenant, they would have been guilty of ſin; much more, if they had pretended to bind God to any thing, to which he had not graciously bound himſelf. And the ſame is the caſe with us now. Were we to make any covenant that God has not made, to add any new articles to that which he has made; or, in any reſpect, to change what he has already fixed; we would be chargeable with much ſin. But ſurely it can be no ſin, publicly to accept what God as publicly offers; nor to declare

clare our consent to *his* covenant in the same explicit manner in which he has declared his. As really as God made a covenant with the church of Israel in the wilderness, so really does he make this new covenant with the New Testament church, through the Lord Jesus Christ. He makes it in the same public and formal manner, though with much less pomp and terror. And if his open exhibition of *that* covenant to the church in that period, warranted her publicly to lay hold of it, by the duty of public covenanting; does not a similar exhibition of *this* everlasting covenant to us, afford an equal warrant for a similar acceptance of it? Thus, covenanting has the same warrant now that it had then. And the duty will ever be alike binding, while God continues proposing to make, with the New Testament church and her members, this new covenant which is compendized in our text.

Let the reasonings of men, or their practices, be what they will, covenanter, you have no cause to be ashamed of what you have done. God is not ashamed, either to call himself your God, or to call you his people, in the hearing of all the world; and why should you be ashamed to say what he has said before you. The covenant, by which he becomes your God, is publicly consented to and sworn on his part, and why should it not upon yours? Let others content themselves, if they will, with receiving him as their God in their hearts; but do you count it your honour, to avouch him to be your God before angels, men, and devils. Let others satisfy themselves with being night disciples, if so be that "they *really* love the praise of men, more than the praise of God;" but let it be
 considered

considered as your glory and your happiness, to put honour upon Christ, by publicly “ confessing *him* before men ;” in the faith that he “ will confess *you*, before *his* Father who is in heaven *.”

2. We may see here a copious fund of encouragement and consolation, to all who either have been bringing themselves under *the vows of God* formerly or of late ; or are proposing this day to ratify their engagements at his table. Whatever there is about yourself, to occasion discouragement or down-casting, if you look up to God, through the glass of this promise, you shall see the prospect brighten before you, and shall be satisfied that you have abundant matter of confidence and joy. There are chiefly two considerations, that are apt to produce fears and discouragements on such an occasion as this. Against both you will find a sufficient antidote in this promise.

(1.) Some are afraid to venture upon a solemn approach to God, on account of their own felt unworthiness ; fearing lest God be thereby provoked to reject their claim, when they aim at calling him their God ; and refuse to accept their offering, when they would devote themselves to him as his people. But why is it, O faithless and doubting Christian, that you suffer unbelief thus to deprive you both of your comfort and your confidence ? Has not God already signified his consent to the covenant between him and you ? And has he not exhibited and proposed it to you, inviting and calling you to give your consent to it ? You would have good reason for your fears, if you were intending to deal with God by any other
covenant

* Matth. x. 32.

covenant than his own. But is it not your desire to be related to him only by the covenant of grace? Has not *he* already sworn and subscribed the covenant? Has he not delivered it to you, that it may likewise be ratified and confirmed on your part? Does he not earnestly call you to acknowledge him as your God, and to devote yourselves to him as his people? Yea, has he not, in this text, engaged that you shall do so? And now, when you endeavour, through his grace, to do so, at his call; can you have any reason to fear that you shall not be accepted? After delivering his covenant to you, ratified and confirmed on his part; can *the God of truth* so far belie himself as to refuse to stand to it, when you return it to him, with your seal and subscription appended? You well know, that such conduct would render any person infamous among men; and dare you admit a thought so blasphemous concerning God? “ Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” He knew all your unworthiness, and all your sinfulness, before he made an offer of his covenant to you; and surely he never would have offered it, if he had not been willing to receive you as you are. Nay, my dear brethren, give not way to any apprehensions concerning him, so egregiously unworthy of him. Go, “ eat *your* bread with gladness, and drink *your* wine with a merry heart; for the Lord accepteth *your* work.”

(2.) The other consideration, by which I apprehend some are prevented from joining in covenanting-work, and others may be diffculted about proceeding to recognize their former vows to God at his table; is, their own insufficiency to pay their vows. ‘ Alas!’ says the person, ‘ How shall I come under the
‘ most

‘ most solemn engagements to walk according to God’s
 ‘ law, and to keep all his commandments, when I
 ‘ am sensible that I cannot keep one of them for a
 ‘ ment; and that, in every thing I set my hand to, I
 ‘ break them continually?’ But consider, Christian,
 where it is that your *great strength lieth*; and then
 you will find no reason to be discouraged. You ought,
 indeed, to *count the cost* before you set forward to a-
 ny duty. Before coming under engagements to God
 of any kind, you ought to consider how they are to
 be performed, and even to have some rational secu-
 rity that they shall be performed acceptably. But
 you may wait long enough before you find any such
 security about yourself. Yea, though you wait to
 your life’s end, you never shall find it; for your stock
 is not in your own hand. Your *strength is God alone*.
 He has engaged, as you were hearing, that you shall
 not only be related to him as his people, but shall al-
 so be enabled to walk agreeably to that relation.
 “ He is faithful that hath promised; and he is able
 “ also to perform *it*.” It is, therefore, the strength
 and grace which God has promised to you, and has
 laid up in the hand of Christ, to be communicated to
 you according to your need, that you should consider
 as your only security for the payment of all your
 vows. And is it not security enough? However un-
 able you are to keep God’s commandments, God is
 surely able to strengthen and make you able to keep
 them. And he will do it; for so he has expressly
 promised. “ I will strengthen them in the Lord, and
 “ they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the
 “ Lord *.” A sense of your own weakness and in-
 VOL. II. I * sufficiency,

* Zech. x. 12.

sufficiency, instead of being a bar in the way of your vowing to God, according to his commandment, ought rather to stir you up to it; as it should lead you to take a believing view of God's omnipotence, as engaged to furnish you with strength, both to vow and to pay your vows. Thus, though you cannot go one step on your own legs, you may confidently go to the Lord's table, or wherever else he calls you, "in the strength of the Lord God; making mention of his righteousness, even of his only."

Who are they, then, that reproach us, as heaping coals of fire on our own head, and aggravating our own condemnation, by our covenanting; because we engage to what we are unable to perform; and thereby lay ourselves under a necessity of breaking our vows? Were the Jews, when they covenanted with God, any more able to obey his commandments than we are? Or was obedience easier under that burdensome dispensation than it is now, when the yoke of legal ceremonies is broken? Are these men themselves able to keep the commandments of God? or will they deny that they are bound to do so, by their vows in baptism and at the Lord's table, as really as we are by our covenants? Do they not then, by this argument, condemn all covenanting under the Old Testament as well as under the New? Yea, do they not condemn themselves for joining in the sacraments; because their sacramental vows contain more than they can perform?—But we never pretend to engage that we will keep God's commandments by any strength of our own. We know that of ourselves we can do nothing. Our engagements are only to be performed, as they should be entered into, in the
strength

strength of "the grace that is in Christ Jesus." And dare any person say, that his *grace is not sufficient for us*; or that we have no warrant to promise upon it? We do not expect to be supplied with grace sufficient, in this life, to enable us to keep the law perfectly; neither do we engage that we will do so. But surely we have reason to depend upon him for all that is necessary to enable us to keep it acceptably. And, in a dependence upon his promise, we need neither be afraid nor ashamed to say, as does the Psalmist, "I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments *."

WE shall now conclude with a short address, first to those who intend to be communicants; and then to those who, in respect of the great work of *shewing forth the Lord's death*, propose to be spectators only.

You see in this text, communicant, how much you owe to Christ, for that glorious and wonderful event which you are this day to commemorate. If Christ had never died, you could never have heard such a promise as this; nor could the blessing promised in it have been enjoyed by any of you. Nay, the covenant itself, to which this promise belongs, could never have been made with you, nor offered to you, nor published among you; unless Christ, by his obedience unto death, had fulfilled the condition of it; and thereby made the promises "sure to all the seed." You are therefore to remember the death of Christ, as the sole ground of your claim and title to all the blessedness that you are to enjoy by the covenant of grace; and to all the fruits of your fœderal relation

to God, either in time or through eternity. While you remember it, see that you have all that dependence upon God as your God in covenant, and upon all the promises that the covenant contains, for which a sure foundation is laid by the death and satisfaction of Christ. When you see the covenant ratified and confirmed by the sacrifice of Christ, beware of giving way to unbelieving jealousies, as if God were unwilling to stand to any part of the contents of it. Beware of that refined legality which would cause you doubt of God's acting up to his relation to you; because you are sensible of manifold short-comings, failings, and offences against the laws of the relation on your part. Go forward to his table, in the exercise of all that holy boldness and confidence, that arise from the persuasion of his being a God "keeping covenant and mercy to a thousand generations." As this feast was made for spiritual gladness, beware of disgracing it, by appearing at it with a sad or sullen countenance. But rejoice in God, as your God by covenant: express your joy in him, and your gratitude to him, for condescending to enter into covenant with you, by a cheerful acceptance of all that he offers you, in word and sacrament, and an equally cheerful dedication of yourself and your services to him. Let your language, at his table, and in the near prospect of approaching to it, be an echo to his gracious declaration in the text. ' Lord, through thy
' grace, I consent to thy benign proposal; and am
' heartily satisfied, that thou, and none but thou, be
' my God for ever and ever; and that I be consider-
' ed, in heaven and on earth, in time and through e-
' ternity,

ternity, as one of thy covenanted people, though the most unworthy of them all.'

And you who are only to be spectators of the solemn action, beware of considering yourselves as mere spectators while you attend upon the dispensation of the word. Unto you, as well as to those who are to communicate, is this promise directed. The covenant of grace, which was originally made with Christ, and has been fulfilled, in its whole condition, by his obedience unto death; that covenant, now turned into a bundle of great and precious and free promises, is graciously offered and exhibited to you. Thus saith God to every person present, sinner as well as faint; whatever be your age, sex, condition, character, or relation; whatever has been the manner of your past life, or whatever is your present disposition: thus saith God to you, "Wherefore will ye spend money for that which is not bread; and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live: and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David*." If you would know what is the substance of the covenant that he proposes to make with you, you have it in the words of the text. He will be your God, and you shall be his people. He requires no condition to be performed by you. He insists for no qualifications on your part. Himself engages to make you whatever his people ought to be. No objection can be sustained against a present compliance with his call and offer. Even your inability to comply is no sufficient excuse;

* Isaiah lv. 2, 3.

for God has engaged to enable you. And you shall assuredly have success, if you aim at saying *Amen* to his gracious proposal. While he exhibits the covenant to you, he engages that you shall consent to it. "I will say, it is my people: and they shall say, the LORD is my God *."

* Zech. xiii. 9.

S E R.

S E R M O N I V .

*God's Covenant with the New Testament Church
considered.*

P A R T I I .

H E B . v i i i . 1 0 .

—I WILL BE TO THEM A GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE
TO ME A PEOPLE.

UNDER the Old Testament dispensation there were different courts, in which different sorts of worshippers assembled. In the outer court, or court of the people, all clean Israelites were allowed to offer up their prayers, and to eat of the sacrifices which had been offered. But into the inner court, where the altar stood, and where sacrifices were offered, none were permitted to enter but the priests; and “the stranger that came nigh *was to* be put to “death*.”

In like manner, under the New Testament our Lord Jesus Christ has instituted some ordinances in
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* Numb. xviii. 7.

the church to which every one of mankind may come, and in which every one has an immediate warrant to partake. Thus, according to an ancient promise, God has made "unto all people," in the mountain of the gospel-church, "a feast of fat things full of marrow, and wines on the lees well refined." This feast is served up to you all in the preaching of the word. But there are other ordinances to which no person has any immediate warrant to approach, but they who, being of the family of the antitypical Aaron, are, through him, made kings and priests unto God. And *the stranger that cometh nigh* is in danger of suffering eternal death. Such is the solemn ordinance which we propose to celebrate in this place to-day.

For this cause, "let a man examine himself; and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." If any person is desirous to comply with this exhortation, and would gladly know whether he be among those who have an immediate right to partake in this ordinance or not; he may find a short and easy method of having the question resolved, if he looks into his own heart, and considers attentively how he is affected at hearing this text read. You may come even to the holy table of the Lord, in the confidence of being welcome, if you are disposed to consider this promise as relating to you in particular; if you sincerely believe that God is willing and ready to accomplish the promise to you; and if you, on your part, are disposed cordially to say *Amen* to it; that he should be to you a God, and you should be, and, through grace, behave to him as one of his people.

Some

Some will probably remember, that we spake from these words on last occasion of this nature; and, after taking a brief view of the Apostle's scope in this chapter, we saw that the words contain the second of four capital promises, mentioned by the prophet Jeremiah, and here recited by this Apostle, as expressive of the substance of that new and well ordered covenant, which God makes with the church, and with particular believers in gospel-days. Indeed we may consider this promise as a compend, or summary, of the whole covenant, as it is exhibited in the gospel, and consented unto by the Christian in the day of believing, "I (says JEHOVAH) will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people."

The promise, as we formerly saw, consists of two parts. In it we have,

1st, What God will be to the New Testament church, and to the particular members of it,—*I will be to them a God.*

2dly, What the church and her particular members shall be to God,—*And they shall be to me a people.*

In the *first* part of the text we observed four things more particularly; and we may take notice of the same number in the second, *viz.*

1. The person speaking, in the pronoun *me*, referring to God himself. Israel of old was remarkable for a disposition to idolatry. Though God had chosen them for his peculiar people, and they had consented to it; they were always backward to consider themselves as his, in such a manner as to preclude all acknowledgement of any other God. The same disposition to idolatry, though perhaps in a more refined form, prevails, more or less, with all the members of the

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the gospel-church. Still we are prone to give away ourselves to another, even after we have been solemnly dedicated to him. But God himself has graciously engaged to subdue this disposition in us, and to make us heartily willing to be a people to him only.

2. The parties spoken of in the pronoun *they*; referring to the house of Israel and the house of Judah, which must be understood of the gospel-church. This promise belongs not only to the church at large, but likewise to all the genuine members of it. Not only is it directed to all the members of the church invisible; for to all such it is accomplished already: but to all who live within the visible church. To every person in whose ears this covenant is published, God becomes engaged, not only to receive them among his people, when they shall apply to him for that honour; but also, graciously to dispose and enable them to make such application, and really to become his people.

3. The happy relation to God, in which the New Testament church, and her individual members, shall be honoured to stand. They shall be to him *a people*. By nature they were so far degenerated, that they deserved not to be called a people at all. Yet God condescends to erect them into an organized society, and even to take them for a peculiar people to himself. Being related to one another, as members of the same body mystical, they all stand related to him, as the Sovereign Proprietor, the Lord, the Lawgiver, the God of the whole.

4. The freeness and stability of the promise, intimated in the word *shall*. It hangs upon no conditions to be performed by us. It admits of no peradventure,

ture, nor leaves room for any rational doubt. Were it only the word of a man, there would be reason to doubt it. Had it been spoken by a mere creature, though it had been the highest angel in heaven, there would at least be a possibility of its failing. But the words of God are not “yea and nay—He is not a man, that he should lie; nor the son of man, that he should repent.” What he *hath said* he will assuredly *do*. Having *spoken in his holiness*, he will not fail to *make it good*.

The method which we proposed to follow, in speaking from the subject, was the following.

I. To take notice of a few things imported in the words, more generally.

II. To enquire more particularly what is implied in God’s being our God.

III. To consider the import of our being to him a people. And then,

IV. To conclude with some improvement of the whole.

HAVING attempted a discussion of the two first heads in the method already, we now proceed, through divine assistance, to

The *third*, which was, To consider what is imported in our being to God for a people. And I conceive this part of the promise imports the following things.

I. That God would gather together into one all the members of the New Testament church; so that in whatever place of the world they should have their residence, from whatever nation they should spring, whatever should be their kindred, tongue, or language; they should all be closely united one to another, and constituted one body mystical. The word *people*

is of a collective signification ; and usually denotes a great number of persons, regularly associated and joined together in one society, or body-corporate.

Under the Mosaic dispensation God did not only take every individual of Israel's seed into covenant with himself; but he separated the whole nation from the rest of the world ; erected them into an organical church ; took them, in that united and joint capacity, to be his peculiar people ; and married them to himself. In like manner under the New Testament, though all who are brought within the bond of this covenant do not belong to one nation, or descend from one family, but are scattered through all the nations, families, and places of the earth ; yet God, when he takes them into covenant with himself, does likewise unite them to one another, and make them all members of one and the same body. Yea, the very same covenant by which they stand related to God, joins and unites them to one another ; so that they become one people, one church ; and in that capacity they are espoused to God ; who becomes a husband, not only to every individual among them, but also to the whole catholic church. Now their union to one another arises chiefly from two things.

(1.) They are all united to one Head, even Christ. With him it was that this covenant was originally made: And still it is only in his right that any person can be admitted into it. Though the covenant is made with us in time, as really as it was made with Christ from eternity ; yet there are not three different parties contracting in the covenant, but only two—God the Father on the one side, and Christ and his spiritual seed on the other. We enter into
covenant

covenant with God, by taking our place in Christ; according to what was stipulated concerning us in the original making of the covenant. As in the natural body all the members are really and jointly knit to the head; because there all the nerves, from the different parts of the body, meet; and, in this way, the members are likewise knit and united one to another; so also is Christ. All the members of his body are united to him by faith, and enjoy communion with him. Consequently they are all united to one another in him; and enjoy a happy communion one with another, however distant they be in point of place, or even in point of time. Yea, through him, those members of the church who are now in heaven, hold communion with us on earth, and we with them, as being all one body in him, and all partaking of vital influences from him, according to our different circumstances and conditions.

(2.) They are all partakers of one and the same Spirit. The moment that they are united with Christ, they “receive the Holy Ghost;” and, from that time forth, are actuated by the same Spirit that was, and still is in him. As no man can doubt that every limb, which is enlivened and actuated by his own rational soul, is a member of his natural body, and in union with all the rest; so neither can we doubt, that the members of the church are all in union with one another, and constitute a living whole, when we see them all quickened and influenced by the self-same Spirit; even the Spirit of Christ, who is as the soul of the body-mystical, and enables every member to perform its proper function in the body.

And as they are all united to one another, so they are

are united in the most regular and orderly manner. Every member has its own place and office in the body, in due subordination to one another, and in a proper subservience to the good of the whole. He who makes them one body, has likewise assigned to every one his place; and established rule, order, and subordination among them. He has given them laws, ordinances, and office-bearers, for the general edification of the whole; and thus has made them, to himself, not a savage or undisciplined rabble, but a regular and orderly society,—a well governed *people*.

2. The words import, that this dignified people, and every particular person among them, shall, in due time, be enabled to dedicate themselves unto God, and cheerfully to acknowledge themselves to be his property. When God makes an offer of himself to us, to be our God,—he likewise makes a claim upon us; he calls us to give him our hearts, and our whole selves, to be his willing people. When we accept his offer, and say, “This God is our God;” we likewise admit his claim, and say, “We are the people “of his pasture.” And as his promise to be our God includes an engagement to enable us to accept his offer; so his promise, that we shall be his people, must include an engagement to enable us to admit his claim; and so to devote ourselves to him, and to acknowledge his sovereign propriety in us.

Every member of the visible church, is, by his appearance and profession materially dedicated to God. This dedication, as well as our acceptance of God for our God, is ratified and sealed, in a public and solemn manner, in baptism. It is openly recognized and renewed, by every communicant, at the Lord's table.

And

And every person, who, in partaking of either sacrament, enjoys the thing signified, along with the outward and visible symbol, sincerely, and with the heart, gives himself away to God, as one of his covenanted people. This promise secures, not only the outward, but also the inward and spiritual part.

Every worthy communicant this day will have his heart concurring with his outward profession,—while he practically declares, before God, angels, and men, not only his acceptance of God for his God, but also his consent to be the Lord's, in time and through eternity; to be employed in his service, and disposed of by him as he sees most for his own glory, according to the tenor of his covenant. Some of you may be discouraged, in the prospect of such work, from an apprehension, that your deceitful and desperately wicked hearts will not be got to join sincerely in the work; and that you shall be guilty of “lying to the God of truth,” while you profess yourselves his, and yet find your hearts cleaving to his rivals.

Indeed, if you look only to yourselves, there is great danger that this will be the case, and no wonder that you be discouraged. But if you look to the promise of God, the danger evanishes, and all the grounds of your discouragement. If you are to be God's people, it must be with your own consent; for our glorious Mediator rules none but a willing people; and to him God commits the charge of bringing them within the bond of his covenant. If you are to give your consent to be his people, this is the very thing you wish for, and are afraid you shall not attain. And it is necessarily included in the promise. Go forward, therefore, in a believing dependence upon his faithfulness
who

who has promised. Do not hesitate to say with the mouth, and likewise to say practically to Christ, what Amasai said to his type, "Thine are we, David, and "on thy side, thou son of Jesse *." Say it with cheerfulness before this assembly, by cheerfully taking your seat at the Lord's table. And aim at saying it to God with the heart at the same time. In this way you may be assured, that he who has given you the promise in the text will enable you to say it in sincerity, and so will make what you say to be a truth. As he will really be your God, so he will take effectual care that you shall be among his willing people. The one is the fruit of his gracious condescension; the other shall be the effect of his all-subduing grace. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of "thy power †."

3. They import, that having made such a dedication of themselves to God, the church, and her members, shall be preserved from ever attempting to *alienate what they have devoted*. While God makes an offer of his covenant to us, he has a multitude of rivals, who attempt to divert our attention from the advantageous offers that he makes us, and to engage our affections to themselves. When one is determined to hearken to God's gracious proposals, and to give himself away to him, those rivals do not cease to molest him with their importunities. Whereas formerly they endeavoured to prevent his being espoused to Christ, now they tempt him to commit adultery against him. After we have become his people, they set themselves to draw us off from our allegiance: and, alas! too often we are in danger of their prevailing,

* 1 Chron. xii. 18.

† Psa. cx. 3.

vailing, to make us “change *our* God and *our* “glory.”

But that they shall never wholly prevail, this promise, Christian, gives you ample security; God engages, not only that you shall become his people, but that you shall continue to be so. He will still maintain that possession of you which he has obtained with your own consent; and will effectually prevent your being either able or willing wholly to alienate yourselves from him. Two ways you might alienate yourselves, and be guilty of revoking the dedication that you have made of yourselves to him. Against both you are hereby secured.

(1.) By employing yourselves in the service of any other, to the neglect of that work which he has put into your hands. If you are really his, it is doubtless your reasonable service to be always employed as he requires and appoints. You cannot continue his people unless this is the case. And his promise of making you his people, affords ample security that it shall ever be the case. While you remain in this world, you will always have a hankering after his rivals; still they will ply you with their importunities; and no wonder you be sometimes left to comply with them in part; and so to remit in your duty to God, and even to employ yourselves in their service. But as God will never give up with his property in you, so you shall never be suffered habitually to act inconsistently with it. His service shall still be your element. You shall never take the same pleasure in the service of his enemies, as in running the way of his commandments. He will keep you in that way, as far as you are enabled to trust him for it; and if, at any time, he permits you to go astray, he will be sure to

reclaim you sooner or later—"Though you fall you shall not be utterly cast down; for *still* the LORD upholdeth," and shall uphold you, "with his *almighty* hand."

(2.) By indulging yourselves in fretting or murmuring at the manner in which he sees meet to dispose of you in the course of his adorable providence. Resignation to the will of God under adversities, is one of the hardest lessons that a Christian has to learn. And yet resignation is a duty to which we are especially bound, by the dedication that we make of ourselves to God when we take hold of his covenant. If you give yourselves to the Lord, and consider yourselves as his property, surely you cannot expect to have the disposal of yourselves as if you were still your own. Nor can you reasonably complain, if he, to whom you have given yourselves, dispose of you as seems good in his own sight. Has he not *power to do what he will with his own*? Why is it then that you are so frequently guilty of *charging God with folly*, in his dispensations relative to you? And why are you displeased, because, in the use to which he puts you, and as to the lot which he casts into your lap, he does not consult your inclinations? 'Alas,' say you, 'I can assign no reason for it. I am sensible of the injustice and unreasonableness of my conduct; but I find myself unable to help it. Still my uncircumcised heart will be rising up against God, and murmuring against his manner of dealing with me; though I am convinced in my judgment, that his dispensations, like his law, are *holy, and just, and good*; while I am carnal, discontented, ungrateful, and sold under sin.' Well, here is your security against

gainst this atrocious sin. Resignation, like every other Christian virtue, is the work of the Spirit of God in the soul. And God has engaged to perform it. He cannot make you his people, and keep you such, without enabling you, in some degree, to submit to be disposed of according to his sovereign will. Trust him, then, for the accomplishment of his promise, while you aim at the performance of the duty. And so shall you be enabled to acquiesce in his dispensations, as believing that he does *all things well*. At least, you shall be determined, like the royal Psalmist, to be *dumb, and not open your mouth* against any thing that befalls you in providence, when you consider that it is *your God* who *does it* *.

4. The words import, that God will graciously accept the dedication that we make of ourselves to him, and all those evangelical services which we perform in consequence thereof. This covenant, like all others, must have the consent of both parties. And both must consent to both the parts of it. While God declares himself willing to be our God, he likewise declares himself satisfied that we should be his people. And as he cannot be our God, till we consent that it should be so; much less can we be his people, unless he is graciously pleased to accept us as such, and to admit us into that happy society. Nor can we ever serve or worship him, as his people ought to do, unless he condescends to accept those services which we perform. If, therefore, he promises that we should be his people, it must include a promise of acceptance, both of our persons and of those services

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which

* Psal. xxxix. 9.

which we, through his grace, perform in that relation.

Is there, in this assembly, any poor dejected Christian, who dare hardly presume to make an offering either of his person or his services to God, from a sense that he is altogether unworthy of acceptance before him? 'Alas!' may such an one say, 'How shall a worm, so vile and sinful as I am, adventure to make an offering of himself, or of any thing that he can do, to such a glorious and *holy* LORD God? Would an earthly Prince receive into his family a beggar from the dunghill, whose rags were only sufficient to expose his nakedness, whose body were all deformed, and covered over with a loathsome and infectious disease, and who could neither move hand nor foot without assistance? Would he be pleased with any services that such an one could perform? Or would it not be ridiculous for such a person to pretend to perform any services at all? How much more absurd is it in me, to expect that the God of all glory, who is infinitely blessed in himself, and stands in no need of any of his creatures, or any of their services, who has *thousands of thousands*, of powerful and holy angels, *standing before him, and ten thousand times ten thousand ministring unto him*; that he will receive into his service such a wretch as I am, or pay any regard to such unworthy and polluted services as I can perform; while I cannot but be sensible that I am *all as unclean thing, and all my righteousnesses are as filthy rags?*'

But beware that you give not way to the suggestions of Satan, nor hearken to the dictates of unbelief in this matter. You are in the same condition with every

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every other Christian in this respect. Never any of Adam's lost family was worthy to be a servant of God. Never was there any piece of service performed by the greatest saint out of heaven that was, of itself, worthy to come up with acceptance upon his altar. Were we to judge of God by the standard of men like ourselves, we could never look for acceptance with him. But his *ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts*. No man durst ever have thought of presenting such an unworthy offering to God, if himself had not required it. But now that he has required it, the presumption of refusing it is as great as that of offering it would otherwise have been. He not only requires that you *present* your souls, and even *your bodies a living sacrifice* unto him; but he promises that you shall do so; and that, in so doing, you shall find acceptance, notwithstanding all your unworthiness. Yea, those sinful and imperfect services, which you may perform, being purged and perfumed by the merit and intercession of your glorious Surety, shall not only be accepted, they shall even be graciously rewarded by him. Be encouraged, therefore, however unworthy you are, cheerfully to enter yourself among God's people, and to aim at serving him in a manner becoming that character; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. Go forward, with holy confidence and alacrity, even to the communion table; there to signify, before God, angels, and men, that you count it your glory to be devoted to his service. At that table, "eat *your* bread with gladness, and drink your wine with a merry heart; for the Lord accepteth *both you and your* works."

5. The words import, that this chosen people, being thus brought into covenant with God, shall be enabled likewise to behave in a manner corresponding to that relation. Not only shall they employ themselves in his service; but the services which they perform shall be such as are due from a people to their God. Seeing he is not barely our Master, but our God; we must not satisfy ourselves with performing to him such services as are due to a common master; but must give him all that honour, glory, and worship, as well as all that obedience that is due to a master who, at the same time, is God, and our God. And that we shall do so, this promise is our security; for, unless this is the case, we cannot deserve the character of his people.

Here a large field opens to our view. We might go through all the duties required in the law of God; and shew, that by this promise, and others parallel to this, we have full security for the acceptable performance of them all. But we shall satisfy ourselves with naming a few of those which are essentially necessary in all who are the people of God.

1. We shall be enabled to give credit to his word of grace, and to trust in him for the accomplishment it. "He that believeth not hath made him a liar*;" but he cannot be a liar, and yet be God; for it is an essential attribute of the Deity, that *he cannot lie*. He, therefore, who believes not, instead of acknowledging him as his God, or behaving towards him as one of his people, denies him to be God at all. Consequently, if we are to be his people, we must needs believe

* 1 John v. 10.

believe his word; and so give him that glory which is due to him as a God of truth.

Faith is so necessary in the duty of communicating, that every person who sits down at the communion-table without it, must be "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." Sensible of this, and conscious of the weakness of their own faith, or apprehensive of the want of it, some who have received tokens may be hesitating whether to make use of them or not. But why should you stand at a distance from a known duty for want of that faith which you may just now receive, and which God has promised to give you? Can you ever believe of yourself? And if faith is the gift of God, why should you not presently apply to him for it? It is utterly impossible that you should be his people without it. And it is equally impossible that you should behave as his people without the present exercise of it. Faith is as essential to God's people, as faithfulness is to God himself. And if he has promised to make you his people, you may safely trust him that he will give you this grace, and enable you to the exercise of it. If you think that the promise in the text is not explicit enough to this purpose, you may find a great many in the word of God, that more directly and immediately relate to this. Has he not said, for instance, "I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people; and they shall trust in the name of the Lord*." Even in a sense of your utter inability to believe, set forward to your duty at his call; and, by the strength of his promised grace, you shall be enabled, in this as well as
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* Zeph. iii. 12.

in other respects, to acquit yourself as becomes one of his people.

(2.) We shall be enabled to make him our refuge in every time of need, and always to call upon him for all necessary assistance and deliverance. "To whom should a people seek but to their God." He who is the Author of this promise, represents it as absurd that they should seek to any other. And surely, when he engages that we shall be his people, it must include an engagement that we shall seek to him only, and not go *for the living to the dead*. Not only has he condescended to invite us to call upon him in the time of need; he has likewise pledged his faithfulness that we shall do so. The following promise looks both to the Head, and to all the members of the mystical body; "He shall call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble: I will deliver him, and honour him*."

You, who know any thing about yourselves, will not be disposed to look upon this promise as unnecessary; though, perhaps, it may appear so to those who are strangers to that enmity against God, and that estrangement from him, which are natural to the human heart. Indeed, it is most unreasonable that any, who believes that God is both able and willing to help, should be backward to make application to him for that purpose. There was never occasion for many arguments to persuade the worshippers of false gods, to apply to them for help in time of need. But all the arguments that can be used are not sufficient to prevail with them who profess to worship the true God, regularly and seasonably to call on him for what they

* Psal. xci. 15.

they stand in need of. Are you not convinced, Christian, that you have often been foiled by your spiritual enemies, have often come short in the performance of your duty, and often continued under severe affliction, for want of a timely application to the throne of grace for assistance? And if you are left to yourself, it will be so still. Such is the *folly* that is *bound up in your heart*, that you will never apply to God for any thing in an acceptable manner, till his grace determine and enable you to do so. Such grace is secured to you by promise. You *shall* both *call upon him*, and he *will answer you*.

(3.) We shall be enabled to persevere in the performance of all that religious worship which is due to him as God, and our God. It has been taken for granted, in all nations, and in all periods, that religious worship is due to none but a divine object; till a generation arose, who call themselves Christians, to the disgrace of that honourable name, and yet prove themselves the followers of antichrist, by this, among many other abominations, that they allow a kind of religious worship to various sorts of creatures. And if religious worship is due to none but a divine person, they who believe that there is but one God, must needs think it their duty to worship him only. So long as we continue to be the people of God, we must persist in worshipping him only, and that in the manner which himself has appointed. We must worship him with the heart, as well as with the outward man; “casting all *our* idols,” of every kind, “to the moles and to the bats;” and carefully observing all that God has commanded us, in this respect, without “adding thereto, or diminishing from it.” When a
people

people ceases to do this, they behave not as the people of God. And if they persist in such a foolish course, he is, at length, provoked to disown them, and to refuse to be their God. So it was with the people of Israel. "Ye are not my people," says God to them; "and I will not be your God*." The change of time, in this text, deserves to be carefully noticed. He does not say, "Ye are not my people; and I am not your God. *But ye are not, and I will not be.*" "You, by your idolatry, and corruption of my worship, have already ceased to be my people; and I, as a punishment for this, will also cease to be your God. The relation has been disowned, and the covenant dissolved, on your part; and it shall not much longer be maintained on mine."

But such a thing shall never take place with the New Testament Church, nor with any of her genuine members. They shall always be to God for a people; always will he continue to be to them a God; "and the idols will he utterly abolish." He will enable us still to maintain his instituted worship, and that in an acceptable manner; and still he will countenance and be present with us in it. His promise, considered in this view, has a partial accomplishment among us to-day; inasmuch as we have a regular dispensation of ordinances, and a number of persons brought together to celebrate them. Some, after all, may be afraid to take part in the solemn work before us, from a sense of the attachment of their heart to idols; and its backwardness to go along with their outward man, when attending the worship of God. On this account they may be afraid, lest, by joining outwardly

* Hos. i. 9.

outwardly in the work, they subject themselves to the punishment that is due to those who "draw near to God with the mouth, and honour him with the lip, while their heart is far from him." But know you not, poor soul, that the promise extends to your case also? You cannot be God's people unless you worship him only, in a way of renouncing all idols, and worship him with the heart as well as with the outward man. But he has promised that you shall be his people; and therefore you may trust him for grace to worship him, as becomes that character, both now and on every other occasion. Many other promises might be adduced for encouraging you to trust him for this. We shall mention but one, which God expressly designs as a testimony, both against your former idolatry and against your present unbelief. "Hear, O my people, and I will testify against thee: O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me. There shall no strange god be in thee: neither shalt thou worship any strange god." He adds what is extremely suitable, both to this subject and to the work of this day. "I am the LORD thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt; open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it*."

(4.) We shall be enabled to be zealous for God, and to stand up in behalf of his truths and ways against all who set themselves in opposition to either. That such a zeal is one essential qualification of God's people, is manifest from that remarkable expression of the Apostle, "Jesus Christ gave himself for us; that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

* Psa. lxxxvi. 8, 9.

“works*.” God’s peculiar people are to be zealous, not only in performing good works themselves, but likewise in promoting them among others: Consequently, in opposing and bearing testimony against all that is of a contrary nature and tendency; whether in those who are open enemies to God, or in them who profess to be of his people. And this, with every other necessary qualification belonging to the character, must be included in the promise of making us his people.

Beware, Christian, of indulging yourself in lukewarmness and indifference in the cause of God. Beware of going along with persons, or with churches, in any sinful course. Be not silent, or indifferent, when you see the authority of God contemned, his name profaned, his ordinances corrupted, his truths impugned, his people oppressed, or any part of his holy word perverted. By such silence, you should not only give reason to suspect, that hitherto you are none of his people; you should also cast a bar in the way of the accomplishment of this promise to you; and do what you can to render the death of Christ in vain, as far as it relates to you. God promises to make you his people, and Christ died to “purify you a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Thus, in zealously promoting all that is agreeable to the will of God, and opposing what is contrary thereunto, both in yourself and in others, by every proper and habile mean, you may expect to be assisted by divine grace. You may even hope to be graciously rewarded. Remember what was the promise of God concerning Phinehas, “Behold I give unto him my co-
“venant

* Tit. ii. 14.

“ covenant of peace : and he shall have it, and his seed
 “ after him ; even a covenant of an everlasting priest-
 “ hood ; because he was zealous for his God *.”

(5.) In a word, being made the people of God, according to this promise, we must needs be determined still to improve that fulness of grace and strength which is in the hand of our God, for enabling us to do every duty ; and to do in his name and strength, whatever we attempt to do in his service. Even heathens trusted in their gods for assistance in their enterprizes ; and when they were successful, they ascribed it to *their* interposal. The people of God of old are heard professing that they would do the same. “ All people will walk, every one in the name of his
 “ God ; and we will walk in the name of the LORD
 “ our God, for ever and ever †.” If it is a common thing for every people to walk in the name of their God, surely God cannot make us his people, without determining and enabling us to walk in his name ; which is the same thing with going always in his strength.

There are few who know any thing about Christianity, but can talk of doing things in God’s strength. Many talk of it in a very ignorant and thoughtless manner. But they who know any thing of this matter by experience, are sensible, that really to make use of divine strength, in the performance of duty, is a thing not easily obtained. On this account it is necessary, not only that you depend on divine strength in all that you do in God’s service ; but also that you depend on God’s faithfulness, for enabling you to renounce your own strength, and to make a believing
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* Numb. xxv. 12, 13.

Mic. iv. 5.

improvement of *that* which he has laid up in the hand of Christ. For your encouragement herein, you have not only the general promise in the text, but likewise a variety of particular promises, more immediately relating to this matter. There is one very remarkable, in which God has engaged, not only to communicate strength to you according to your day, but also to determine and enable you to make use of it. "I will strengthen them in the Lord; and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the LORD *."

It is now high time to conclude with some improvement of the subject. We shall content ourselves, for the present, with the following inferences.

1. From what has been said, we may see one very remarkable difference between the covenant of grace, as it is exhibited in the gospel, and actually made with every Christian in the day of believing, a difference, I say, between this and all other covenants. In all covenants there are mutual engagements entered into by both parties respectively; and something which they become bound to perform one to another, on both sides. So far this covenant agrees with all others. God graciously binds himself to be our God, and to deal with us, in all cases, according to that character. And we, on the other hand, by our acceptance of God's covenant, bind ourselves to be his people, and to perform all that worship and obedience which we owe to him in that capacity; not as the condition of what he is to do for us, far from it, but as a testimony of our gratitude for it. But the amazing difference between this and every other covenant lies in this, that here one party binds himself

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* Zech. x. 12.

for the performance of the engagements of both. God obliges himself, by his faithful word of promise, not only to be our God, and to do all for us that this character may warrant us to expect; but also to make us his people, and that we, through his grace assisting us, shall behave dutifully in that relation.

Indeed, if it were otherwise, our entering into covenant with God would be to no purpose. The covenant that God makes with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, in New Testament days, would be broken and dissolved, as quickly as was that which he made with the *first Adam* in our name. We could no more perform the duties that we owe to God as our God, by our own strength, than we could perform the whole condition of the covenant of works. But, seeing God has engaged to work all our works in us and by us, as well as do all his own work for us, there is not a Christian so weak, but, like Paul, he may do all things, through Christ strengthening him. Let not, then, a sense of your own weakness, nor a sense of the difficulty of your work, cause your heart to faint, or your hands to hang down. Be not afraid of the strength of your spiritual enemies, nor let your courage fail, because you feel that you are no match for them. But learn in the midst of weakness to be strong. Your strength is omnipotence itself. And, so long as nothing is required of you that God cannot perform in you and by you, you have no reason to be discouraged, or to doubt of success. “Be strong, *therefore*, in the Lord, and in “the power of his might.”

2. We may see that all true Christians are really covenanters with God, however little relish some of them

them may have for the name. God makes an open and free exhibition of the covenant of grace to all the hearers of the gospel. He proposes to *make this new covenant* with every person who belongs to *the house of Israel*, or to *the house of Judah*; that is, to the New Testament Church. Every Christian, in the day of believing, accepts God's gracious offer, gives his consent to the whole covenant, as so exhibited; and thus *makes a covenant with God*, through the intervention of the sacrifice of Christ. Accordingly, he becomes engaged, in the strength of covenanted grace, not only to have and acknowledge God for his God; but also to consider himself as one of God's people, and, in all time coming, to behave himself agreeably to that character. And what is it that any formal covenanter does more? We disclaim all those impious and blasphemous attempts, with which we are charged by some, to bind the great God to terms of our making. We disclaim all covenants with God, that are not of his own making, of his own proposing. We openly disclaim all that covenanting with God which amounts to any thing more, or to any thing less, than a formal and explicit declaration of our acceptance of God's covenant of grace, and of our hearty consent to the gracious offer and promise contained in this text. We are bold to challenge all the enemies of that despised work, to produce one sentence in our Bond, or what is usually called our Covenant of Duties, that is not manifestly included in such a consent; or any sentence that does not express the genuine language of the heart of every believer, when he takes hold of the covenant by faith. And, though all the men on
earth

earth should set themselves against it, whether professors of religion or profane persons, we hope never to be ashamed, to say before angels, men, and devils, what God has graciously said before us, and what every genuine Christian says in his heart; that *he* shall be to us *a God*, and we, through his grace, *shall be* to him *a people*.

It is not strange to find all the open enemies of religion combined, as in fact they are, in the strongest and firmest manner, against the duty of covenanting. They act in character. A thing so manifestly of God, cannot fail to meet with opposition from his stated enemies. But how *they* should join in that combination who are friends to God, and in their hearts approve the covenant of grace, and have laid hold upon it, is really unaccountable. Are you pleased with God's covenant in your heart, and yet ashamed to avouch it before the world? Are you willing to be the people of God, but unwilling that any should know it? Have you really covenanted with God in secret, or in your heart; and dare you condemn and revile those who do the same thing in an open and explicit manner? In all this are you not self-condemned? Being really the people of God, do you not openly take part with his enemies, in opposing that work to which you have put your own hand, though in a secret manner? "Tell it not in Gath; publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon: lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughter of the uncircumcised triumph."

3. From hence we may see, that neither faith nor repentance, nor sincere obedience, nor any thing else wrought in us or done by us, can be the condition of

the covenant of grace. The whole substance of that covenant, as it is made with us, is exprest in this text; and all that is here exprest is to be performed by God himself. As made with Christ from all eternity, this covenant had a very arduous condition; but, as made with us through Christ, it is absolutely free and unconditional. It is properly a *covenant of promise*. To us it is exhibited as a covenant already fulfilled by Christ, in the whole condition of it. And in laying hold of the covenant, we give our consent to the fulfilment of its whole condition by Christ, as well as to every thing else that it contains; renouncing our own righteousness in every form, and disclaiming all right to any of its promises, founded on any thing about ourselves. We engage, indeed, to perform obedience to God's law, considered as the law of Christ, as becomes his people; but not with a view to found our claim to the accomplishment of the promise, nor in a way of considering what we engage unto as any part of the condition of the covenant. We have seen, that all that we engage to do is contained in the promise of the covenant. And it is only in consequence of the accomplishment of the promise to us, that we can perform our engagements. When we perform them acceptably, it is only in the strength of promised grace. Our success in such endeavours is solely owing to God's assistance; and the work, when done, is much more properly his than ours. Thus, instead of engaging to fulfil the condition of the covenant, we consent to have all our dependence upon Christ's fulfilment of it for us; and we engage to do nothing, unless in the faith that God, according to the promise of the covenant, will work it in us and by us.

4. We may see from this subject, that real Christians are the only happy persons in the world. All the things that men value or esteem, and in which they look for happiness, riches, honours, power, pleasure, they possess in a supereminent degree. They are the only persons who deserve to be called rich; having an interest in God himself, an infinite and inexhaustible good as their portion and inheritance. In comparison of this, all other possessions are but dross and dung. The sole heir of both the Indies would be a poor man without this. And, having an interest in this, the beggar on the dunghill is richer than the owner of a world. They only are dignified and honourable persons; being allied to heaven itself. To be married or adopted into the family of an earthly prince, is considered as the summit of honour and dignity in the kingdoms of this world. But Christians are espoused to "the Prince of the kings of the earth." They are adopted into the family of the Father of eternity. To express all in few words,—they are in covenant with God. They only deserve to be considered as powerful persons. The man who rules the most extensive empire, whose victories hold the whole world in awe, is liable to be overthrown in the midst of his success, and levelled with the meanest of his slaves, the moment that God sees meet to strike the blow. But God himself is on the Christian's side, and all the power of his almighty arm is ready to be exerted in his behalf. Hence Jacob, though but a *worm*, may "thresh the mountains *into* dust;" and, by faith in the power of God, the weakest Christian, if called, may "subdue kingdoms, and put to flight *whole* armies of the aliens." None but they enjoy true and

solid pleasure. God can and does make them *glad with his countenance*, more than other men can be *when their corn and their wine are increased*, and all other sensual gratifications. They only have a valid title to what they enjoy, and hold it by a sure tenure. The covenant of God is their security for all that they possess, and for all that they need, even of the good things of the present life; and, while God is faithful, they can want nothing. In a word, they only have a comfortable prospect after death, and a *good hope* for eternity. "The things that are not seen, and are "eternal," are secured to them by covenant. They have a "house, not made with hands, eternal in the "heavens;" upon the possession of which they shall enter, when "the earthly house of this tabernacle "shall be dissolved." They have "an inheritance, "incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, "reserved in heaven for *them*." Yea, they have "a "kingdom that shall never be moved; prepared for "them before the foundation of the world." This, believer, is an inventory; a very general, and a very defective inventory of what is yours, by virtue of this covenant that subsists between God and you. All this you either possess now, or shall possess in a little; and inexpressibly more than this, more than ever mortal *eye saw*, more than ever mortal *ear heard*; yea, incomparably more than ever the *heart* of any mortal could possibly *conceive*. Have you any reason, then, to be envious, or grudge when you "see "the prosperity of the wicked?" What was Alexander, amidst all his conquests, but a weak and contemptible insect, crushed like a moth by the power that is your Rock and Stay? What was Cræsus, amidst all his

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his treasures, but a bankrupt in comparison of the poorest of you? Haman, possessor of all the honours that the ruler of *an hundred and seven and twenty provinces* could bestow, was less honourable than the meanest of you. Yea, *Solomon in all his glory*, and amidst all the carnal delights by which his heart was drawn aside, enjoyed no pleasure so solid, or so exquisite, as one moment of real communion with God will afford you. Ye that are strangers to this covenant, what think you of the blessed people who are interested in all its contents? Do you not yet long to be among their number? Are you not constrained to say concerning them, "Happy is the people that is in such a case: yea, happy is the people whose God is the LORD?"

I MUST come to a conclusion with a short word of exhortation.

"Let Israel be glad in him that made him; and let the children of Zion be joyful in their *God and King.*" Beware of suffering any sublunary good to draw away your hearts from him. Beware of suffering any temporal evil to diminish, or, in the smallest degree, to damp your joy and rejoicing in him. Let not any supposed attainments of your own inspire you with one thought of living a moment without him; or of attempting the least duty, without an immediate dependence upon his strength and grace. Nor let any felt unworthiness or insufficiency about yourself, influence you to stand at a distance from any thing that your God requires of you. Still go in the strength of the Lord God, making mention of his righteousness, even of his only. In this way come forward to

his holy table, over the belly of all difficulties and doubts from within; of all the suggestions of Satan from without; of all discouragement, and of all opposition, from hell or earth; and there avouch your covenant with God, your interest in him, your relation to him, and your voluntary dedication of yourself to his service. God is ready to set his seal to the covenant on his part; and see that you be not backward to seal it also on yours. Let it be seen, by your conduct and appearance to-day, that you are not ashamed to say before God, as a reply to his gracious promise; to say before his holy angels, who are present in the worshipping assemblies of the church; to say in the face of devils, in a way of bidding them an open defiance; to say in the hearing of fellow Christians, for their encouragement; and to say in the audience of those who are strangers to God's covenant, that, if possible, they may be stirred up to take hold of it; to say, in a word, before all the rational world, if you had an opportunity, what God has warranted you to say, by saying it before you, "He is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand; to-day if ye will hear his voice;"—

To-day, O sinner, that continuest under the broken covenant of works; "to-day, if ye will hear his voice, then harden not your heart as in the provocation." What think you of the gracious invitation that is given you by God himself, that is repeated by his servants in his name, that is echoed from the mouths of all who now are "the people of his pasture; to-day, if ye will hear his voice? The Spirit and the Bride say come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Let him take the Fountain
of

of life himself, as his God and portion, and that freely. He is presently making an offer of himself to you, as your God. He is presently declaring his willingness, yea, his earnest desire to have you for one of his people. He is willing to deal with you as such, from this day forth; not in time only, but through an endless eternity. All the riches, dignity, power, pleasure, and happiness, of which you were just now hearing, are yours for the receiving. If you will but say *Amen* to God's covenant of promise, he will make no further account of all that you have done against him. It shall be, in his sight, as if it had never been; and you shall be as if you had "never been cast off." On the contrary, if you persist in rejecting his offered covenant, this will bind down all your other sins upon your head; and will itself be considered as the most atrocious of them all. As you love your own soul, therefore, and wish for its eternal happiness, beware of rejecting your own mercy; and bringing upon yourself the curse of the broken covenant of works, while God makes you welcome to all the blessings of the covenant of grace. This moment is God ready to "make with you an everlasting covenant; even "the sure mercies of David;" of which covenant, the sum and substance is expressed in this precious promise, *I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.*

Let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the LORD.

*An Use of Trial, delivered in the Fencing of the
Tables.*

AMONG the many inestimable privileges that God has bestowed upon his covenanted people, it is none of the least, that he “ covers a table for them in “ presence of *their* enemies.” He giveth meat unto them that fear him, as an evidence that “ he is ever “ mindful of his covenant.” In the dispensation of the word, he has been, and still is, making a feast unto all people. But the feast which we are now to celebrate is designed for his own covenanted people only. And therefore you who have received tokens of admision, are called to examine yourselves, whether you belong to that number or not. “ Let a man “ examine himself; and so let him eat of that bread, “ and drink of that cup.”

The subject from which we have been speaking affords a variety of interesting marks, by which you may try yourselves. And, in agreeableness to what you have been hearing, we would ask you,—and we make bold to charge you, by the authority of this God whose covenant has been exhibited to you,—that you ask your own consciences the following questions.

1. What think you of the gracious promise that has this day been published among you? Are you satisfied that it is the word of God? Do you believe him

to be in earnest in what he says? Do you consider it as said to you? And is it your desire and aim, to trust in God for the accomplishment of both parts of it? Is this the exercise in which you wish to be employed, both now and at the communion-table; and are you grieved for that unbelief, which tends so much to mar you in it? Then you are one of God's peculiar people; and we invite you to the holy table, where you may receive the seal of the covenant. But if you have only been receiving the promise as *the word of men*; if you regard it as an idle tale; if you consider it as a thing in which you have no personal concern; if you allow yourself to question the accomplishment of it; if none of these things be matter of humiliation to you; or if you have no sincere desire that it were otherwise; then you are a stranger to the covenant of promise, and, in that condition, can have nothing to do at the *Lord's table*.

2. What think you of your need of this covenant, and of your ruined state, while under the covenant of works? When God brings any person into the number of his people, he first opens their eyes to see their dismal condition, while under the curse of Adam's broken covenant. They see the justice of God, armed with vengeance against them; and all the divine perfections, engaged by covenant to bring them to endless misery. The view of this makes them joyfully to welcome the glad tidings of another covenant, entered into for their relief. If this has been the case with you, we invite you to this holy table. But if you still live in security within the flood-mark of divine wrath, and have never been affected with the dreadful curse of the old covenant, which you saw, or
perhaps

perhaps never saw, hanging over your head; then you must be a despiser of God's Covenant, for you never saw your need of it; and, while this is the case, we debar you from the holy table of the Lord.

3. What think you of God's condescending to enter into covenant with you? Job had such a view of his own vileness, and of the infinite glory and greatness of God; that he speaks of it as matter of wonder, that God should condescend to chastise him, or even to bestow a look upon him*. How much more reason have we to wonder, when, instead of *bringing us into judgment*, he brings us into covenant with himself? Does this consideration, then, fill you with holy amazement and adoration? And is it the language of your heart, "Dost thou open thine eyes up-
" such an one; and bringest me into *covenant* with
" thee?" It is a comfortable sign that you are within the covenant, and are welcome to the seal of it. But if you have such low thoughts of God, or such high and conceited thoughts of yourself, as lead you to apprehend that you have any claim to such an honour, or prevent your being affected with wonder at such divine condescension; then you know nothing experimentally about this covenant, and are utterly unfit for the holy table of the Lord.

4. What think you of the scheme of the covenant; that wonderful plan, for the redemption of mankind sinners, which was laid, in the original making of the covenant, from all eternity? No person can embrace this covenant, till he enjoy such a discovery of the plan of salvation therein laid, as may convince him of its exact suitability, both to his own necessities,
and

* Job xiv. 3.

and to the glory of all the divine perfections. It is one article of this covenant, that all who are brought within it, being taught of God, and having an experimental acquaintance with him, know him and his will, in a better manner than they could attain by any human instruction. If, therefore, you have seen the beauty, the order, the glory of the covenant; the harmony and due subordination of the several parts of it, and the suitableness of the whole, to promote the honour of God, and the happiness of his covenant-ed people; so as to be rationally convinced, that it is "ordered in all things and sure;" and to make choice "of it, as "all *your* salvation and all *your* desire;" then you are one of God's people, and are welcome to a share in their provision. But if the covenant of grace appears to you, as the glorious Head of it once did to the prejudiced Jews, "like a root out of a dry "ground, *having* no form nor comeliness in it why it "should be desired;" then you are a stranger to the covenant, for you have no understanding of its constitution; and how can you be fit to partake worthily in the seal of it?

5. What think you of Christ, the head of the covenant? All who are God's people, are savingly united to Christ, and have been determined to embrace him, and unite with him, by a believing view of his love, his loveliness, the matchless excellency of every thing about him, and his exact suitableness to every branch of their need. This has effectually convinced them that there is no *other beloved*, who deserves a comparison with him; that no other can be worthy of their affections, when he lays claim to them. Is the language of your soul concerning him, the same that is expressed

expressed by the Spouse, "My beloved is white and ruddy; the chiefest among ten thousand. His mouth is most sweet; yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem!" Then you are invited to sit with him at the "banquet of wine." There will he *give* you his *loves*. But if you see not any thing to recommend Christ "more than another beloved;" if a view of his love has never constrained you to love him; if you think that you love him enough, or are not grieved, because your love corresponds so little either to his love or to his loveliness; then you are strangers to him whom God has given for a covenant of the people; and you cannot, in your present condition, be welcome to his holy table.

6. What think you of *the blood of the covenant*? The main design of that solemn ordinance, which we are about to celebrate, is to keep up the remembrance of the shedding of that precious blood; by which the covenant was confirmed, and still is *confirmed with many*. And surely they are unworthy to take part in this work, who do not consider that blood, or the shedding of it, as worthy to be remembered. Have you, then, been determined to consider the shedding of this blood, as the most glorious and wonderful event that ever the sun shone, or refused to shine upon? Is this blood the sole ground of all your pleadings with God, and of all your expectations from him? Does the love of Christ, evidenced by the shedding of his blood for you, appear to you as surpassing all description, all comprehension, all knowledge? Is it your motive, in going forward to the Lord's table, notwithstanding all the difficulties in your way; that
 you

you may cast in your mite to keep up the remembrance of this love, and of the shedding of this precious blood, *till he come again?* And, as you go forward, are you aiming to learn and to sing that song, “Thou art worthy to take the book, and to loose the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood; and hast made us kings and priests unto our God; and we shall reign on the earth?” Then we are warranted kindly to invite you to eat the sacramental bread, and to drink that cup which is “the New Testament in his blood, which was shed for you.” But if you are still disposed to “trample under foot the Son of God; and to count the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing:” If you dare substitute your own ragged righteousness, or any thing else, in the room of that atoning blood; if you still persist in “crucifying to yourselves afresh the Son of God,” and putting him to an open shame, by habitual unbelief; or if you have never been humbled in the sight of God, for the shameful treatment that you have formerly given, both to Christ and his blood, at his table and otherways; then your eating and drinking at the sacramental table, in your present condition, would be to “betray the Son of man with a kiss,” and make yourself “guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.” And therefore, in sympathy to your soul, as well as in obedience to the command of Christ, we must debar you from this holy table of the Lord.

7. What think you of God’s part of the covenant? Are you satisfied that he should be your God, according to it? Have you ever seen the vanity of all earthly

ly

ly possessions? Are you convinced, that, by reason of their passing nature, as well as by reason of their unfitness to yield satisfaction in the time of enjoyment, they can never make you happy? Is it matter of rejoicing to you, that the eternal and all-sufficient God is offering himself to you as a portion, and engaging to be your God? And is it your desire, that the language of your heart should be the same, that is so sweetly sung by the royal Psalmist, "This God is our God for ever and ever; *and* he will be our guide, even unto death*?" Then God is willing to take you at your word; and he invites you to have his gracious grant sealed to you at his table. But if you still prefer the trash of this world to him; if you suffer your desires to wander, without restraint, among the vanities of time; and are not concerned to have them collected, and centring in him; if you fondly pursue that happiness among the creatures, concerning which all say, with one voice, It is not in me: If you allow the chief room in your heart to any thing below God; or if you was never humbled for your disposition to choose his rivals in preference to him; it is a sad evidence that you have no present interest in God himself; and what have you to do at his table?

8. What think you of your own part of the covenant? Are you heartily willing, through his grace, to be his people? We call it your part of the covenant; not as if you were to perform it by your own strength; far less as if your performance of it was the condition of God's performing his part. Christ, your Surety, has fulfilled the whole condition of the covenant;

* Psa. xlviii. *ult.*

nant; and therefore, considered as God makes it with you, it has no condition at all. But it is your part of the covenant, inasmuch as, by your acceptance of the covenant, you become engaged to perform it, in the strength of that grace with which God has engaged to furnish you; and in the faith that he will effectually “work in *you*, both to will and to do of “his good pleasure.” Are you sensible that you are not your own, and desirous to be satisfied that it should be so? Are you aiming at a cheerful submission to all the disposals of God’s providence, knowing that he has a right to use you as his own? Do you resolve, and through grace endeavour, to employ yourself always in his service, and to “be to the praise of his “glory?” And are you humbled for all that you feel about yourself, of a disposition to alienate what you had devoted? Then these are the genuine marks of his peculiar people, and you are welcome to the table which he has covered for such. But if you still refuse to *give yourselves to the Lord*; or, after pretending to do so, indulge yourself in the service of Satan, of Mammon, or any other idol or lust; if you allow yourself in murmuring at his dispensations. In a word, if you was never sensible of a disposition about yourself to revoke the dedication that has been made of you to God, nor humbled before him on account of it; then you are hitherto none of his people; and why should you appear among them at his holy table?

9. What think you of the law of the covenant? Do not startle at the expression. It is very proper, if rightly understood. It is true, that, in a certain sense, the law is the direct reverse of the covenant of grace; and

and all who are within the covenant are delivered from the power of the law. But there is another sense in which they are sweetly subservient to one another. The law was delivered to our first father, in the form of a covenant of works. And, in consequence of the breach of that covenant, all the posterity of Adam, in their natural estate, are subject to the law, as a cruel and rigorous husband; breathing nothing but curses and condemnation, because of our disobedience. From the law in that capacity, every one of God's covenanted people is delivered. But they are not delivered from the law in every form. "We are not without law to God, but under the law to Christ." The law is now grafted into the covenant of grace; and every person who gives his consent to that covenant, consents also to the law, as the rule of his covenanted obedience. As he gives ear to Christ as the Prophet, and employs him as the Priest of the covenant; so he cheerfully submits to him as the King of it, and gladly receives the law at his mouth. He makes it his study to imitate the example of the Head of the covenant; in a regular obedience to every precept of the law; and resolves, through divine grace, to persist in that course, to the end of his mortal life.

We cannot now take time to give you a particular explication of the several precepts of the divine law: Such explications you have often heard, on occasions of this nature. But, if you are God's people, you will pay a due regard to all the precepts of both tables; both in your outward life and conversation, and in the inward exercise and frame of your hearts. More particularly,

You

You will use every proper mean for attaining, and for growing in the saving knowledge of God; you will not be ashamed to acknowledge him as your God, in any case, in any place, or in any company; and, through his grace, you will be concerned to love, fear, obey, honour, and adore him, to believe and trust in him as your God. You will carefully maintain all that religious worship which you owe to him, in your closet, in your family, and in the public assemblies of his people; and will contend, in your station, for the purity of all his institutions, relative to the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of his house. You will maintain a holy reverence for all that whereby he makes himself known; particularly for his written word, for all the titles and attributes that are there ascribed to him, and for all the ordinances there instituted by him; such as oaths, religious vows, and lots. You will practically “call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable;” and will honour him on that day, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words.

Moreover, all who are God’s people make conscience of performing their duty towards their brethren, and towards all men; as the second table of the law requires. They reverence their superiors, and submit to them in the Lord; they love and cherish their inferiors; they give all due benevolence to their equals; and are patient towards all men. They abhor every thing that tends to take away their own life, or that of their neighbour, or to render it uneasy. They hate the garments spotted with the flesh; and stand at the utmost distance from all appearances of un-

cleanness, and all temptations to it. They take every method in their power, lawfully to promote their neighbour's wealth, as well as their own; and avoid carefully all that has an opposite tendency. They habitually "speak the truth in *their* heart; *being* "children that will not lie." And they abhor covetousness, in every form, as gross idolatry.

If these things be in you, and abound, we pronounce you the people of God; and invite you to communion, both with him and with your brethren, at the sacramental table. But if you dare follow an opposite practice, habitually neglecting any known duty, indulging yourself in any known sin, or being unconcerned when you are drawn aside from the way of God's commandments; whether by the temptations of Satan, or by the prevalence of indwelling corruption; if you pique yourself upon your obedience to the precepts of the first table, to the neglect of those of the second; or if you value yourself upon that morality, which consists in external obedience to the second table, in a way of overlooking the obligation that the first table lays upon you to perform your duty to God; if you have not seen yourself a debtor to the whole law, as having broken every precept of it, times and ways without number; or, if you have never been determined to flee to the blood of a crucified Redeemer, as the sole atonement for sin, and the sole ground upon which you expect the pardon of all your transgressions; then you are "yet
 "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of in-
 "quity." While that is the case, you have "neither
 "part nor lot in this matter;" and it shall be at
 your

your peril, if you approach the holy table of the Lord.

10. In one word, What think you of that inexhaustible treasure of grace and strength which is lodged in the hand of Christ, according to the covenant; to be bestowed upon all the people of God, as their circumstances require? Are you sensible, that of yourself you can do nothing in God's service? Do you aim at a continual dependence upon covenanted grace, for the performance of all the duties that are incumbent on you as God's people? Is it in this dependence, that you set forward to the duty of communicating; though sensible of your own unfitness, and insufficiency for such work? And is it, through grace, your fixed resolution, always to "go in the strength of the Lord God; *making* mention of his righteousness, even of his only?" Then you are within this happy covenant, and may cheerfully come forward to receive the seal of it. But if you have never been sensible, that, of yourself, you are incapable of any action spiritually good, being dead in trespasses and sins; if you think yourself able to perform the work, in which you propose to be engaged, without the aid of divine grace, or by any grace, which you have already received; if you are not willing to be indebted to the grace of God, venting through the imputed righteousness of Christ, in the way of the new covenant, for all that you do, as well as all that you enjoy; you are hitherto none of God's covenanted people; and you can have no immediate right to intermeddle with this seal of the covenant.

Not to detain you longer, Let every intended communicant beware of eating and drinking judgment

to himself ; by approaching this holy table, either in a way of seeking happiness by the covenant of works ; or, by unbelief, refusing to enter within the covenant of grace. And let every person who has said *Amen* to the promise in the text, or is willing now to say *Amen* to it, come cheerfully forward to the communion-table, to have the covenant ratified and sealed between God and him ; and the most ample security given him, for the everlasting possession of all that is included in the gracious declaration, *I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.*

S E R-

S E R M O N V.

The first Promise illustrated.

P A R T I.

GEN. iii. 15.

I WILL PUT ENMITY BETWEEN THEE AND THE WOMAN, AND BETWEEN THY SEED AND HER SEED.

WHEN our first parents were called to account for their sin, God addressed himself first to Adam: When he cast the blame upon his wife, God proceeded to examine her also. And when she accused the serpent as her seducer, he directs his discourse to it. Having thus convicted all the parties concerned in the transgression, he declares the consequences that should follow upon it; to the serpent, to the devil who influenced it; to the woman; and, last of all, to Adam himself, with whose examination he had begun.

The sentence passed against the tempter was dismal indeed. No ray of hope was left him; but he was irreversibly condemned to suffer the due reward

of his deeds. It was otherwise with regard to mankind. Though terrible things were denounced against us in righteousness; yet a door of hope was set open before us, which shall never be shut while time remains. We were condemned to suffer a variety of temporal miseries; but "life and immortality were brought to light," and encouragement was given us to look for a happy eternity, by the words recorded in this verse. This eternal happiness was not to be enjoyed by all mankind, though they were all to be subject to the miseries of this life; but only by a select number, here denominated *the seed of the woman*; whom God would finally deliver from all the direful effects of Satan's power and policy.

And it deserves to be remarked, that this promise is addressed to the old serpent himself, as a part of his sentence. And thus the revelation of mercy to us is interwoven with the denunciation of wrath against our destroyer. This may have been the case for two reasons: *1st*, To intimate, that as envy at the happiness of mankind was Satan's motive for seducing them, so the eternal gnawings of that same envy should be a principal ingredient in his punishment. God would place a number of mankind in such a state, that he should have occasion to envy us for ever; and, by means of that nature which he had attempted finally to ruin, united to the Person of the Son of God, a punishment should be inflicted upon him, more terrible than he could have suffered if he had never drawn mankind into sin. *2dly*, To allay the terror that had seized our first parents upon the appearance of the Judge. While God was passing sentence against the serpent, Adam and Eve stood trembling before him, expecting

expecting a similar sentence to be past against themselves in their turn. In this sad condition, a ray of hope darted in upon them unawares. God prevented them, as he often does their posterity, "with the blessings of *his* goodness;" and gave them a revelation of mercy, even sooner than they expected to hear the denunciation of wrath.

This merciful revelation consists of two parts. In the *first*, God denounces a warfare, to ensue betwixt the serpent and his seed on the one part; and the woman and her seed on the other. In the *second*, he foretels a notable victory, to be obtained by the latter party over the former. It is only the first of these, from which we intend a few thoughts at present; as we have it in these words, *I will put enmity between thee and the woman; and between thy seed and her seed.* In which words we may observe the following things.

1. The party speaking, in the pronoun *I*. It was Jehovah himself, in the person of the eternal Son; whom some take to be meant by "the voice of the *LORD* God," mentioned in ver. 8. It was now that he began to act in his Mediator character. He published his Father's will, relative to our salvation, as the Prophet of the new covenant; and, as our King, denounced war in his own name, and in name of all his spiritual seed, against Satan and all the abettors of his interests.

2. The parties spoken of; and here we find "the company of two armies." On the one side stands Eve, our common mother, and all those of her posterity who should be partakers of like precious faith with her; under the conduct of that illustrious Person,

son,

son, who is called, by way of eminence, *the seed of the woman*. . And, on the other side is that *old serpent, who is called the devil and Satan*, at the head of all the forces of the bottomless pit; with whom are confederated all those of mankind who continue to bear the devil's image, and to do his works.

3. We have the disposition of these two parties towards one another. There is a mortal enmity between them; an enmity productive of a war that shall never be terminated, but by the total destruction of one of the parties; an enmity so violent, that the exercise of it has never been intermitted since these words were uttered; nor will it ever be abolished, through the remotest ages of eternity.

4. We have the origin of this enmity; or the spring from whence it arises. God put it between them. *Behold, we shew you a mystery. The very God of peace* becoming the Author of a mortal enmity. Satan, by the introduction of sin, put enmity into the hearts of men against God. And God, in the riches of his mercy to us, and in just indignation against the devil, hath put enmity between him and a chosen remnant of our family.

This subject we shall endeavour, through divine assistance, to elucidate in the following order.

I. We shall enquire into the general import of the words.

II. We shall consider, more particularly, whom we are to understand by the seed of the serpent, and by the seed of the woman.

III. We shall speak of that enmity which subsists between these two.

IV. We

IV. We shall consider in what sense it is that God puts this enmity between them. And,

V. Apply the whole.

I. THE words, among other things, plainly import.

1. That, in all futurity, there should be a remarkable aversion between the race of mankind and the whole *genus* of serpents. I am far from thinking that the words relate only, or mainly, to the serpent, literally considered. But I cannot think that they are without any relation to it; more especially, in regard that the preceding words are mainly intended of it. At first, all the creatures were made subject to man; and they all had an attachment to him as their master. And, as the serpent seems to have been remarkable for a sagacity approaching to reason; it is natural to think, that there would be such an attachment between it and its master, as we now see between mankind and some of those animals that are most sagacious and docile. But now, though there are various serpents of the most beautiful appearance and perfectly harmless in their natures; yet mankind have still a natural aversion to every species of these reptiles; and they to mankind. And, in this natural aversion, or antipathy, we have a visible proof of divine revelation, (particularly of that part of it which relates to the origin of evil,) before our eyes to this day.

2. As the words relate chiefly to the devil, who is called *the old serpent*; with regard to him they import, that, when they were spoken, there was at least a semblance or appearance of friendship between him and the woman; otherwise there could have been

no occasion to *put enmity* between them. A real friendship there could not be. The devil had a fixed principle of hatred against mankind. And this it was that influenced him to attempt their ruin. But he disguised his enmity, under a pretence of friendship. As for the woman, she could have no real friendship for Satan; for she knew him not. But what he appeared to be she loved and esteemed. Both she and her husband had acted a part the most friendly to his interests. It was with them, as it still is with all their posterity while in a natural estate. Whatever was their disposition towards the devil, they acted in the very manner in which they would have acted if they had been his hearty friends.

3. That this semblance of friendship could not be broken, nor open enmity introduced between the woman and the serpent, otherwise than by the immediate interposition of the hand of God. Satan had prevailed so far, by his first temptation, that our first parents were confederate with him in his rebellion against his Creator. And so firmly were they attached to his interests, that nothing but the power that made them could draw them off from the confederacy. A disposition to rebel against God was already become natural to them. In the same depraved state is their nature transmitted to their posterity. And nothing can ever make any of us real enemies to Satan's interests, but the efficacious operation of the Holy Ghost.

4. That, notwithstanding all this, an open and avowed enmity should take place between the woman and the serpent. All appearances of friendship should be laid aside, on the one part; and the falsehood of all

all such appearances, on the other side, should be clearly discovered. Thus, though Eve was the first subject of Satan's kingdom in this world; she was likewise the first to shake off his yoke, and become a subject of the Redeemer, who is here promised under the designation of the woman's seed. Though she was the first sinner, she was also the first saint. Not only was this enmity to subsist between the serpent and the seed of the woman; it is expressly said, that it should first be *put between him and the woman* herself. Thus David's Antitype gave an illustrious proof of what he would afterwards do, for the whole flock that his Father had committed to his charge; by snatching, in a sudden and surprising manner, from the paw of the devouring lion, the very first lamb of which he expected to make a prey.

5. That the woman on the one side, and the serpent on the other, should have each a *seed*; who might adhere to the interests, and espouse the quarrel of their parents respectively. The devil, being a spirit, does not propagate his species by generation. He cannot, therefore, have a seed in a literal sense. The words must be understood in such a sense as may be competent to a spirit. They are his seed who bear his image; and are partakers of the same mischievous, wicked, and malignant nature with himself. As to the woman, she had seed in a literal sense; but it cannot be her natural posterity, as such, that are here intended. Many of them, alas! live and die in the confederacy with Satan; and are chief promoters of his interests. Even her first son, whom she seems fondly to have taken for the *seed* of the *promise*, was so manifestly of the devil's party, that he *slew his brother*;

brother ; and that for no other reason, but *because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.* The seed of the woman, therefore, must also be understood in a spiritual sense;—of those who bear the woman's likeness, as being partakers of the same renewed nature that was communicated to her, in accomplishment of this promise.

6. That the same enmity, which should subsist between the woman and the serpent, should be propagated, and continue to subsist between their seeds respectively, to the latest posterity. The old serpent is an enemy to the seed of the woman, as well as he was to herself. No sooner is a child born to her, in a spiritual sense, than he opens his mouth to devour it. And every person who belongs to his seed bears his image in this, as well as in other respects. They always hate the seed of the woman; next to God himself, who is the supreme object of their enmity. And they are always disposed to seek their ruin. If there is any time, when they do not carry their rancour against them to the same height as on other occasions, it is not owing to any change in their disposition; but solely to those restraints that God lays upon them, for ends becoming himself. On the other hand, next to that *abominable thing which God hates*, Satan, who is the author of it, is the supreme object of hatred, abhorrence, and enmity, to all the genuine seed of the woman. They are in a state of perpetual warfare against him, and against all the interests of his kingdom. As for the seed of the serpent, though they love their persons, as the workmanship of God, and wish them as well as their own souls, both in this world and in the world to come; yet they are mortal

mortal enemies to their ways. They hate the image of their father appearing about them. And they cannot but stand up for God, in opposition to them, when they see them doing their father's works.

II. WE proceed to enquire, more particularly, whom we are to understand by the seed of the serpent, and of the woman. And,

First, As to the seed of the serpent, they are distinguished into two tribes, or families.

The first comprehends all those wicked spirits who joined with Satan in his rebellion; and are now joined with him in the same condemnation. God is called *the Father of spirits*; because, being himself the supreme, independent, and uncreated Spirit, all other spirits resemble him in the immateriality and immortality of their natures; as children resemble their father. And on this account, as well as because they bear the image of his moral perfections, those angels who kept their first estate are called *the sons of God*. On a similar account, fallen angels may be called the seed or children of Satan, *the old serpent*. They all bear his image; are united into one society, under him as their head; and honour and obey him, as children do their father. Hence he may be called the Father, as well as the *Prince of Devils*. Perhaps there is no passage of scripture where they are expressly so called: But as the enmity against the woman's seed, which is mentioned in the text, is common to them all; and as they always give their assistance in the warfare against them, we cannot but look upon them as here included.

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The other family of the serpent's seed, contains all those of mankind who continue in their natural estate. What our Lord said to the Jews of his time, may, with the same propriety, be said of all mankind, while they are strangers to the new birth; "Ye are of your father the devil, and the works of your father ye will do *." Though they are *the seed of the woman* in a literal, they are the *seed of the serpent* in a spiritual sense. And they may be so called on the following accounts.

1. Because as the natural father is the instrument of communicating existence to his children; so the devil is the author of their existence, considered as sinners. God is, indeed, the author of their being, properly speaking. And their immediate parents are the instruments of communicating to them human nature. But Satan is the author of their sin; he it is that communicated to the whole race, a share of his diabolical nature. As really, sinner, as you partake, through the instrumentality of your immediate parents, in a rational nature, whereby you are distinguished from the beasts that perish; so really do you derive that corruption, which is inherent in your nature, from the devil: and thus you partake of all those malignant qualities, by which he is distinguished from the unfinning angels. And though these qualities may be yet in their infancy, they will assuredly grow up, unless the grace of God prevent it, to perfection. And you shall be distinguished from the *old serpent*,³ your father, only by having less power, though no less will, to do mischief.

2. They all bear his image; and are as like him as children use to be like their father. Animals of every

* John viii. 44.

ry species bring forth others like themselves. The children of men not only partake of the same nature with their parents; they usually have some resemblance, in their dispositions, and in their features, to their fathers, more than to any other man. But never did you see a son bear a stronger likeness to his natural father in the features of his face, than every unregenerate person bears to Satan in his spiritual lineaments. The same enmity against God, and all divine things; the same hatred of the people of God, and the same disposition to seek their ruin, are common to them with him. The same love to sin is interwoven with their nature as with his; the same unsupportable pride; the same implacable malice; the same deceitful and lying disposition; and the same invincible obstinacy in all manner of wickedness. A very black portrait this of human nature in its lapsed state! but not less just than black.

3. They all submit to his authority, and do his work; as our Lord said of the Jews, in the passage lately quoted. Thereby they give to the devil that honour and obedience, which is due from children to their father. God complains of his ancient people, that while they acknowledged him as their father, they refused him that honour which was due to him in that relation. "If I be a Father, where is mine honour; and if I be a Master, where is my fear *?" But Satan has no reason to complain, in this manner, of his children. Perhaps they deny him in words, and profess to be children of another family. This he values not; it is no way inconsistent with the law of his house. But they all confess him uniformly in their

* Mal. i. 6.

their works ; and declare themselves his children by doing his will. They do not all honour him in the same manner ; for he has many pieces of work to do, and he gives a different employment to every different member of his family. But they are all employed willingly in his service, and thereby prove themselves to be his children.

4. In a word, They may be called his seed, because they are the natural and legal heirs of his inheritance. He can inherit nothing but consummate misery, in consequence of the curse pronounced against him, and recorded in the preceding context. This is not more justly due to him than to us. And every sinner of mankind shall as surely possess it, through all eternity, as he shall ; unless they are prevailed with to quit his work, and leave his family. Hear the tremendous sentence that shall, in a little, be past against every impenitent sinner, from the supreme tribunal of the great Judge of all the earth, “ Depart
“ from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” God will not kindle one furnace for devils, and another for damned men ; but the same unquenchable fire shall eternally consume them both. Let me, therefore, take occasion, now to intreat every sinner before me, “ in
“ the bowels of Christ Jesus,” to leave that cursed family. “ Come out from among them, and be ye separate. Touch not, *any more*, the unclean thing ;
“ and God shall receive you.” Consider the immense difference between inheriting eternal life, and eternal death ; between “ dwelling with devouring fire,
“ with everlasting burnings,” and possessing “ that ful-
“ nefs of joy *that is at God’s* right hand for ever-
“ more ;”

“ more;” between the fellowship of saints and angels, singing the praises of God, in the presence of their incarnate Redeemer; and the company of devils and damned men, howling, gnashing their teeth for rage and despair; gnawing their tongues for intolerable pain; and cursing God, themselves, and one another. Are you not convinced that the difference is great beyond conception? Sure I am, you will think so one day. “ Hearken, *therefore*, O daughter, and “ consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thy father’s house, and thine own people; then shall the “ King,” the King of glory, the King eternal, immortal, and invisible, “ greatly desire thy beauty.”

Secondly, With regard to the seed of the woman, they all belong to one family; yea, they are all members of one and the same body. Like Saul and Jonathan, they are *loving in their lives*, and *death* itself cannot *divide* them. They also shall have all the same dwelling; and shall, for ever, be blessed in the possession of the same inheritance. Yet there is a twofold seed here promised to the woman, both inimical to Satan’s interests; though they are neither his enemies in the same degree, nor are they capable to prosecute their enmity with the same success.

I. The Lord Jesus Christ, who is also the eternal Son of God, is the seed here promised to the woman. That the words relate chiefly to him, is manifest from the following clause. *It*, or rather, “ He shall bruise “ thy head; and thou shalt bruise his heel.” The words accordingly have been always understood, both by Jews and Christians, as referring to the Messiah. Now Christ may be called the seed of the woman on a twofold account.

(1.) In regard that he is the seed promised to the woman. In this sense he is likewise called the *seed of Abraham*. The promise to Abraham was expressed in the same general terms as this; yet an inspired Apostle limits it to Christ. “Now, to Abraham and his seed were the promises made: he saith not to seeds, as of many; but to thy seed, as of one, which is Christ*.” Now, if Christ was called *the seed of Abraham*, in a sense peculiar to himself; though the promise was so expressed as to include, in a certain respect, all the peculiar people of God, who descended from the loins of Abraham; why may not Christ be here called the *seed of the woman*, in a sense that excludes all but himself; though there is likewise a sense in which the promise may and ought to be extended to many others, as we may see in a little? Christ, then, is that illustrious person, who is chiefly intended in this promise. And in him it had its primary and most remarkable accomplishment.

(2.) In regard that he was miraculously conceived by a woman, without the intervention of a man. In these words, there was a dark intimation of what was afterwards more clearly foretold by Isaiah: “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bring forth a son; and shall call his name Immanuel †.” Christ is, indeed, often called *the Son of man*; because he was an actual partaker of human nature, and was descended really, though miraculously, from Adam. But he was the *seed of the woman*, so as to be the immediate seed of no man. Adam stood, in the covenant of works, as the representative of all his natural posterity. Consequently, all who descend from him,

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* Gal. iii. 16.

† Isa. vii. 14.

in an ordinary way, are conceived and born in sin. But it was necessary that Christ should be born without sin; and therefore his human nature was produced in a miraculous and extraordinary manner; being formed of a part of the virgin's body, sanctified and prepared for that purpose, by the immediate agency of the Holy Ghost. Thus, as in his divinity, he was *without mother*; so in respect of his human nature, he was *without father*; a complete antitype of Melchisedec, *after whose order he was made a priest*.

2. The promise includes all believers in Christ; or all those of mankind, who, being delivered from Satan's power, and brought out of his family, are no longer of the number of the *seed of the serpent*. These may be called the seed of the woman, on the following accounts.

(1.) Because they are the most excellent part of the woman's natural seed, and therefore may be put for the whole. So they are expressly called by the sweet finger of Israel, personating Christ himself: "My goodness extendeth not unto thee; but to the saints, the excellent ones of the earth." All others have so far degraded themselves, and act so inconsistently with their rational nature, that they scarcely deserve to be called men. Hence the people of God are often spoken of in Scripture, as if they were the only men in the world. You may take for an example, that saying of Christ himself. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me*." He does not mean all the race of mankind in general, or every individual of that family; but all those, who,

* John xii. 32.

by divine grace, are enabled to act up to the character of men. All unbelievers are degenerated so far, that they are even below the beasts that perish. They are the children of the devil; and therefore are unworthy to be called the *seed* of the *woman*; especially after she was delivered out of Satan's family.

(2.) Because they are the followers of her laudable example. Abraham is called *the father of the faithful*; because he set an eminent example of strong faith; which they endeavour, through the grace of God, to imitate. And, on the same account, all believers are called the children of *the faithful Abraham*. In like manner, Eve was called *the mother of all living*; not so much because she is the natural mother of all that partake of temporal life, but rather because she was, in a spiritual sense, the mother of all who partake of a spiritual life. Accordingly, the name *Eve* was given her, not on the back of her creation, but on the back of the publication of this promise. Adam and his wife had already felt themselves spiritually dead; and they looked for nothing but death in all the extent in which it was threatened. But, to their unspeakable joy, "life and immortality" were brought to light," by this promise. A *seed* was promised to the *woman*, who should be restored to the possession of that life which had been forfeited by the fall. As a pledge of the full accomplishment of the promise, the *woman* herself was already made alive in Christ. Thus, though she was the first that died, she was also the first that was raised from the dead, in a spiritual sense. Hence God himself had called the remnant who were chosen to eternal life her

her seed; and Adam, who had been witness to all this, calls her their mother. Thus he gave her such a name as might, at the same time, put her in mind of this promise; and likewise of the honour God had done her, by making her the first partaker of that new life which was revealed in the promise. This is the sense in which she was "the mother of all living." And in this sense all the spiritually living are her seed.

(3.) Because they also are the children of the promise that was made to the woman. Though Christ was the seed promised, in a sense peculiar to himself, they also are included in it. The same promise that secured God's sending "forth his Son made of a woman, to bruise the head" of the serpent; secured the existence of a number among those that should spring from the woman, in an ordinary way, who should be partakers of the same life that was now communicated to her; and should have the same *enmity* put between them and the serpent, that was now put between Eve and him. Thus, in relation to this first promise made to Eve, as well as in relation to that which was afterwards made to Abraham, all Christians may say to one another, as Paul to his Galatians; "We, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of the promise*."

(4.) Because they are all united to Christ, the prime *seed* of the promise; and made one in law, yea and *one spirit* with him. Being vitally joined to Christ, they are members of his body; and are spoken of, both here and elsewhere, as if they were not distinct from him. Though the word here used is

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singular,

* Gal. iv. 28.

singular, and therefore is strictly applicable to no more than one individual; yet this individual, this one seed, comprehends both Christ and the church, and every genuine member of the church. It comprehends him as the Head, and them as the members of the same mystical body. For, "as the body is one, and hath many members; so also is Christ," the promised *seed* of the *woman*.

III. WE come now to speak of that *enmity* which subsists between these two parties. And all that we shall say concerning it, shall be comprized in the following observations.

I. This enmity is mutual and characteristic. Every person, who belongs to either society, has a rooted and natural enmity against the other party. Satan has an inexorable enmity against all the children of the promise. Next to God himself, there is nothing that he hates so much. And in this, as in other respects, all his children bear his image. On the other hand, Christ has such an enmity against Satan and his interests, that he became the seed of the woman, purposely to *bruise* his *head*, and *destroy* his *works*. And all his members, being under the influence of the same spirit, are of the same disposition. You cannot find a surer mark by which to try yourselves, to which of these societies you belong, than by considering who is the object of your enmity. If you have a real and predominant enmity against Christ, or against his people, for their likeness to him; or if you never felt the workings of such an enmity within yourself, so as to be humbled for them in the fight of God; you are yet among the serpent's seed. But if you have a sincere

ere hatred against sin, and are disposed on every occasion to set yourself in opposition to the interests of Satan's kingdom; then you belong to the seed of the woman, and may be welcome to partake in their provision.

2. There is a great difference between the manner in which this enmity works, and is exercised by the one party, and by the other; owing to the difference of their respective characters. The serpent and his seed have malice and envy for their ruling principles; and their enmity against the seed of the woman is still influenced by these. They hate their persons, as well as their manner of life. They are enemies to their happiness, as much as to their way. And nothing will satisfy them but their utter destruction. But the seed of the woman bear the image of the God of love. As they love God above all other objects, they not only love his image wherever it is, they also love and esteem all the workmanship of his hands. Even the devil himself they hate not, considered as one of God's creatures; nor do they take any pleasure in his misery, for itself. As to his seed among mankind, they are so far from being enemies to their happiness, that they wish them as well as their own souls. As an evidence of this, they pray to God for them; and they take every opportunity to do them good. Yea, when they find it necessary to oppose and fight against them in their sinful courses, they do it in such a manner as to shew that they wish well to their souls.

3. This enmity is, on both sides, altogether implacable. Satan can never be reconciled to any of the seed of the woman. He may put on a semblance of friendship,

friendship, as he did with the woman herself, and make many fair professions. But beware of trusting him. He aims at nothing but your ruin. And if once you comply with his suggestions, you shall quickly find that he is not the friend that he pretends to be. The fairer his professions are, the more dangerous are his designs. The same is, in a great degree, the case with all his seed. On the other hand, the seed of the woman can never be reconciled to sin, nor to the interests of Satan's kingdom. They may, for a time, be so far prevailed upon by temptation, and by the remainders of corruption within them, as to take part, in a great degree, in promoting the interests of Satan's kingdom. But the principle of enmity against sin, which the grace of God has implanted in them, shall never be totally eradicated; nor will they, knowingly and deliberately, take part with the serpent and his seed, in their opposition to Christ or his cause.

4. This enmity is effective. It lies not dormant in the heart, but appears in the whole tenor of the life and actions. Satan is absolutely restless in seeking opportunities to wreak his malice upon the people of God. And if his seed are not equally busy, it is not owing to themselves. At any rate, their enmity will constantly appear by shunning the company of the opposite party; aspersing their characters, injuring their persons, or making their godly conversation an object of ridicule. And they who are the seed of the woman, will shew themselves enemies to the serpent's interests; by constantly aiming at the mortification of sin in themselves; by testifying against it in others, as they are called in providence; by earnestly pray-
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ing for the overthrow of Satan's kingdom; and by using their influence, in their several places and stations, to accomplish it. In vain do you pretend to be of this seed, unless this be the case with you. To no purpose is it that you profess to be enemies to sin, and to the kingdom of Satan, if you do not exert yourselves in maintaining a constant warfare against it. All they who are neutral in this war, are really on the serpent's side; for, thus saith the great Captain of the opposite army, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth*."

5. This enmity is not always exercised in the same manner, nor is it always effective in the same degree. Armies, though always in the field, to oppose one another, are not always engaged in battle, nor always under arms. So it is in this warfare. Sometimes the serpent would seem to have laid aside his venom, and to live at peace with the *woman's seed*; so do his children. This takes place, either when they mean to lull the opposite party into security, or when God is pleased to shorten their chain, and restrain them from doing mischief. On the other side, the great *seed* of the *woman* appears, at some times, not only to make little opposition to the enemy's interests, but even to give up his own kingdom and interests into Satan's hand; till he sees it for his own glory to take the field. "Then *he* arises, as one that awaketh out of sleep; and as a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine: He makes his stroke to fall upon the hinder parts of his enemies, and puts them to a perpetual shame." As to the followers of Christ, they
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* Mat. xii. 30.

are zealous in his cause, or apparently neutral, or even active in promoting the enemy's designs; according as the grace of God in them, or their own corruption prevails.

6. In a word, This enmity shall be everlasting. Not only while time remains, but even so long as these two families exist, they will still be mutual enemies to one another. The war, indeed, which proceeds from that enemy, will not be eternal. It will be terminated in a manner the most glorious for the one party, and the most ignominious for the other. The seed of the woman shall finally prove victorious, and shall enjoy an everlasting triumph. The serpent and his seed shall all be taken captive by the conqueror, and shut up in the prison of hell; where they shall be effectually cut off from any opportunity to prosecute the war. But even when matters have come to that issue, this *enmity* will still remain. The people of God, though perfectly delivered from all the effects of Satan's malice, will be as much enemies to sin, and all the works of the devil, as ever. And both devils and wicked men will eternally continue enemies to Christ and to his people, to such a degree, that the rage of this enmity, together with the want of any opportunity to gratify it, shall undoubtedly constitute a great part of their torment.

IV. THE last thing proposed, on the doctrinal part of the subject, was, To speak of the origin of this enmity, or to enquire in what respect God *put it between the serpent and the woman, and between his seed and her seed?* And here we must previously take notice
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of the two or three things following, to prevent mistakes.

1. Strictly speaking, God is not, nor can be, the author of any kind of hatred or enmity. *God is love.* It is inconsistent with his nature to be at enmity with any of his creatures, unless that enmity begins on their side. When he made the world, an universal harmony subsisted among all the creatures. As none of them were enemies to their Maker, so none of them were enemies to one another. God's law is a law of love. Love is the fulfilling of it. And he cannot approve, far less be the author of any thing that is contrary to his own law. Enmity was none of God's creatures, nor would it either have been produced or approved by him, if sin had not introduced it into the world; at the same time that it produced an object, with which God himself behoved necessarily to be at enmity, and all that were friends to him.

2. The enmity that has been spoken of was already begun on the one side, when this promise was made. Satan's enmity against God, and against man, because God's favourite, was the spring of the first temptation; and consequently of our first sin. There was, therefore, no need that God should put enmity into the heart of Satan, against the woman or her seed; because he was already full of it. Already had his enmity prompted him to plot, to attempt, and in all appearance to effect the final ruin of the whole human race. All his pretensions of friendship were no more than a cloke for his enmity. Therefore,

3. All God's agency, in putting this enmity between these two parties, is confined to one of them. In accomplishing this promise, he made no change
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upon the serpent, nor does he make any upon any of his seed. He only leaves them to the perverse bias of their own nature; and permits them to exercise that *enmity* which they had before. It is far otherwise with the other party. Immediately before this promise was made, the woman herself was joined in confederacy with the serpent, against God and against herself. All her seed, the great Head of the body alone excepted, come into the world in the serpent's family. They have the same enmity against Christ and his followers, that is natural to all that cursed brood. And they would continue for ever to exercise it, if God did not accomplish the promise; by actually putting enmity between them and that family to which they formerly belonged.

4. The truth, relative to the rise of that enmity, is shortly thus. Satan having cast off subjection to God, became a mortal enemy to him. This was the first enmity that ever subsisted in the world; and it was introduced by sin, or rather by Satan, when he became a sinner. This was necessarily followed by enmity on God's part, both against sin, and against the author of it. He could not be other than an enemy to sin, without violating his holiness. Nor could he be a friend to Satan, without denying his justice. Satan's enmity against God had made him an enemy likewise to mankind. It was their duty to have repelled his enmity, and followed their Creator's example, in being enemies to him. But they knew him not; and therefore were imposed upon, by his pretensions of friendship, so far as to be joined with him in his enmity against God. But God, having a purpose of mercy for a number of mankind, resolved

resolved to bring them off from this confederacy ; to turn away their enmity from him, as well as his wrath from them ; and to direct it against their destroyer, who should have been the first object of it. This is it that he here promises to do ; and his agency, in this matter, consists in the following things.

(1.) He pulls off the mask under which the serpent and his seed endeavour to hide themselves, and discovers to the other party, that they are really influenced by enmity, both against God and against them. As Satan pretended friendship for our first parents in the first temptation, so he does with all their posterity. He persuades them that happiness is to be found in the way of sin ; and, as a friend, he pretends to advise them to seek it there. We are naturally disposed to believe him ; and hence are all the vain attempts that are made to find happiness in sensual and sinful objects ; and all the mournful disappointments that these produce. But, as God enabled our first parents to see through the vanity of Satan's first pretence ; so, when he comes to deal graciously with any soul of their posterity, he discovers the cloven foot, under the assumed robes of light. He lets them see, through all his pretences, that enmity by which their seducer is influenced ; convinces them, that happiness is not where he directs them to seek for it ; and that he only allures them with the prospect of happiness, that he may bring them into irretrievable ruin. Thus the danger of sin is made to appear, and the deceitfulness of all its promises. And this is among the first things that the Spirit of God does for any person, when he comes to open their eyes ; and to turn them from
darkness

darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God.

(2.) He discovers also the hatefulnes of the devil's character, and of the characters and dispositions of his seed; and then represents them to us, not only as our enemies, but likewise as proper objects of our enmity. The leading branch of Satan's character is sin; so it is also with all his seed. This is like the black hue of the Ethiopian's skin; every part of the man, and every thing about him, is affected by it. And such is our folly, that we are in love with our blackness; and consider the purity and holiness of God as the most hateful thing. So far has Satan imposed upon us, that we may be said to love himself, while we are so deeply in love with that which constitutes the chief branch of his character. But this charm the Spirit of God breaks, in the day of the Mediator's power; and discovers the filthiness and odiousness of sin, as well as the danger of it. The person then sees the devil, and his whole family, to be really hateful and abominable, by reason of the sin that is about them. And, as he is sensible that himself has been a member of that family, and equally black and deformed as the rest; like Job, he "abhors *himself*, and repents in dust and in ashes."

(3.) He implants in the soul a principle of sincere and rooted enmity against sin, and against all the interests of Satan's kingdom, both within him and without him. Such is the depravity of our nature, that no conviction in the understanding, relative to spiritual things, will have any proper influence, either upon our heart or upon our actions; unless a principle is implanted in the will, corresponding to the conviction

tion that is in the understanding. Our will and affections often carry us away, in direct opposition to the dictates of the understanding; so that, though we see and approve what is good, we really and practically follow that which is evil. And one main difference between the common operations of the Spirit, and those which are saving consists in this; that the former produce convictions in the understanding only, while the others produce a corresponding disposition in the will. In relation to the subject under consideration, it is not enough that we be convinced of Satan's enmity against us; and of the real hatefulness of sin, which constitutes his character. All this we may be, and yet continue friends to sin, and so to Satan, in our hearts. And it really would be so, if the Holy Ghost, after carrying his work thus far were to proceed no farther. But, having convinced the person of its hatefulness, he implants in his will a disposition corresponding to that conviction; and so enables him to hate it indeed. Thus he efficaciously *puts enmity* into the person's heart against sin, against its author, and against its abettors, as far as they are such; and thereby brings him in among the number of the *woman's seed*. The man is then in a condition to say from the heart, as says David,—“ Do not
“ I hate those, O LORD, that hate thee? Am not I
“ grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate
“ them with perfect hatred. I count them mine enemies*.”

(4.) He directs, assists, and succeeds, the endeavours of the woman's seed, against the interests of Satan's family; so that they have some competent effect.

* Psa. cxxxix. 21, 22.

effect. Such is the disproportion between us and our adversary, both in respect of strength and cunning, that our enmity against him could have no effect at all, unless God were to assist us in the prosecution of it. But it is he that “teaches *our* hands to war, and “*our* fingers to fight.” This he does so effectually, that the “feeble *becomes* as David, and the house of “David as God; as the angel of the Lord before “him.” Thus it comes to pass, that there is not a dwarf of all the woman’s seed, (and God knows there are many silly dwarfs among them,) who is not a formidable enemy to the serpent’s interests; and can perform exploits, that all the power and policy of hell are not sufficient to defeat. Such is the necessity of this assistance, and such its effect upon the Christian, that he who was incapable, when left to himself, to wield a weapon, but lay panting, and almost breathless, among the slain; shall be seen to rise up, in a moment, under the influence of this assistance, to fight “like a giant refreshed with wine, *and to put to flight* “*whole* armies of the aliens.”

V. WE are now to conclude with the following inferences from the subject.

I. We have here a dismal view of the condition in which all mankind are by nature. We are all the seed of the serpent,—the children of the devil; of the same hellish dispositions with our father, and employed in the same work. We are all under the same curse, and liable, every moment, to have our condition made equally desperate as his, by the final execution of our sentence. “Look,” Christian, “to the “rock whence *you* was hewn;” and take an affecting
view

terests; or fights against him, under the banner of Christ, by turns. Let Christians mourn before God, not only in consideration of what they once were, but likewise on account of what they still are; while they cannot but feel in themselves the workings of that enmity against Christ, which are owing to the imperfection of *the seed of God abiding in them*; and to the remainders of the serpent's seed continuing about them.

3. We may see to what it is owing, that the serpent's disposition does not continue in its full force about all the posterity of Adam. It is owing to nothing about ourselves; to no endeavours of our own; to no improvement of our natural powers; nor to any thing that any creature did, or possibly could do for us; but solely to him who, according to this ancient promise, has put enmity between the seed of the serpent and that of the woman. As soon may a literal serpent be changed into a man, without any miracle, as a person may be translated from the one of these families to the other, by any thing inferior to creating power. Be not high minded, Christian, but fear and be thankful. Who maketh thee to differ from another? or what hast thou, that thou hast not freely received? And if thou hast received it, wherefore shouldest thou boast, as if it had been originally thine own, or a thing of thine own procuring?

4. We may see who they are that are like to be welcome guests at the Lord's table, on the ensuing solemn occasion. They, and they only, who have had a personal experience of the accomplishment of this promise in their own souls; into whose hearts God has put an irreconcilable enmity against sin, and against all

all the interests of Satan's kingdom. The sacramental feast was provided, by the great representative of the woman's seed, for those that belong to the same family with himself. And surely it is not fit that any person should sit down at his table, with a principle of enmity reigning in his heart against the Master of the feast, and against all his friends. Wherefore, "let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup." Has God discovered to you the vanity and falsehood of all those suggestions, by which Satan would allure you to take part with him against Christ? Have you seen sin as a hateful thing, and been determined to hate it, and fight against it, wherever it is? Have you a sincere aversion at the devil's work? And is it your sincere desire to take Christ's side, in the war that he has so long been carrying on, against the dragon and his angels? Then, and then only, are you the woman's seed, and fit for a seat among them at the communion-table.

5. We may here see the duty of all who are, or sincerely desire to be, among the seed of the woman. Make a diligent search for all the remainders of the serpent's disposition about yourself. Mourn deeply before God for all of that kind that you discover. And give yourself no rest till it be mortified and destroyed. Let your enmity against the devil's interests be inflamed, by the sight of what abets those interests in your own soul. Give no quarter to any of the enemies of the seed of the woman within you. And make no truce with those without you. Continue to "quit yourselves like men, and fight" for the interests of the Redeemer; without being discouraged, either by the sense of your own weakness, or the power, the policy,

policy, the numbers, or the apparent success of the enemy. Be careful, in the mean time, to maintain such a love to your glorious Head, and towards one another, as may influence you to mind the interests of the family, and to exert yourselves in maintaining and defending them. And be ever on your guard, against all the wiles, and all the fiery darts of the enemy. However indolent you may be, either in the offensive, or in the defensive part of the war; you may be assured, that, on the other side, no opportunity will be lost of doing you a mischief.

6. In a word, We may see what is the duty and interest of all that still continue in the devil's family. Be intreated, sinner, to "forfake your father's house, and your own people;" and give over to prosecute your enmity against Christ or his followers. You cannot *harden yourselves against him and prosper*. All the efforts of your enmity against him will fall back, with redoubled violence, upon your own head. And he whom you now serve, and honour as your father, will be so far from pitying you, that he will help forward the affliction. Willingly shall he act as the executioner of the Mediator's vengeance upon you. And then you shall find, to your irreparable cost, that, however much you befriended his interests, he never was a hearty friend to you; but was, indeed, your greatest enemy. Why should you continue in league with your mortal enemy; and maintain a warfare against one who is able to befriend you in every case, and as willing as he is able? Christ is so far from wishing you evil, or having any pleasure in your destruction, that his heart bemoans you, when he sees you
 running

running headlong to your ruin, and despising all his gracious invitations to the contrary; as he bemoaned Jerufalem of old, faying, “ O Jerufalem, Jerufalem, how often would I have gathered thee, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings!” Oh! perfift not in giving him occafion to add concerning you, as he did concerning her children, “ and ye would not.”

S E R M O N VI.

The first Promise illustrated.

P A R T II.

GEN. iii. 15.

—HE SHALL BRUISE THY HEAD, AND THOU SHALT
BRUISE HIS HEEL.

MANY are the wars and fightings that sin has introduced into the world. Often is their success precarious, and their event doubtful. But there is one great warfare, which, though not properly the fruit of sin, is undoubtedly the consequence of sin's entrance; the event of which was infallibly determined before ever a blow was struck: I mean the war mentioned in the preceding part of this verse; between the woman and her seed on the one side, and the serpent and his seed on the other. Of this war, the final issue is foretold by God, who could not be mistaken, in the words of this text. Both parties must suffer in the course of the war; but the sufferings of the one are not comparable to those of the other.

ther. The one shall have his *head*, which is the centre of life and motion, *bruised* to pieces; but the other shall escape, with only a slight *bruise* in the *heel*.

Having very lately spoken from the first part of this verse, in the hearing of many present; we observed, that the whole verse is part of what God said to the devil, who still continued to occupy the body of the serpent, as he had done while he managed the temptation that issued in Adam's fall. In it God foretels what should be the continual state of matters, between Satan and the unhappy family which he had now seduced, and what should be their final issue. Accordingly, we took notice of two things, generally contained in the verse: *viz.* 1. A denunciation of war, in these words, *I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.* Of this we have spoken already; and shall resume nothing. 2. A promise of victory to one of the contending parties over the other, in the words of this text: *It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*

In the words, in general, we have two things.

1. The success of this war, on the side of the woman and her seed, in these words, *It shall bruise thy head.* And here, more particularly, we have four things noticeable.

(1.) An agent spoken of, in the pronoun *it*. In the original language, the word is masculine; and ought to be translated *he*, as it is in the margin of some of your Bibles. It manifestly refers to the *seed* of the *woman*, mentioned in the preceding clause; especially to the great Head of that body, the Lord Jesus Christ. Papists, indeed, render it *she*; and understand

derstand it of the Virgin Mary. How she comes to be spoken of in this place, how she is spoken of in the masculine gender, and how she bruised the serpent's head, let the friends of that interpretation determine.

(2.) An action ascribed to him, or foretold, as about to be performed by him: *He shall bruise*. The word signifies to grind, or to break into very small pieces, as grain is broken under the millstone. It signifies also to darken, or hide in obscurity. Both senses may be here included. The substance of the meaning is, that Satan shall be shut up in utter darkness, by the power of Christ; and there subjected to a punishment, that may be compared to the grinding of one's head between two millstones.

(3.) The object of this action, or what it is that Christ shall so bruise,—*thy head*. Satan, that old serpent, being a spirit, has no bodily parts. But, as he still possessed the body of the serpent, God speaks to him as if he were literally that animal; and means, that he should be reduced, in the issue of this war, to a situation comparable to that of a serpent whose head is crushed to pieces.

(4.) The certainty of the event, expressed in the word *shall*. God himself has foretold it, and he cannot be mistaken. It is more than a bare prediction. It contains a positive engagement, in which the faithfulness of God was pledged, that it should be so.

2. We have the success of the war on the serpent's side. Here we have the same particulars as in the former. The agent here is the devil, expressed in the pronoun *thou*. The action is the same as before, that of *bruising*. But the object is very different—*his heel*.

heel. What the seed of the woman was to suffer from the serpent was as little, in comparison of what the other should suffer from him, as a bruise in the heel is, compared with a grinding of the head. The certainty of the event is the same here as in the former. God could as certainly foretel what Satan should do to Christ, as what Christ should do to him; for, though the devil does nothing in obedience to God, he can do nothing without his permission. And he knew as well what he would permit to be done, as what himself would do.

The Jewish Targum gives a very different reading of the words; which, though it may not express the true sense of them, deserves not to be wholly overlooked. The word which we render to *bruise*, they understand of *remembering*. And the words *head* and *heel*, they take figuratively, as referring to the beginning and end of time. They read the whole thus: ‘It shall remember thee in the beginning; and ‘thou shalt remember it in the end.’ And they give us a paraphrase of the text, to the following purpose: ‘Thou hast given a memorable stroke to the family ‘of mankind, in the beginning of time, at the commencement of the war. This the seed of the woman shall not forget; but shall take ample vengeance for it in the end; by reaching thee such a blow ‘as thou shalt not be able to forget through all eternity.’

This, like all the rest of what we have in this and in the preceding verse, may be applied literally to the serpent itself, and to the species that proceeded from it. It is well known that a serpent’s poison lies in its head; and that the readiest method of destroying it

it is by a stroke upon that part. Hence men usually shew their natural aversion to serpents, by endeavouring to crush their heads, either by treading upon them or otherways. It is also manifest, that, as serpents go upon their bellies, when a man walks upright, nothing but the lower parts of his body can be within the reach of the serpent's bite. And nothing is readier to happen than that the person who treads upon the serpent's head, and crushes it, should, in that instant, receive a wound from it in the heel.

But, though the promise may have an accomplishment, even in this respect; yet this is far from being the only thing, or the main thing here intended. The words, in their principal meaning, refer to Christ and the devil; and the other is included only as an emblem of this. It is as if God had said, 'I tell thee, Satan, that a fixed antipathy shall take place between the race of mankind, and that species of creatures which thou hast made use of as the instrument of their seduction; as an emblem of that mortal enmity which I will put between thee and a part of the woman's posterity. And the ordinary issue of that antipathy shall likewise be a fit emblem of the issue that matters shall come to, between thee and the representative of that holy seed. For, as men shall take every opportunity of destroying serpents, by crushing them in the head; and as they who do so shall be in danger of receiving a wound in the foot, from the very animal which they kill; exactly so shall the contest issue between him and thee.' *He shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*

One thing farther deserves to be taken notice of, before we leave the general explication of the words.

I mean,

I mean the inversion of the order, in which the two contending parties are mentioned in the beginning of the verse. In the declaration of war, the serpent and his seed are first mentioned, and then the woman and her seed; intimating that the war began on that side: and that they, being the aggressors, were to be accountable for all the blood that should be spilt on both sides; and for all the other consequences of the war. But in this text, where the issue of the contest is foretold, this order is inverted; the seed of the woman is first mentioned, and then the serpent. This may intimate, that, in the course of the war, Satan shall be proved inferior, both in power and wisdom, to the *Captain of our salvation*; that he who was last in taking the field shall prove himself the best warrior, and shall leave the field victorious and triumphant.

The sense of the text, as thus explained, may be summed up in the following proposition.

Though, in the grand contest between the serpent and the woman's seed, the former may be so far successful, as to bruise the heel of his opponent; yet God has given assurance, that the principal success shall fall on the other side: for the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.

THE method to be prosecuted, in speaking a little farther from this subject, shall be, through divine assistance,

I. To consider a little the general import of the words.

II. To enquire, more particularly, what we are to understand by the *bruising* of Satan's head.

III. To

III. To speak of his *bruising* the *seed* of the *woman* in the *heel*. And,

IV. To conclude with some improvement.

I. IN general, the words seem to import the following things, among others.

1. That the great warfare, mentioned in the preceding part of the verse, shall be chiefly managed by two individuals. The words used in the text are all in the singular number. Neither are they of a collective signification, as those in the preceding clause. It is true, that on each side there is a great army. All the forces of hell are on the one side, assisted by all those of mankind who continue in their natural estate. And on the other side, all the *nations of them that are saved*, with whom are joined all the hosts of elect angels; who, being *ministring spirits* to the church, in that capacity fight against the powers of hell. It is also true, that every person, in either army, bears his part in the contest; and every one shall be involved in the general issue. On the one part, all who fight under the old serpent, take part with him in *bruising* the *heel* of the *seed* of the *woman*; and every one of them, if they finally continue on that side, shall have his *head bruised*, as well as their leader. On the other part, every person belonging to the *seed* of the *woman*, and warring under Christ's banner, is enabled to take part in *bruising* the enemy's *head*; and every such person may lay his account with having his *heel bruised*.

But still the warfare is principally carried on by the leaders of the opposite armies; and the success on either side is chiefly owing to them. This is, in
some

some degree, the case in every war. The conduct of the general is usually of as much importance as the courage of the army. It is peculiarly so here. In this war, the generals not only conduct their respective armies, and direct their motions; but, contrary to the ordinary course of things, they fight with their own hands more than all their soldiery. These two armies have each their champion, as it was with Israel and the Philistines, in the *valley of Elab*. And the two generals are the two champions, who, like David and Goliath, decide the controversy by single combat.

While David was engaged with the Philistine giant, both armies stood aloof as mere spectators, and neither took part in the struggle. But when the engagement was hottest between the two parties mentioned in this text, all the hosts of the uncircumcised assisted their champion; and joined in the fierce assault that was made upon David's antitype; while all the armies of the spiritual Israel shamefully deserted their colours, left their Captain engaged with all the combined forces of hell and earth, and turned their backs and fled! "Then *he* looked, and there was none to help; *he* wondered;" and justly might he wonder, "that there was none to uphold. Then *his* own arm brought salvation unto *him*; and *his* fury it upheld *him*." Like Eleazar, the son of Dodo, "He smote them till his hand was weary; and the people returned after him, only to spoil."

And as Christ had the principal hand in managing the war, so he was principally concerned in all the events of it. None of his followers ever had their *beel bruised* by the enemy, in the same manner as his
was.

was. All that they suffer by the malice of hell, or by the enmity of the serpent's seed on earth, is nothing compared with what he suffered. And, on the other hand, none else ever gave such a *bruise* to the serpent's *head* as he did. None ever bruised it, none ever will bruise it, in any proper sense but himself. His people are conquerors only in him, and through him. It needs must be so. As he fought the main battle without assistance, the honour of the victory can, in no part, belong to any other.

Your glorious head, believer, encountered all the powers of darkness for you, when there was none to stand by or assist him. He submitted to have his *beel bruised*, in such a manner, that, to all appearance, the wound seemed incurable; and, without any assistance from you, he so *bruised the head* of his adversary, that he ceases to be a formidable enemy to you. Even this is not all. In every conflict of yours, he still goes forth on your head. Though all his brethren forsook him in the time of his conflict, he does not revenge their ingratitude, by turning his back upon them when the enemy assaults them. He is always present with you, he assists you in the prosecution of your warfare; and will finally *bruise Satan*, and all your other adversaries, *under your feet shortly*. See, therefore, that your dependence be always upon him, and of all the advantages that you gain over the enemy, see that you give him the glory.

2. The words import, That the principal aim of the combatants in this war, is to *bruise* one another. This is the success of the war on both sides; each party is successful in proportion as his opponent is bruised. The word, as you heard, signifies to grind, or break

into

into very small pieces. And surely this must amount to utter ruin; as it is impossible for any person to live and be active, after this is the case with him. The old serpent hath his name in the Hebrew tongue *Abaddon* *. The word signifies *destruction*; and so it is rendered, Job xxvi. 6. and elsewhere. He has this name, because the destruction of the whole human race, and especially of the seed of the woman, is his continual aim. In the beginning, he attempted the destruction of the whole family of mankind, in the person of the first Adam, and effected it. In like manner, he attempted the ruin of all the seed of the woman in the person of the last Adam; and, doubtless, he thought he had accomplished it, when the representative of the family was "brought to the dust of death." In all his attacks upon particular members of the family, he aims at nothing less than their total ruin; and he would accomplish it, if the *Captain of their salvation* did not protect and defend them. On the other hand, it was Christ's errand in our world to destroy the devil and his works. And, however feeble their endeavours be, nothing less is aimed at by all that belong to that family. You are none of the *seed of the woman*, if any thing less can satisfy you than the total ruin of Satan's interests, both within you and without you.

3. That the success of the war should be various; sometimes one party prevailing, and sometimes another. In all wars, it is ordinary that battles are lost, and battles won, on both sides. Even in the same engagement, sometimes one party has the advantage, and sometimes the other. So it is here. Sometimes the

* Rev. ix. 11.

the serpent is suffered to carry all before him; his point seems almost gained; and there wants but one step to complete the ruin of the woman's seed on earth. At other times, Satan is bound, his interests in the world quite sunk, and the opposite family is almost undisturbed and triumphant. At some times, God "beats down *Christ's* enemies before his face, "and plagues them that hate him," according to his promise. And at other times, "the right hand of his enemies is set up, and his adversaries made to rejoice. The edge of his sword *seems* to be turned; "and *he does not* stand in the battle*." Look around you, Christian, and see. Alas! is not this the sad case in the day wherein we live? But you need not be too much cast down on this account. The enemy can have no success, unless the Captain of your salvation sees meet to permit it. Nor can any success be wanting to his followers, unless he sees it fit, that, for the time, it should be wanting. Never does the serpent prevail to the *bruising* of *Christ's heel*, unless when such bruising may contribute, both to the health of the body, and to the final *bruising* of the enemy's *head*.

4. The words import, That both parties might prove successful in some degree; at the same time, and by the same means. As a literal serpent is never more ready to sting a person in the heel, than when he is just about to crush its head, by treading upon it; so never is Satan more ready to bruise the heel of *Christ*, or of his followers, than when he is just about to receive a remarkable bruise in the head. And never has the *seed* of the *woman* given more remarkable

markable wounds to the enemy, than when he had just received an wound from him. Indeed, every degree of success that Satan has enjoyed, has always cost him so dear, that there is nothing that he has more reason to be afraid of than apparent success. In his very first attack, before any war was proclaimed on the other side, he succeeded so far, that the bruise appeared incurable, and really was so to any created skill. Yet this very success has exposed him to all the bruising that ever he has suffered, or will suffer, from the *seed* of the *woman*.

But never was there any instance of this so remarkable as that which took place in the great and decisive engagement that Christ had with him at his death. Then did the serpent *bruise his heel*, in a manner that he never could accomplish before; nor ever shall accomplish again. So eminent was his success, that his antagonist lay dead at his feet. And yet this very success hurt him more than any thing else that ever took place since the war commenced. Then was his *head bruised* in such a manner, that he shall never recover the blow. Quickly did the *seed* of the *woman* rise triumphant, even from the grave itself. *His* wound, though mortal, was speedily healed. But at the same instant in which he received his wound, he gave another to his enemy; that shall never be healed through all eternity. Even *by death*, he overcame, “ he destroyed him that had the power “ of death; that is the devil. *Having* spoiled principalities and powers, *he* made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross *.” This

is the great event to which this text primarily refers; and in which it had its most remarkable accomplishment.

But it has an accomplishment in other cases also; and that in respect of the mystical body, and even of particular members of it. Hence is that remarkable saying of the Apostle Paul, "In all these things, we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us *." He is speaking of the various bruifings that the followers of Christ may suffer from the serpent and his seed; by which they are even "killed all the day long, and counted as sheep for the slaughter." Yet he says not, *after all these*, or *notwithstanding all these*; but *in all these things we are conquerors*. Intimating, that even while we suffer we conquer; and that the enemy's success against us is the very means whereby we become victorious and triumphant over him. Take comfort all ye that are of the seed of the woman; such shall be the effect of all the success that Satan obtains, either against you or against the church in our day. Our glorious Captain may suffer him to prevail, till his heel be bruised in a cruel and shocking manner; but soon shall that old serpent find reason to repent his success. As Joshua caused Israel to flee before the men of Ai; so that the enemy said, "They are smitten down before us, as at the first;" when all his design was to draw them into the ambuscade, and make their destruction inevitable; so does our Jesus, who is Joshua's antitype, in relation to the serpent and his seed. They may glory in their success for a little season; but their success shall prove the

* Rom. viii. 37.

the means of their eternal destruction. Every wound which they inflict upon the *heel* of Christ, or upon the lowest member in his body, shall issue in a proportionable wound in their own *head*.

5. The words import, That the victory shall at last be decisive on the side of the woman's seed. A person whose heel is bruised may live and keep the field, even while he smarts by his wound: And he may expect to fight after it is cured. But one whose head is grinded, must needs be totally ruined. And when this is the case with a whole army, there can be no occasion for any further struggle against them. Such shall be the final condition of the serpent and all his seed. Though that party was the first to take the field, the other shall be last on the field. None of them shall escape from the hand of the illustrious conqueror. Eternally shall they be bruised in the *wine-press of the wrath of Almighty God*. They shall be an everlasting prey to the *worm* that *dieth not*, everlasting fuel to the *fire* that *is not quenched*. Thus shall the *seed* of the *woman* accomplish his whole aim; he shall fully execute all that he undertook to his Father, and all that he intended, when he entered upon the war. Every one of his followers shall *see* all their *desire upon* all their spiritual *enemies*. Yes, believer, a troop may overcome you, and overcome you, and overcome you again; but you shall be sure to overcome them all at the last. You shall reap, through eternity, the happy fruits of your victory; and, which is incomparably more, of the victory that your glorious Captain has obtained in your name. And eternally shall you sing "the song of Moses and "the Lamb;" in an uninterrupted celebration of that

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triumph,

triumph, which, in communion with your Captain, you shall enjoy, as the result of the victory; when those "enemies whom you see to-day, you shall see them no more for ever." Comfort ye one another with these words.

II. WE proposed to consider, more particularly, what we are to understand by the bruising of Satan's head. And, I apprehend, it includes the following things.

I. The total destruction of his works, and the abolition of all the effects of his infernal policy. A bruise in the head, you know, has a tendency to impair one's reason, and make him think and act like a fool. And if the bruise is severe, it totally destroys the exercise of reason. The devil's works are the fruits of his infernal policy. And as the works of God must be supported by the same power and wisdom, that appeared in their creation; so the works of the devil must be supported by the same hellish policy that was exercised in their production. When his head is bruised, his policy is defeated, himself befooled, and rendered incapable of exercising his malicious cunning, either for accomplishing new works, or for the maintenance of the former. These works, of consequence, must fall into ruin; they shall be totally abolished. This was one great end of Christ's appearing in our world, in the character of the seed of the woman. "For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil*." And this he will accomplish so effectually, that no effect of the devil's policy shall remain, which may disturb

* 1 John iii. 8.

disturb or interrupt the happiness of any of that family of which he is the head.

The principal works of the devil are two: sin, which is his main work; and misery, which always accompanies or follows upon it. These Christ will destroy, and completely deliver all his people from them both. Yes, believer, from both these shall you be completely delivered in a little. The miseries that sin has brought upon you, the temptations with which you are now liable to be assaulted, shall, in a few years at most, give way to "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." And, which is still more comfortable, sin itself, which is the just cause of all your sufferings, shall be totally routed out, and finally removed from you. And you shall continue, through eternity, as free from all the fruits of Satan's policy, as if none of them had ever been felt, or seen, or even heard of among you. You shall be as happy as your nature is capable of, and as holy as happy. Both in holiness and happiness, you shall be perfectly conformable to what Christ now is, at the right hand of God.

2. It includes the abolition of his power; that he may no longer be capable to hurt any of the *seed of the woman*. A serpent, you know, has its sting in its head; there is all its poison lodged. When once its head is sufficiently bruised, no person has any thing to fear from its bite. To this condition, Christian, shall your grand adversary be reduced in a little. Yea, such is his condition already; to such a degree, that it is beyond his power to do you any real injury. The great bruise that his head received when Christ triumphed over him in his cross, has utterly disabled

him from hurting any of the *woman's seed*. He is not yet completely slain, though the wound which he has received is mortal. Another bruise is wanting, to complete his destruction: and it shall be given him at the second coming of Christ. Till then, he may terrify you with his hissings; but he cannot touch you with his envenomed sting. He may wound you in the heel; but the wound shall never prove mortal. To you, even the serpent's bite shall be found medicinal. Why then should you be afraid of such a harmless enemy? What can you have to fear from the impotent threats of a foe reduced to such a condition? Indeed, your glorious Captain has secured you from any real injury from any quarter. *And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good* *?

3. The mortality, and incurableness of his wound. A wounded heel may be cured, even though it be much bruised, or bit by a serpent; if the cure is timely undertaken, and properly managed. But the most skilful physician can never cure a person, whose head is grinded to pieces. So, all the injury that Satan ever did, or ever shall do, to any of the *seed of the woman*, admits of reparation; and it shall be repaired accordingly. But what Christ has done against him, and will further do in a little, is beyond all reparation or remedy. Christ himself, though his wound was the most dreadful that ever was made by the serpent's teeth, was completely cured in three days. And now he is for ever above the reach of his attempts. And his followers shall be cured as effectually, if they are not as speedily. *There is balm in Gilcad,*

* 1 Pet. iii. 13.

Gilead, Christian, and a *Physician there*, by whom every wound of the daughter of thy people shall be healed. But he who has undertaken your cure has himself infused poison into the serpent's wound; and who can pretend to extract it? Ah! sinner; to the same dreadful and desperate condition shall you be reduced in a very little, if you continue in the serpent's family, and take part with him in his warfare against Christ; till he be provoked, in just indignation, to bruise you also in the head. For, as all the seed of the woman are here included, together with their glorious Representative, on the one side; so all the seed of the serpent are included, along with their father, on the other.

4. The bruising of Satan's head includes the total destruction and overthrow of his kingdom. A kingdom without a head is incapable of subsisting. When a prince is slain in battle, his armies routed, and all his friends and abettors killed or taken captive; then a revolution in his kingdom is the necessary consequence. His dominions become the property of the conqueror; and all his power and authority is at an end, whether it was lawful or usurped. So, when Satan's head shall be finally grinded, the ruin of his kingdom shall be the necessary concomitant of his own; and all his usurped authority shall be made to cease. In this world, we often see the kingdom of Satan in a flourishing condition; his government cheerfully submitted to by the greatest part of mankind, and his interests thriving apace on every side; while the kingdom of Christ is proportionably low. But it shall not always be so. It is but a little, when the kingdom of Satan shall be ruined with himself; and

and all the apparent glories of it shall become so many jewels in the Mediator's crown. His sin turned him out of his place in heaven; and the final punishment of his sin, executed by the hand of the woman's illustrious Seed, shall eternally dispossess him of all his usurped power upon earth. All his subjects shall either be brought to do homage to Christ, as his willing people; or else shall be for ever involved in the destruction of their master and his kingdom. Yea, that no vestiges may remain of his tyrannical usurpation, even the world itself, in which it was exercised, shall be burnt up. "Nevertheless, we look for new heavens, and a new earth; wherein dwelleth righteousness*."

III. It was farther proposed to enquire what we are to understand by Satan's *bruising the seed of the woman in the heel*. And I think the expression holds forth to us the following things.

I. That a suffering lot was appointed by God for all the seed of the woman, during the continuance of the war; at least during their continuance in the field. A wound in the heel may be very painful, especially when it arises from the biting of a serpent. Yea, it would be mortal if it were not skilfully managed. So would the wounds given by Satan to the followers of Christ. As it is, they are often very painful and uneasy. The first-born of this honourable family was himself "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," during his continuance in a state of warfare. From the womb of his mother to his grave, he was not a moment exempted from sufferings of one kind or other,

* 2 Pet. iii. 13.

other. *He was wounded, believer, for your transgressions; he was bruised for your iniquities; the chastisement of your peace was upon him, that, by his stripes you might be healed.* All his life through, we never hear of his smiling, but once of his rejoicing in spirit; though frequently of his weeping and being grieved. Towards the close of his life, we hear him complaining, (and it was not usual with him to complain); complaining in an agony, that forced the blood from every pore in his blessed body: "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death!" And shall it be thought hard that his younger brethren also be partakers of a suffering lot, for the short time of their continuance in this fighting world? *Is the servant in any respect above his lord? Or can the disciple expect to fare better than his master?* Nay, Christian, it is highly reasonable, that through manifold tribulations you must enter into the kingdom. No warrior expects always to sleep in a sound skin. But be not discouraged on this account. You shall enter into the kingdom at last, when your warfare is accomplished. And your sufferings, as they are a prelude, shall likewise prove an aggravation of your glory: "If you suffer with Christ, you shall also reign with him." If, in this world, you are abased as he was; in the world to come, you shall also be glorified together.

2. That in the sufferings, both of Christ and his followers, the old serpent and his seed should have a principal hand. No doubt, trials are inflicted upon Christians by the hand of God immediately, without the instrumentality of Satan or his agents. And we are sure that the principal part of what Christ suffered

ed was from the hand of his God and Father. "It pleased the Lord," not only to suffer him to be bruised by Satan, but also "to bruise him" with his own hand. He bruised him in a much severer manner than all the devils in hell, and all the devil's offspring on earth could ever have done. But it is likewise certain, that Satan and his instruments had a very deep hand in Christ's sufferings. The Jews were of their "father the devil;" and how much he suffered from them the whole gospel history evinces. And as for Satan himself, what agency he had in his sufferings is manifest from the two great instances which the scriptures have on record. First, he detained him in the wilderness forty days, hungry, thirsty, restless, and exposed; and all that while harassed him with the most dreadful temptations. And then, towards the period of his suffering state, *the prince of this world came upon him like a ravening and a roaring lion*; though he could not but know that he had *nothing in him*. Thus did he *bruise his heel* in the estate of his humiliation.

The same is the case with all the friends of Christ. Some of them have suffered very much from the seed of the serpent in this world. They have "had trial of cruel mockings, and scourgings; yea, of bonds and imprisonments. They were stoned, they were fawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheep-skins, and goat-skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented." Though they were persons "of whom the world was not worthy," they were yet constrained to "wander in deserts, and in mountains, in dens, and in
" caves

“caves of the earth*.” Though they do not all suffer in the same degree with those worthies, of whom the Apostle speaks in the words now repeated; there is none of them but has somewhat to bear from the hands, or at least from the tongues of wicked men. Because they “are not of the world, but *Christ hath* chosen them out of the world; therefore the world hateth *them*.” As to the devil, who is the “god of this world,” he is continually bruising them in the heel; not only by violent temptations, and terrifying suggestions, which he throws into their minds; but even by bodily afflictions, and various kinds of outward troubles, which he is often permitted to lay upon them. Perhaps Satan’s agency in these matters is often more than is apprehended, either by the afflicted themselves, or by others around them. Had we been informed of Job’s distress, or only heard his own account of it, without being told what hand the devil had in it, we would scarcely have ascribed so much of it to him as the Scriptures do. And who would have thought that the poor woman, who was bound by an infirmity for eighteen years, was bound all that time by Satan, if our Lord had not plainly told us so much †? Surely he is not less malicious now than in former ages; nor have we reason to think that he is less concerned in the afflictions of the people of God now than he was then.

3. It imports, that, notwithstanding all those sufferings that the seed of the woman should be called to endure, their main interests should still be safe. The heel, you know, is far from the springs of life; and therefore, a wound in the heel is far from being so dangerous

* Heb. xi. 36,—38.

† Luke xiii. 16.

dangerous as one in the vital parts. All the bruises that ever were, or ever shall be inflicted by the *old serpent*, upon any of the *woman's seed*, shall never destroy their spiritual life, nor hurt the dearest interests of their immortal souls.

With regard to Christ himself, it was expressly promised, and as expressly accomplished, that, notwithstanding all his sufferings, a "bone of him *should* not be broken." The bones, you know, are the strength of the natural body. And this circumstance might be intended to signify, that even in death the strength of Christ was not diminished. While his body lay breathless in the tomb, he still had an *arm like God*. His own power was sufficient to raise his dead body from the grave; and even to protect all his disciples from the rage of the enemy, while his human nature continued in the state of the dead. Thus, his main concerns were not affected by all that he suffered from the enemy's hand. His almighty arm was not shortened, his divine glory was not diminished; nor was that infinite blessedness which he enjoyed in the bosom of his eternal Father, before all worlds, in the smallest degree impaired. But even when his *heel* was so *bruised*, that his humanity bled to death; his divine life, glory, power, and felicity, were the same as they were and shall be, from eternity to eternity.

Something similar to this obtains in the case of all the followers of Christ. You have a mortal part, believer, which Satan may bruise, and, for a time, destroy; but you have likewise an immortal part, that he cannot injure. There is a life, a breath in your nostrils, that he may perhaps extinguish; but you have a life, "hid with Christ in God," which he can

in nowise impair. He may disturb the peace of your conscience; but he cannot interrupt your peace with God. He can mar your comfort; but he can never destroy the grounds of it. He may disturb the exercise of grace in you; but the habits he shall never be able to root out. Your covenant with God, your union to Christ; and consequently, your interest in all that fulness which God has laid up in Christ's hand, are things to which the power of your enemy shall never be able to extend. Thus, as it was with the head, so shall it be with every one of the members; God will "carefully keep all his bones, *so that* not one "of them shall be broken *."

4. This part of the text, especially when compared with the other, imports, that no wound which the serpent, or any of his seed, can inflict upon any of the opposite party, shall ever prove mortal. They shall all be completely cured, and the person restored to spiritual health and soundness. If a serpent's bite were so near the vitals, as that the poison might insinuate itself into the mass of blood before a remedy could take effect; the cure would be difficult, if not impossible. But, when the wound is only in the heel, the remedy may be applied before the poison can have time to diffuse itself; and there may be hopes of a cure, especially when the serpent is at hand with its head bruised. It is remarkable, that, if some naturalists may be believed, the most certain and effectual cure for the bite of a serpent may be found in the head of the animal itself; so that the person who has trode a serpent to death, and, in so doing, has been wounded by it in the foot, has a remedy at hand; and,

* Psal. xxxiv. 20.

and, if he knows how to use it, may expect a cure. Whatever be in this as to literal serpents, we are sure it obtains in the case under consideration. If Christ had not bruised the serpent's head, when his own heel was bruised by him, his bite would still have been mortal, both to Christ himself, and to all the rest of the woman's seed. But now, from the effectual bruising of Satan's head, arises a sovereign and infallible cure for all that have been stung by him; if they have but grace to use it. And with this grace all the genuine seed of the woman shall be endued; and so shall infallibly be cured. Your wound, Christian, may smart now, and smart severely; but you may rest assured that it shall never prove mortal. You saw how speedily your glorious Representative was cured; and you see in what a happy and glorious condition he now is at his Father's right hand. Perhaps your cure may not be so quickly accomplished as his was—And no wonder. The serpent's poison, with which he was not capable to be affected, has diffused itself through your whole constitution. And the cure must be performed by degrees. But cured you shall be, as certainly as Christ is, and as completely too. And, together with him, you shall enjoy spiritual health and beauty; *i. e.* immortal happiness and glory; in a much higher degree than you would have been capable of if your *heel* had never been *bruised*.

IV. It is now high time to conclude with some improvement of the subject. It affords us the following inferences for our information.

I. There

1. There is no reason to be alarmed at the devil's success, in his opposition to Christ, and to the interests of his kingdom in our day. Alas! "the enemy has entered *God's* heritage; he has defiled *his* house, "and laid *our spiritual* Jerusalem on heaps!" He has wounded the heel of Christ in a dreadful manner. He has diffused the poison of a delusive and contentious spirit, in that part of Christ's mystical body which is on the earth; so that it is bruised into a thousand pieces! this is a lamentation, and ought to be for a lamentation. But let us not sorrow as they that have no hope. Nor let us be alarmed, "as if some strange "thing had happened to us." This is the very thing that we had reason to look for. It was foretold as early as the day on which Adam fell. And, instead of being a breach of God's promise, it contains an exact fulfilment of it. When, therefore, we see the promise fulfilled in one part of it; let us not indulge an apprehension that God has forgotten the other. The work of Christ is going on, as really as the work of the devil. It is one great design of those ordinances which you, this day, enjoy; and of the whole dispensation of grace, which the goodness of God has still continued with us; that, by means hereof, Christ may carry on his great work of *bruising* the serpent's *head*. And he is here present to accomplish it. He will accomplish it in the soul of every believer. And it is but a little when he will accomplish it in the church, so as to make the enemy repent his success. Every bruise which he now gives to the *heel* of Christ, shall, ere long, be found a *bruise* in his own *head*.

2. Neither have we reason to be surprised at the malice which is continually vomited up by wicked men,

men, against Christ, his truths, his ways, his ordinances, or his people. They would act wholly out of character, and against their very natures, if it were otherwise. They are the seed of the serpent, and partake of his malignity. How can they be other than enemies to the seed of the woman? They naturally join with their father in bruising the heel of Christ and his followers—But wait a little. “The day of vengeance is in *his* heart; and the year of *his* redeemed is as good as come.” He *will* render vengeance to his enemies; and an abundant recompense to all his adversaries. When Satan’s own head shall be finally bruised, then all the heads of his seed shall be bruised along with his. And eternity itself shall never see their wound cured. “Consider this and be afraid, ye that forget the Lord;” and maliciously set yourselves in opposition to Christ or his little ones. Consider it and repent of your conduct, “lest *he* tear you in pieces, when there *shall* be none to deliver.”

3. Nor is there any reason to stumble, or take offence at the cross of Christ. The people of God have no reason to be discouraged; nor have sinners any reason to stand at a distance from Christ or his cause, on account of any sufferings that are annexed to Christianity. There are but two classes, you see, into which all mankind are divided; and each of them may lay their account with *bruising*. If you belong to the seed of the woman, your heel may be bruised by Satan; but if you continue among the seed of the serpent, your head shall be bruised by Christ. It is true, these last enjoy a whole head in this world, while the heel of the others is fore bruised. But, in the other

ther world, their heads shall be bruised incurably, while those shall enjoy everlasting health and cure. Now, let the greatest enemy to Christ in this company be judge, which of the two is the most eligible condition. Whether is it better to have your heel now bruised by Satan, and afterwards healed by Christ; or to have your head bruised by Christ, in a manner that shall admit of no cure, through all eternity? Did not Moses, then, make a wise choice? And is it not your greatest wisdom to imitate him in it; "choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season?"

The subject might likewise afford us a variety of marks, to assist us in that self-examination, which is so necessary, as a preparative for communicating work. The seed of the woman are the only persons who have an immediate warrant to partake in this solemn feast. And they may be distinguished from the serpent's brood by the following marks; from each of which arises a question, fit to be asked at his own conscience by every intended communicant, and by every other person in this assembly.

I. What views have you of your natural estate, while a child of the old serpent? They who are still in Satan's family may apprehend that they are *Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage*. They think all is well with them; and therefore, as the manner of their *species* is, they *closely shut their ear* against every alarm, and refuse to flee for their life. But the seed of the woman are sensible, that, by nature, they are children of wrath, even as others; and that

they justly deserve to “ fall into the condemnation of “ the devil.”

2. How do you go? A man is easily distinguished from a serpent, because he walks upon his legs, while the other goes always upon its belly. The seed of the woman have been raised up, by divine grace, from the grovelling state in which they were by nature. They look up to heaven, in the exercise of faith, and of spiritual meditation. Their hearts and their conversations are in heaven; and thitherward they travel, under the conduct of the elder brother of the family. But the serpent's race continue to move on their belly. Their very hearts are in contact with the earth that is under them. And their eyes are never lifted towards heaven, unless it be to suck a prey into their mouth; for God is not in all their thoughts.

3. What is your food? Do you feed upon the dust of the earth, or upon the corn of heaven? The serpent's feed will ever be known by their licking the dust. They look for all their happiness in the things of a present world. Some expect it in riches, some in honours, some in pleasures; some in one thing and some in another, but all in dust. But the seed of the woman have an appetite for the bread of life. They *hunger and thirst* after the imputed *righteousness* of their Redeemer; after that inherent righteousness which constitutes their likeness to him, and after God himself as their only satisfying portion. The flesh and blood of the Son of God is the provision, that, of all others, is most suited to their appetite. And this is it upon which they desire to feed, when attending divine ordinances.

4. Who

4. Who is the object of your enmity; Christ and his members, or Satan and his seed? Methinks I hear many saying, 'God forbid that I should entertain enmity in my heart against Christ. I hate the devil, and all his infernal crew. Surely I have this mark of the seed of the woman, if I have no more.' But be not too hasty. You are still an enemy to Christ, if you love or desire any thing else more than him; if you have no love to him, nor any enmity against Satan's interest, but what you always had; or if you do not shew your love to Christ, and your hatred of the devil's works, by the whole tenor of your behaviour. For all the seed of the woman have had enmity against Satan's interest, and love to Christ and his image, put into their hearts by the grace of God. And they evidence it by a constant endeavour to keep the commandments of Christ; and to fight strenuously against all the interests of Satan's kingdom, within them and without them.

5. To whom do you wish success in this war? Or how are you affected with the news of Christ's victory? It is Christ's great design to destroy the works of the devil; to abolish sin, and restore holiness in the world. Now say, as in the fight of God, whether would you desire that sin should be abolished in you, or would you rather wish that the law of God were abolished, and you allowed to sin on with impunity? If this last is the case, you are a child of the devil still; for all the seed of the woman are disposed to rejoice in Christ's victory, as a sure pledge of their complete deliverance from all the works of the devil.

6. In a word, Which are you most afraid of, and most studious to avoid; the bruising of your head, or

of your heel? This may seem a strange question to be put to rational creatures. And it would be a very needless question if all men were disposed to act rationally. But who expects reason among the serpent's offspring? They are so foolish as to be really more afraid for their heel than for their head. They dare not be followers of Christ, for fear of present sufferings. But they are not deterred, by the prospect of eternal misery, from following the devil in a course of sin. They look only at the things that are seen, and at the present time; of the things that are not seen, and are eternal, they have no proper conception. But the seed of the woman are all resolved, cheerfully to submit to have their heel bruised in the cause of Christ; in the faith, that, together with him, they shall eternally lift up the head.

The subject affords, moreover, a variety of useful directions to the Christian; both in relation to the work of this day, and in relation to all the duties of his after life.

As to the work of this day; you have come hither, intended communicant, with a view to commemorate the accomplishment of this promise, by the hand of your glorious representative, when he bruised the serpent's head at his death. And have you not good reason, while you do so, to mourn for all the bruises that ever you have given to the heel of Christ; either while you continued in the devil's family, or since you was taken into the family of the woman's seed? While you was a serpent, it was no wonder to see you joining with all the rest, in opposition to Christ and his members. Yet even this should be matter of humiliation to you. Much more should you be grieved, because,

because, after you became a follower of Christ, instead of aiming your blow at the serpent's head, as duty and gratitude required, you should still continue to aim it at the heel of Christ. Come forward, therefore, to the Lord's table, in the exercise of humiliation; and let us eat the passover with "unleavened bread, *and* bitter herbs." Come forward, likewise, in the exercise of mortification. Let it be your present aim to fetch a mortal blow at all the interests of Satan's kingdom within you. Bring forth every beloved lust; and let it be "hewed in pieces," like Agag, "before the Lord." Thus will you concur with, and promote the ends of Christ's death, while you cast in your mite to keep up the remembrance of it. In a word, Look forward, in the exercise of faith and hope, to the day when this promise shall have its full and final accomplishment. He who bruised the serpent's head, at the same time that his heel was bruised by him on the cross, shall come again to our world, in a little, to give him the final crush; and effectually to cure all the bruises that ever any of his followers have suffered in the combat. And be assured, that the Captain of your salvation will not leave his work unfinished; but will assuredly do all that for you, and against your spiritual enemies, *that he hath spoken to you of.*

As to the business of your after life, consider yourselves always as soldiers in the field. Lose not any opportunity of annoying the enemy, or of hurting his interests. Keep always on your armour, that armour which the Spirit of God has recommended*. Watch

Q 3

continually,

* Eph. vi. 13,—18.

continually, and be on your guard against the wiles of the enemy ; he is a serpent, and ever noted for his infernal subtilty. Make no peace, no truce, no parley with him ; nor give any quarter to any of those lusts that are the abettors of his interests within you. Say not a confederacy with his seed, in any of their evil ways. Choose them not for your companions, nor ever trust to their pretensions of friendship. You are a *people* that should *live alone*, and should not suffer yourselves to “ be reckoned among the nations.” Depend always upon your glorious Captain ; that he may “ teach *your* hands to war, and *your* fingers to “ fight.” Be always obedient to his orders ; keep the post that he assigns you, and maintain it to the last extremity. Be not discouraged, though your heel should be bruised in the contest ; but wait patiently, and trust confidently in him that hath promised, and who assuredly “ will bruise Satan,” and every other enemy, “ under your feet shortly.”

To conclude, This subject evinces how deeply every person present is interested in the work that we are going to set about. There shall be no mere spectators among us to-day. In the great event, which we are about to commemorate, this promise had an exact accomplishment. Then was the decisive engagement, in which the serpent “ bruised the seed of *the* woman in the heel, and he bruised *him* in the “ head.” And as we are all either the seed of the woman or the seed of the serpent ; the symbolical commemoration of this event sets before us, as in a glass, the object of our fear, or of our hope. Let every person present, then, take a view of the double
issue

issue of this combat. Let the seed of the woman mourn; their champion is "bruised in the heel; *and he was bruised for their iniquities.*" But let them also rejoice; he left the field victorious; having *bruised his enemy in the head.* And he is now enjoying the most glorious triumph in heaven. Let all the serpent's family tremble. Your champion, O ye "generation of vipers," has received a mortal wound. His head is grinded; and he is rendered incapable of defending either himself or you. If he stood not, in the day of battle, before "the Captain of our salvation," how shall you? Be assured, that, while you continue in the devil's family, you are an object of Christ's enmity as really as your father is. And if you finally continue in it, your end shall be the same with his. Be exhorted, therefore, as you would not wish to "fall into the condemnation of the *devil;*" and to have your head bruised eternally under the feet of Christ; to leave the cursed family to which you belong. Cast away the weapons that you have hitherto borne in the serpent's cause. Embrace the gracious offers of peace and reconciliation, that are now made you in the name of our triumphant Redeemer. And take up arms, under him, against your former master. He will doubtless rage against you, and threaten you with terrible things, if you forsake his camp; but be not afraid of him. He who now invites you to his standard, will protect you with his Almighty arm; so that you shall never be hurt, by all that he, or any that take part with him, shall be able to do against you. And it is but a little, when he will make *you* also victorious

over

over Satan himself, and all that espouse his interests. And you shall eternally share in that triumph, which all the seed of the woman shall obtain, when the contest shall be finally terminated; in the everlasting bruising of the serpent and all his seed, under the feet of Christ. "For he must reign, till all his enemies be made his footstool."

S E R-

S E R M O N VII.

The Invocation; or, The Church's Prayer for the Influences of the Holy Ghost, to qualify her for Communion with Christ.

SONG IV. 16.

AWAKE, O NORTH WIND, AND COME, THOU SOUTH,
BLOW UPON MY GARDEN, THAT THE SPICES THERE-
OF MAY FLOW OUT.

THIS book, as you have had occasion to hear before, is a sacred *epithalamium*, or marriage song. It was not composed on account of Solomon's marriage with any of those women whom he loved; but to celebrate a spiritual marriage between one infinitely "greater than Solomon," and a bride apparently more unsuitable for him than any heathen princess was for the king of Israel. "This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the church."

In the preceding part of this chapter Christ is introduced commending the church, and giving her assurance

assurance of his love in the most ample, and the most condescending manner. Among the other similitudes, which he uses for setting forth her excellencies, as she is adorned and beautified with his salvation, he compares her to a garden, ver. 12. "A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed." He recalls the same image, in ver. 15. "A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon."

With a peculiar eye to this part of his commendatory speech, does the church express herself, as in the words of this text. For, though some interpreters have considered these as the words of Christ; yet, as there can be no doubt but the church is the speaker in the last clause of the verse, I see no reason why we should not consider these also as her words.

What we have in this verse is, then, to be considered, as the whole of her reply to all that Christ says, in commendation of her, in *fifteen* verses before. A Christian, hearing such ample praise, bestowed by the Prince of life upon a sinful worm, cannot help being filled with astonishment and admiration. It would not be consistent with his station, or his character, to deny what his Lord had said. But, allowing that his soul is a *garden inclosed*, he breaks forth in a fervent supplication, that *that garden* may be rendered worthy of him that is the owner of it; and that he may be present in it accordingly.

The verse consists of two parts. In the first, we have a prayer for the gracious influences of the Spirit of Christ; to make his church, and the souls of his people, a fit place of abode for Christ himself. And

in the second, a prayer for the gracious presence of Christ; to hold communion with his church and people, in the fruits of his Spirit among them. It is only the first of these from which we propose to discourse a little at present, as it is expressed in the first clause of the verse.

In which, more particularly, we may observe the three things following.

1. To whom the spouse addresses herself in this supplication. It is to the Holy Spirit of God, under the designation of the *north and south winds*.

2. What she asks of him, in three particulars; *viz.* That he might *awake, come, and blow upon her garden*; i. e. that, by the communication of his gracious influences to her, he would make her like a garden through which the north and south winds blow freely.

3. The end that she had in view in this petition, and expected to attain by means of the answer of it; *that the spices thereof may flow out*; or that, by the drawing forth of the graces of the Spirit into exercise, she might be enabled to send up such a pleasant favour as might prove acceptable to her glorious Lord and Husband.

The farther explication of these particulars will fall in of course, while we prosecute the following doctrine; which we take to contain the sense of the words.

It is the duty of all Christians, especially in the view of a solemn approach to God, earnestly to pray for the influences of the Holy Ghost; that their graces may be drawn forth into proper and lively exercise.

THE method to be observed, in speaking from this subject, is suggested by the above division of the words. Accordingly,

I. We shall, through divine assistance, speak of the influences of the Spirit of God, under the denomination of the north and south winds.

II. We shall consider what it is that we are here taught to pray for; as represented by the awaking, coming, and blowing of these winds.

III. We shall enquire what advantage we may hope to enjoy by the answer of such a prayer; or what is meant by the flowing out of the spices, in the last words of the text.

IV. We shall conclude with some improvement.

I. THE first thing proposed was, To speak of the influences of the Holy Ghost; as represented by the figure of the north and south winds. All that is proposed on this head shall be comprised in the following particulars.

I. The north wind, and the south wind, here invoked, are neither to be considered as emblematical of two different beings, nor of two distinct persons. It is one and the same person who goes by both designations. This is evident, among other things, from the consideration, that the word which we render *blow*, is in the singular number. She does not say, 'Awake, O north wind, and come thou south wind, blow ye upon my garden;' and yet it is evident she prays for the blowing of both. She only says, *Blow thou*; plainly intimating, that, under both figures, she had her eye to one and the same Spirit. In the natural world, the north wind and the south wind.

wind are different, and opposite one to another. They blow from opposite quarters. But, in the spiritual world, they blow from the same point; they are both operations of one and the same Spirit.

2. The person here addressed is the Holy Ghost, the third person of the ever blessed Trinity. He is often compared to the wind in Scripture. "Come," says the prophet, "from the four winds, O breath; and breathe upon these slain, that they may live*." If there should be any doubt, whether the Holy Ghost is meant in that passage or not, there can be no such doubt relative to the words of Christ to Nicodemus: "The wind bloweth where it listeth; and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." The Holy Spirit, in his gracious operations upon the soul, is fitly compared to the wind, on the following accounts.

(1.) Because the air, or wind, is the fittest emblem that the material world can furnish, for representing any kind of spirit. The wind is not visible to the bodily eye. It does not sensibly resist our touch. It has no fixed shape or position. In all these respects it resembles spirit, which is an immaterial substance, and is not subject to any of the bodily senses. Hence, in various languages, and particularly in the Hebrew, the same word signifies both *breath* and *spirit*. Now, the Holy Ghost, being an infinite Spirit, may surely be represented by this emblem, as fitly as any spirit that is finite and created.

(2.) On account of the secret and imperceptible manner of his working. Whatever knowledge of the

* Ezek. xxxvii. 9.

the works of nature, and particularly of the causes of winds, the learned of our day have to boast of, beyond what was attained in former ages ; still what our Lord said to Nicodemus, in the passage just now quoted, continues to be true. No man has power, either to raise the wind or allay it. It cannot be stopt in its progress, nor resisted in its operations. In these respects, it is a fit emblem of the working of the Holy Spirit. He worketh where, and only where he listeth. His own sovereign pleasure is the only reason that we can assign for his working upon one person, or at one time rather than another. Our resistance to his motions may provoke him to withdraw them ; but, when he has a mind to work efficaciously, no created power can resist him. As we “hear the “found” of the wind, “but cannot tell whence it “cometh, nor whither it goeth ;” so the Holy Ghost produces effects that may be perceived or felt ; but his operation itself is seldom perceptible ; for “the “kingdom of God,” in the soul, “cometh not with “observation.” And if at any time it is felt, the person may as soon determine at what place of the earth any gust of wind began to blow, or in what place it shall cease, as explain, or fully understand, what he feels.

(3.) The Holy Spirit, in his various operations, may, with sufficient propriety, be compared both to the north and to the south wind. Interpreters have justly considered the north wind here, as expressive of the awakening and convincing influences of the Holy Ghost ; and the south wind, as representing his quickening and comforting influences.

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His awakening and convincing influences may be compared to the north wind on the following accounts.

[1.] The north wind is usually pinching and severe; so that a person exposed to it feels no small pain and uneasiness from its cold. In like manner, the convictions of the Spirit, however salutary, are far from being pleasant to the person who is under them. On the contrary, they often fill his mind and conscience with such uneasiness, that nothing on this side hell can equal it. You can bear witness to the truth of this, who have had all your sins laid open before you; all the danger of your condition discovered unto you; all the thunders of Sinai roaring above your head; and hell itself appearing to yawn beneath your feet; while your conscience roared under a sense of the curse of God that lay upon you, and under the dreadful apprehension of divine wrath pursuing you at the heels! Surely the north wind had never such influence to congeal the waters under the pole, as these convictions had to freeze your spirits.

[2.] As "the north wind driveth away rain*;" so do those convictions dispel the storm of divine wrath, to which all mankind are exposed in their natural estate. There is, however, this remarkable difference; the north wind drives away the rain, by purging the air of those vapours by which it is engendered; so that a person, without changing his position, finds himself relieved from any apprehensions on account of the shower that formerly hung over him. But convictions free us from the apprehensions of divine wrath, not by driving away the shower from the place
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* Prov. xxv. 23.

where we were; but by driving us into a place where no shower of that kind ever falls. When they come to be sanctified, they drive us to Christ, our city of refuge. And then, like those Egyptians who "feared the word of the Lord," we feel no harm from that hail-storm, which brings inevitable death on every person who is found without.

[3.] Though the north wind, while it continues, tends to harden the earth, and render it unfit for the purposes of vegetation; yet, by means of it, the soil is pulverized, and fitted to receive the seed from the hand of the husbandman, against the return of the spring. In the very same manner, while convictions last, and are not accompanied with the comforting influences of the Spirit in any degree; they have no tendency, but to irritate corruption, and render the hard and stony heart still harder. Yet convictions are the means through which the soul comes afterwards to be mollified; the stony heart turned into a heart of flesh; and the person prepared to receive the good seed of the word of God, so as to bring forth fruit; "some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred fold."

[4.] The north wind kills those weeds with which the ground is infested; and which are peculiarly noxious in gardens; so that the soil is left clear for those plants that are nourished by the care of the husbandman. In the garden of the church, and in the souls of particular believers, a variety of corruptions spring up of their own accord, as noxious weeds; and are in danger of choaking that good seed which the great husbandman has sown in it. But a blast of this spiritual north wind so nips those corruptions, that they wither

wither and die apace; and the heart is left free, for the cultivation of those graces that the Spirit of God has implanted. - Hence it is that convictions are necessary, not only in the day of regeneration; but through the whole course of life, till corruption be wholly mortified. And, however unpleasant they are in themselves, the Christian who knows his own interest will always desire and pray for them, as in the text: "Awake, O north wind, blow upon my garden."

The quickening and comforting influences of the same Spirit are compared to the *south wind*; and that on the following accounts.

[1.] As the south wind revives the decayed face of nature, and restores to plants their former verdure; so these quickening influences of the Holy Ghost restore freshness and vigour to the Christian, after a time of spiritual withering and decay. It is not more natural for a winter to succeed a summer, in the material world, and another summer the winter; than for the child of God to have his times of spiritual withering, succeeding his times of refreshing, and again succeeded by them. These witherings always take place when the quickening influences of the Spirit are withdrawn; and as soon as they are restored a fresh spring ensues. In the natural world, though the blowing of the south wind may restore the verdure of those plants whose life remained in them, it can do nothing for such as are really dead. But those influences of the Spirit, of which we speak, can give life to dead souls, as well as liveliness to those that are sickly. Though you be *twice dead*, and *plucked up by the root*, a blast of this wind will revive you effectually; so that there

shall not be a plant in all "the garden of God," more vigorous or more fragrant than you shall become.

[2.] As the breathing of the south wind tends to revive the spirits of those who were melancholy, and disposes them to cheerfulness and gaiety; so these influences of the Spirit raise the drooping heart of the Christian, and fill him with holy joy and consolation. Many times he is made sad and melancholy,—by a sense of sin, by his Lord's withdrawing, by the reproach of the enemy, by outward afflictions, and often by all these together; so that, like David, he cries out, "O my God, my soul is cast down in me." Yet, on the back of such a season, he is enabled to "rejoice in the Lord, and be joyful in God *his* Saviour." His *harp* is taken down from the *willows*; and he "sings the Lord's song, *though still* in a foreign land." Yea, even while afflictions continue, he finds them all so much overbalanced by the blowing of this wind; that, like Habakkuk, he can "rejoice in the Lord," though all the springs of earthly comfort run dry. Or, like the primitive Christians, though "in heaviness through manifold temptations," he can yet "rejoice, with joy unspeakable and full of glory*."

[3.] As the south wind usually dispels the cold with which the face of nature was formerly benumbed, and brings heat and warmth along with it; so these refreshing influences of the Holy Ghost restore spiritual warmth to the soul, and set all the frozen affections a-flowing towards God and spiritual things. Then the Christian's zeal, (which was so lukewarm,
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* 1 Pet. i. 6, 8.

that he had reason to fear, lest God should "speak *him* "out of his mouth)," is kindled to such a degree, that he neither fears the face of man, in bearing testimony for God, nor spares the most beloved lust, when making war against God's enemies. His love, which was frozen almost to death, is now so far invigorated, that "many waters cannot quench it," nor can any "floods drown it." A sight of the matchless love of Christ, joined with his equally matchless loveliness, has made him sick of love. And he finds himself much at a loss, either how to express, or how to evidence his love to him; who so undeservedly, so transcendently, so efficaciously, so incomprehensibly, "first loved us!"

[4.] In one word, As the south wind, blowing freely through a garden, causes all the plants to spring up apace; diffuses their pleasant smell on every side, and brings forward their respective fruits unto perfection; so these quickening influences of the Spirit make "those who are planted in the house of God, "to grow up and flourish in the courts of our God; "so that, even in old age, when others fade, they still "bring forth fruit;" and continue "fat and flourishing." It is when God "pours out *his* Spirit upon "Zion's seed, and *his* blessing upon *her* offspring, "that they grow up as among the grass, and as willows by the water courses*." By this means, the image of God is gradually perfected upon the soul; the person "grows in grace, and in the knowledge of "the Lord Jesus Christ." He sends out a fragrant perfume in the nostrils of God, and of all who have

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* Isa. xlv. 4.

their spiritual senses exercised. His *fruit* comes to be “unto holiness, and *his* end everlasting life.”

II. IT was next proposed, To enquire what we are here taught to ask, as represented by the *awakening, coming,* and *blowing* of the north and south winds. For clearing of this we may observe the following things.

1. The Holy Spirit of God, though always present in his church, and in the hearts of his people, often seems, in their apprehension, like one asleep. His work appears then at a stand. He seems inattentive to his own interests, and to those of his people. His enemies are permitted to sow their tares, even in his garden. And many things take place, on account of which both friends and enemies are in danger of concluding, that there is not “in the Most High *any* “knowledge of the things that are below.” Sleep, indeed, being a thing that implies imperfection, is altogether incompetent to God. But in such cases, he seems as if he were asleep. The same things take place in the church, that might be expected to happen in a garden, while the keeper thereof was asleep. On this account we may warrantably pray for his awaking; while our meaning and desire is, that he would shew himself awake, to the comfort of his people, and to the conviction of his enemies. So prays the sweet singer of Israel: “Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord; arise, cast us not off for ever*.” This is the meaning of the first part of the prayer in the next.

2: God may not only seem to be asleep, and so inattentive

* Psal. xlv. 23.

attentive to what passes in the church; he may even seem to be absent from her, and to have forsaken her altogether. His gracious presence can never be withdrawn from her; but he may often be absent to her sense. Zion, in such a case, is oft in danger of saying, "The Lord hath forsaken, and my God forgotten me." And no wonder that she longs for his return. Nothing is more common than to find the people of God, under such apprehensions, crying to him for this, and saying, as David, "O when wilt thou come unto me *?" Yet the meaning of such a petition is not that he would really be present where he was not before; but that he would grant new discoveries, manifestations, and displays of his gracious presence, by carrying on his work in the church or in the soul. Thus, when we adopt the second part of the prayer in this text, our meaning should be, that he would accomplish his work among us, in such a manner, that every friend and every enemy may see his hand at it; and all may be convinced, that "there is a God in *our* Israel."

3. As to the last branch of this petition, which is expressed in these words, "Blow upon my garden;" for the better understanding of it, the following things must be attended to.

The *garden* here mentioned is the church herself. Christ had compared her to a garden in ver. 12. "A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse." To these words, as we have seen, she alludes in this text. Her garden is herself. And the meaning is the same as if she had said, 'Blow upon me.' Neither is there any absurdity in calling the church of Christ both his

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spouse

* Psa. ci. 2.

spouse and a *garden*. Both expressions are metaphorical; and both metaphors together do not exhaust the subject. Now, the church is fitly compared to a garden on the following accounts.

(1.) A garden is usually fenced about, and inclosed with walls or hedges; to prevent its being hurt, either by men or beasts. So the church of God has her fence, which secures her more effectually than walls of adamant. She has a hedge of government and discipline, which Christ has planted about her; and which her office-bearers are called to keep in repair. By this, profane persons may be prevented from “devouring that which is holy;” and her fruits are nourished till they ripen. But she has likewise a wall of divine protection around her, by which she is secured against all the depredations of thieves and robbers; so that none of them can enter her borders, far less can they do her any injury, without a divine permission. This was the hedge that God set about Job, and about all that he had. He sets it, in the same manner, about all his people in every age. And even Satan himself is not able to break through it. This is it of which the church elsewhere sings, “We have a strong city, salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks*.”

(2.) A garden is a place of pleasure. A man usually takes more delight in his garden than in any other part of his possessions. He plants it with the choicest flowers and fruits. He repairs to it from time to time, to amuse himself with its agreeable verdure, and with its pleasing variety. He plucks the most fragrant of its flowers; and tastes those fruits that are

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* Isa. xxvi. 1.

in season. In like manner, the church is Christ's pleasure ground. In her are his flowers, his lillies, and the "trees of his right hand; the planting of the "Lord, that he may be glorified." In her he takes pleasure and delight, more than in all the creation besides. To her he always resorts; "to feed in the "gardens, and to gather lillies*." And hence says God, concerning his church of old, "The vineyard of "the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men "of Judah are his pleasant plants †."

(3.) A garden is usually well dressed and highly cultivated. The husbandman bestows more care upon it than upon any other spot. So it is with the church of Christ. "In that day, sing ye unto her, A vine-
"yard of red wine. I the LORD do keep it; I will
"water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep
"it night and day ‡." The Lord Jesus Christ, being appointed to dress this garden, and to keep it, as the first Adam was set to dress the garden of God in Eden; he has such a peculiar care of it, and of every plant in it; that he takes the very method with each that is best calculated to promote its growth, and bring it forward to perfection. Yea, even those plants that continue fruitless, he will not suffer them to be dug up, or thrown over the hedge, till all due pains have been taken with them. To speak without allegory; as, in all his dealings with his own people, he follows that method which is best calculated to promote their spiritual growth in faith and holiness; so even hypocrites and false professors have a share of that spiritual culture which he bestows upon his church and people, by means of his ordinances. And,
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* Song vi. 2.

† Isa. v. 7.

‡ Isa. xxvii. 2, 3.

with regard to such in this congregation as have never hitherto brought forth any acceptable fruit, he is presently saying, in his providence, " Let *them* alone " this year also, till I dig about *them* and dung *them*."

(4.) A garden is, of consequence, a profitable spot. It brings forth much fruit meet for the Master's use. Indeed, no man, nor any society of men, can, in any proper sense, " be profitable unto God ; as he that is " wise may be profitable to himself." He stands in no need of any advantage by us ; nor is it possible that he should receive any from us. But in the church are produced those fruits of holiness in which God takes pleasure ; while the rest of the world is over-run with the weeds of corruption, and brings forth nothing but briars and thorns. These fruits that are produced in the church, are of real usefulness in the house of God.

Now, as every true believer is a member of the church, all that has been said of her may be applied to every one of them in his measure. They all have the benefit of that inclosure that God has set about the church. They are all considered by him as his *pleasant plants*. They all share in that spiritual culture which he bestows upon his garden ; and have their " fruit unto holiness." Hence, what has been said of the church is applicable to the soul of every Christian. Each has a garden of his own ; and, with relation to his own soul, may pray, as in the text, " Blow upon my garden."

If any should ask, Why the church speaks of this garden as her own, when her Lord and husband is the rightful proprietor of it? We answer she may justly do so, on the following accounts.

[1.] It

[1.] It cannot possibly be his, without being hers also. By virtue of her union to him she has an interest in all that he possesses, as well as in himself; while he has a sovereign propriety in her, and in all that she can claim as hers. This is usually the case in marriages among men; and it is happily the case in this spiritual marriage. It cannot be his garden without being her's also.

[2.] She has a charge of the garden, and is appointed to keep it under him. Eve was joined with Adam in the charge to keep the garden of Eden; and, by this means, she had an interest in it as well as he. In like manner, though Christ is the chief keeper of this spiritual garden, his spouse also has a charge of it. And seldom does any injury befall it, but through her neglect. She has a charge of that hedge of discipline by which it is inclosed; of all those truths which are as the food of the plants; and of the plants themselves, of every stature. Yea, every Christian has a charge of his own soul in particular. And in whatever manner he has been busied otherwise, he will find it a heavy matter, if he have reason at any time to say, "Mine own vineyard have I not kept."

[3:] Her husband has given her the garden for her possession. Though he bought it at an immense price; though himself takes such pleasure in it, and has so much care about it; he has made a gift of it to her. All the fruits of it are for her use; and she may warrantly consider every thing that it contains as her own. To speak more plainly, believer, Christ, though he redeemed your soul by his own precious blood, has made a free gift of it to you; and you shall have it "for a prey in all places whither you go."

All

All the fruit that you bring forth unto God shall rebound to your own advantage. And all that pleasure which God has in the works of his own hand about you, shall flow back to you in rivers to swim in, through all eternity. The same is the case with the church in general.

Now, from all this it is manifest, that, by the blowing of the north and south wind upon her garden, the church means the actual communication of the influences of the Spirit to herself, in agreeableness to her need. As the wind, in blowing freely through a garden, touches every plant, and every part of the soil; and, in this way, communicates its influences to the whole; so she prays that the Holy Ghost may communicate, both his convincing and comforting influences, to every part of the church, and to every one of her members; so that the whole body, and the whole man in every member of the body, may be subject to their efficacy.

III. WE come now to enquire what is the happy effect that the blowing of this spiritual wind will produce; or what may be expected to follow upon the answer of this prayer, as it is expressed in these words, *That the spices thereof may flow out.*

The word which we render spices is meant of those aromatic or sweet-smelling herbs, that are usually planted in gardens, and diffuse an agreeable perfume all around them. These, in this passage, are emblematical of all that God has instituted in his church, or bestowed upon her; which is pleasing and acceptable to him, as the fragrant smell of such plants is to the owner of the garden where they grow. Thus it comprehends

hends all the ordinances of divine appointment in the church ; all the office-bearers that Christ has given her ; all the gifts bestowed upon them or others, for the use of edifying ; all the graces of the Spirit in her members ; and all their exercise of these graces ; together with all that holy obedience which Christians daily offer up, as their " spiritual sacrifices, holy " and acceptable to God, through Jesus Christ."

To *flow out*, strictly speaking, is not the property of spices ; but of waters, or some other liquid. Here, then, is a metaphor within a metaphor ; and it seems to be strongly expressive of two things. 1. The abounding of those things that are acceptable to God in the church, to such a degree, that they may be compared to waters, which *flow out* speedily and plentifully when a sluice is opened. 2. The abundant acceptableness of all these. As a gentle breeze upon the flowers and plants in a garden, causes them to send forth, in abundance, those aromatic *effluvia*, which, affecting the organs of smell, produce the sensation of a pleasant perfume ; so the spouse expects, that, when the wind of divine influences blows upon her, all the spiritual gifts bestowed upon her by her head shall be improved and occupied, in such a manner as to afford suitable entertainment to the royal guest, whose presence she invites in the next clause of the verse. Her ordinances will then be dispensed in purity as well as in plenty. Her gifts and graces will be drawn forth into lively exercise. Her members will be animated for running their Christian race ; many spiritual sacrifices of a sweet-smelling flavour will be offered in her to God. And every thing will be

be in such a condition as may prove most acceptable to her Beloved.

Now, for producing this effect the influences of the Spirit are absolutely necessary. When these are withheld, though the dispensation of ordinances may be continued, they will still be dry and tasteless, unacceptable to God, and unprofitable to men. There may be spiritual gifts; but they will not be improved for the edification of the body. Yea, the graces of the Spirit themselves will never be so exercised as to send up any pleasant favour in Christ's nostrils. But, when this spiritual wind does actually blow, there cannot fail to be a proportionable flowing out of the spices in this garden. The blowing of the south wind, accompanied with the cherishing influence of the returning sun, does not more naturally revive the winter-beaten plants, and cause them give forth their balmy odours in the spring; than the influences of the Holy Ghost, communicated to the church, and to the particular Christian, revive the decayed face of religion, and set every thing to rights in this spiritual garden. Then ordinances become a pleasure to God and to his people. Then gospel ministers are a "sweet favour of God;" not only "in them that perish," but especially "in them that believe." The graces of faith, love, joy, hope, zeal for God, and all the rest, become lively and vigorous in their exercise. And the whole church, like the garments of Esau on his brother's back, has "the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed." In proportion as those influences are communicated, this will always be their effect. An assurance of this is plainly imported in the expression which we are now considering. It runs literally

literally, in the future time, thus: "Blow upon my garden, and the spices thereof shall flow out." 'I am sure the effect cannot be wanting, if once I enjoy the cause.'

IV. WE shall now conclude with some improvement of the subject. And it affords us information in the following particulars.

I. All the three persons of the adorable Godhead are alike the object of divine worship. And we may safely address our supplications to any of them, provided we duly attend to the unity of the divine essence. When we ask for those blessings, the bestowing of which is more particularly ascribed to the Father, according to the œconomy of our redemption, we may address ourselves to him. When we pray for those gifts which Christ, as Mediator, is exalted to bestow; we may speak to the second person, as did Stephen in his dying moments. And when we supplicate, as we are here taught to do, for those spiritual blessings that are more immediately the gifts of the Holy Ghost, we may lawfully direct our prayer to him.

2. Whatever *diversities of gifts* there are in the church, they are all the fruits of the *same Spirit*. Yea, however opposite the consolations may be, by which the Christian is made happy, beyond any thing that can arise from the enjoyment of earthly things, to those convictions by which he was warned to flee from the wrath to come; still both are the work of the same ever blessed Spirit. The north wind and the south wind are here addressed as one.

3. There

3. There is nothing in the church, or about any particular member of it, that is truly acceptable to God, or can afford suitable entertainment to Christ; unless it is the fruit of the gracious operation of the Holy Ghost. There is a manifest connection between this and the following part of the verse. What the spouse here prays for, is intended as a mean of preparing her garden for the reception and entertainment of her Beloved. And here she plainly enough insinuates, that it would be impossible to have it so prepared, unless the wind of divine influences should graciously blow upon it.

4. All the fruits of the Spirit are pleasant and desirable unto Christ. Every grace in the soul is, to Christ, like a sweet-smelling plant in a garden; so is every degree of conformity to the will of God in the church. It affords him the highest satisfaction and delight. When the spices of your garden, believer, flow out, by the blowing of this spiritual wind upon them; then your *Beloved* will take pleasure to “come into his garden.” Oh! pray earnestly for the influences of the Spirit, that your graces may be drawn forth into exercise, you that wish for the presence of Christ with you in his own ordinances.

5. The presence of the Spirit of God, and his gracious operation in the hearts of his people, are not less necessary, in order to the regular and acceptable exercise of their graces, than they are for the implantation of those graces at the first. The spouse of Christ has a garden already, and that planted with spices; yet she prays for the blowing of the wind, as necessary to make her “spices flow out.” If ever you wish to be exercised, as becomes a gracious person, let your dependence

dependence be always upon him that gave you grace, that he may enable you to exercise it.

6. As those operations of the Holy Ghost which are painful to the Christian, are not less useful and salutary than the others; so they ought not to be less welcome when he is pleased to send them. Nay, on the contrary, every Christian should pray for these as well as for the others; and be thankful for them when they come. You need the piercing blasts of the north wind, to wither your corruptions; as well as the gentle breezes of the south wind, to cherish your graces. Both together will make you both fragrant and fruitful.

THIS subject likewise affords matter of trial; and may assist us in the duty of self-examination. If you are espoused to Christ, and capable of being welcome at his table; then,

1. Being sensible that you have a garden, and are intrusted with the keeping of it, it is your concern to keep it carefully and faithfully. Knowing that God has given you an immortal soul, for which you must be accountable to Christ at his coming, you are careful to mind the things that belong to its everlasting peace; and allow not yourself to prefer the vanities of a present world, in your heart or in your practice, to the concerns of eternity.

2. This garden of yours is planted with spices. The great Husbandman, by the saving operations of his Spirit, has implanted in your soul those graces in which conformity to the image of God consists. You have some degree of faith in Jesus Christ, of repentance unto life, of love to God and to the brethren, of

joy in the Holy Ghost, of resignation to the divine will, and of all the other fruits of the Spirit; and you earnestly long for more.

3. It is your earnest desire, that the spices of your garden may flow out. Many there are who have some kind of desire to have grace, because they know that they cannot be saved from hell without it, who yet have little or no concern about the exercise of it. But as for you, it is not enough to you that you be saved from wrath, or that you get to heaven at last. You wish to be acceptable to your Beloved, to put honour upon him, and to have fellowship with him by the way. You know that this cannot be attained without the actual exercise of grace, and the practice of evangelical holiness. These you, therefore, earnestly desire; these you constantly aim at; for these you daily pray.

4. You are sensible that your spices can never flow out, unless the north and south winds blow upon your garden for that effect. You know, by experience, that of yourself you can do nothing; that no grace already received can do your business; and that all your endeavours to exercise grace will be as fruitless as were your endeavours to implant it; unless you are assisted by the Holy Ghost. In all your endeavours to this purpose, you “go in the strength of the “ Lord God,” and in his only.

In a word, You heartily join with the spouse in the prayer of this text, and say, “Awake, O north wind, “ come thou south *wind*, and blow upon my garden; “ that the spices thereof may flow out.” Not only do you profess to say so, now that you are put in mind of it; this is the habitual language of your heart. In
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the view of the solemn work before us, you have been praying already, in your families, and in your closets; if not in these very words, in words of the same import, for the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit; to draw forth grace into exercise in your soul, and so to prepare you for a seat at the holy table of the Lord.

If these things be in you and abound; if you really desire that they should abound, and are grieved because they abound so little; then you belong to the spouse and bride of Christ; and, if your prayer is answered, you may be welcome at his table. Otherwise you are an enemy to him; and, while this is the case, you have no right to partake in the solemn feast in view.

WE conclude with a short word of exhortation.

Let the spouse of Christ, and every one of her members, pray as in the text. Pray for such a blowing of this supernatural wind, as may be suitable to your condition, whatever it is. Pray for his blowing in the church at large; as the only mean of reviving her decayed face, and restoring "the beauty of the *LORD her God upon her.*" Pray for this congregation; that he may so blow upon us, as to make ready, among us, a people prepared for himself. Pray for those who are so careless about all such matters, that they pray not for themselves. Pray for your brethren, who may join with you in the work of the ensuing occasion. Pray for God's servants of the ministry, who may assist in the work; that this wind may so blow upon them, as to make them a sweet favour of God among you. In this manner pray for me.

Let those who are strangers to Christ, be exhorted to consider their ways. You also have a garden, finer; but it is the garden of the fluggard. Instead of being planted with those spices that it ought to produce, it is wholly "grown over with thorns; nettles" *have* covered the face thereof, and the stone-wall "thereof *is* broken down." Corruption reigns where grace ought to grow. There is nothing in your soul acceptable to God, nothing that can be profitable to yourself. Nay, your soul is in danger of being totally lost; and then, though you could gain the whole world, it would profit you nothing. Nothing can better your condition, without a blast of this mystical wind. As you would avoid the dreadful fate of that ground which is "nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be "burned," do you also pray, as in this text, "Awake, "O north wind," &c.

In one word, Let all that hear the gospel beware of neglecting and overlooking, of interrupting or resisting, this mysterious wind when it blows. Thus saith the Lord, "Quench not the Spirit." Resist not his motions, when he blows upon your souls by his inward and secret admonitions. "Harden not your "hearts," when he blows upon you by the external dispensations of his grace. The Spirit of God is speaking to every one of you in this gospel, as really as I am. He calls, he beseeches, he prays you to "be reconciled unto God;" and to be ready to meet the Bridegroom, the beloved of souls, when he cometh. Prepare to meet him, and to give him a becoming reception, when he comes into his garden, as we have reason to expect he will, on the ensuing occasion. And see that you be ready to meet him, and to

go in with him, when he comes to consummate his marriage in a little; left, when you come afterwards, you find the door shut. This you may consider as the advice of the Spirit of God to you. And you shall be guilty of quenching the Spirit as far as you refuse it. "Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith, to-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation; in the day of the temptation in the wilderness."

S E R M O N VIII.

The Invitation; or, A Prayer of the Church for the Presence of Christ, and for his gracious acceptance of the Fruits of his Spirit in her.

SONG iv. 16.

—LET MY BELOVED COME INTO HIS GARDEN, AND
EAT HIS PLEASANT FRUITS.

WE now proceed, through divine assistance, to consider the last clause of the verse. In which we have four things deserving our attention.

1. The person spoken of by the church; and by her called *My Beloved*. This can be no other than Christ himself, her glorious Lord and Husband, whom she frequently calls by this designation in this book.

2. His interest in the church acknowledged; she calls herself *His garden*. What she called her own garden in the preceding clause, she now calls his. Indeed, so close is the union between them, that she has nothing that is not devoted to him; neither has he

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he any thing which he has not graciously given to her.

3. His presence in the church requested: "Let him come into his garden." In respect of his Godhead, Christ is present every where. When this book was composed, he had not yet assumed human nature. Now his presence, in that nature, is confined to heaven, "till the time of the restitution of all things." But still there is a sense in which he might be invited to come into his church both then and now.

4. His entertainment in the church specified; let him "eat his pleasant fruits." If she invites him into his garden, she has provided somewhat; at least she desires to have something ready for his entertainment; even the fruits of his own Spirit and grace wrought in her, and bestowed upon her, by means of the blowing of that wind, which she prays for in the preceding clause.

The sense of the words may be summed up in the following proposition:

As all they who are espoused to Christ, love him above every other object; so they earnestly desire that he may be present in his church, to hold communion with her, and with them, in the fruits of his Spirit and grace.

CONCERNING the designation here given to Christ, we have spoken at large on a former occasion*; and shall not now detain you with any thing on this part of the subject. But shall only speak a few words.

I. Of Christ's interest in the church, as his garden.

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II. Of

* See Vol. I. p. 67,—74.

II. Of his presence in the church, which is here invoked.

III. Of the entertainment that his spouse is willing to give him, or of his "eating his pleasant fruits." And then,

IV. We shall conclude with some improvement.

I. IN discoursing from the first head, we shall not need to inform you why the church is compared to a garden, nor why she calls herself her own garden. Both these we have considered already. All that we have now to do, is only to enquire why she is called *His garden*? And she may be so, with propriety, on the following accounts.

I. He received her, as his inheritance, from his Father. Every plant in the garden, and every part of the soil, is included in that declaration which he makes to his Father: "I have manifested thy name unto the men whom thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them me*." From all eternity, when God took a view of that deplorable estate into which all mankind were to bring themselves by their sin, he passed by the far greatest part of them, determining to leave them to perish in their sin, and under the punishment of it. He was infinitely just in so doing; for surely none had any right to be delivered by him, from that misery which they had wilfully brought upon themselves. But the church, and every genuine member of it, he gave to Christ, his eternal Son; that he might "redeem *them* from all iniquity, and purify *them* to himself a peculiar

* John xvii. 6.

“culiar people, zealous of good works.” And by virtue of this gift she becomes his garden.

2. He bought her at an immense price. Though she was given him by his Father, she was considered, when she was given him, as in a state of alienation from God; so that Christ could not obtain the possession of her, unless in the way of paying a ransom for her. And it was upon the express condition of his paying this ransom, that the deed of gift was made. Accordingly, when the appointed time came, he paid down the price of her redemption into the hands of divine justice; not in such “corruptible things as silver and gold.” These, however much they are valued among men, are not current in heaven. Nay, he paid it in his own “precious blood.” A ransom this infinitely more valuable than ten thousand worlds. Every man considers that as his own property, which he has purchased with his own money. And surely Christ has a just right to the church, as his garden, seeing “he purchased *her* with his own blood*.”

3. He redeemed her from the hand of the enemy by the power of his almighty arm. You will remember, that Jacob gave to his son Joseph “one portion above his brethren, which *he* took out of the hand of the Amorite, with *his* sword and with *his* bow †.” This is thought to be the same piece of ground which he is elsewhere said to have purchased of the sons of Hamor, for an hundred pieces of silver ‡. Though he bought it from the Amorites, yet they resumed their possession of it when he left that part of the country. And he found it necessary to redeem it “with *his* sword and with *his* bow.” In this, as in many

* Acts xx. 28.

† Gen. xlviii. 22.

‡ Gen. xxxviii. 19.

many other things, Jacob was a type of Christ. Though he paid for the church, which is his garden, that immense price which has been mentioned; even this was not sufficient to obtain him the peaceable possession of her. Satan had usurped possession of this garden; and, besides the ransom that he paid for it, Christ found it necessary to redeem her from that enemy by the power of the sword. And surely this must greatly enhance the right by which he claims her as his garden.

4. She is a garden of his planting. When she came into his hand, she was a mere waste, entirely grown over with briars and thorns. It was he that inclosed it, planted it with those spices that are to be found in it, and made it a garden for himself. So much has he done for it in this respect, that he can appeal to any rational person if any more was necessary, or even if more could have been done. This garden is the same with the vineyard of which the Prophet Isaiah speaks: "My beloved hath a vineyard, in a very fruitful hill. And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower therein, and also made a wine-press in it. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it *?"

5. Himself takes care of the garden, and cultivates it with his own hand. Indeed he may be said, in one sense, to have "let it out to keepers †;" in as much as he has committed the external management of it into the hands of men, who are called to dress it for him, and to return him the fruits of it. But still himself presides among them, directs them in all that they

* Isa. v. 1, 2, 4.

† Song viii. 11.

they should do about his garden, makes their endeavours effectual; and accomplishes, with his own hand, what none of them has power to do. He dresses it, he keeps it, he watches over it, he defends it, he waters it; and neither night nor day does he remit in his care of it. Concerning this garden it is, that himself is represented as saying, “In that day, sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine. I the LORD do keep it, I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day*.”

6. He takes pleasure in it, as a man does in his own garden. He feeds with satisfaction upon the fruits of it. He plucks the flowers of it, and transplants them to a better soil; and is never wholly absent from it. If ever you wish to find him, or to enjoy communion with him, it is there that you must seek him. If ever you enquire after him, you will be sure to hear of him in this garden. For thus saith she, who, of all others, has best opportunity to know his retreats; “My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices; to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies†.” Surely these things, all taken together, confirm his property in her; so that she cannot, with half the justice, be ascribed to any other; but is fitly called *his garden*.

II. CONCERNING the presence of Christ in the church, or his *coming into his garden*, which is here invoked, we shall only take notice of the following things.

1. There is a fourfold coming of Christ mentioned in scripture. *First*, There is his coming in the flesh, which

* Isa. xxvii. 2, 3.

† Song vi. 2.

which the Apostle mentions as a thing past : “ Whose
 “ are the fathers ; and of whom, ‘as concerning the
 “ the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed
 “ for ever *.” This coming was an object of ardent
 and longing desire to the church under the Old Test-
 ament. And for this she earnestly prayed. It was
 the matter of that capital promise, in the faith of
 which all the saints of that period died ; and which,
 if it had not been accomplished in its appointed time,
 all their faith had been vain, and ours to. *Secondly,*
 There is his coming, in just displeasure, to execute
 judgment upon a rebellious and gainsaying people or
 church. In this sense, we often hear of his coming
 to the church of the Jews. And in this sense he
 threatens to come to the church of Pergamos, unless
 she repented of those evils for which she is reprov-
 ed. “ Repent, (says he) or else I will come unto thee
 “ quickly ; and will fight against them with the sword
 “ of my mouth †.” This coming is never an object
 of desire to the church in any period. She always
 deprecates it, and is grieved at the prospect of it.
Thirdly, We read of his coming, in the dispensation
 of his grace, to manifest himself as “ the desire of all
 “ nations, and to fill the house of God with his glory.”
 Of this must the Apostle be understood, when he says,
 concerning Antichrist, that “ the Lord will consume
 “ him with the spirit of his mouth ; and destroy him
 “ with the brightness of his coming ‡.” This can-
 not be meant of the second coming of Christ at the
 last day ; for the scriptures represent the downfall, or
 destruction of Antichrist, as about to take place a
 considerable time before the end of the world ; and
 assure

* Rom. ix. 5.

† Rev. ii. 16.

‡ 2 Thess. ii. 8.

assure us, that the church will enjoy a pretty long season of peace and tranquillity; which shall, at last, be disturbed by the conspiracy of Gog and Magog, between the fall of Antichrist and the coming of Christ. But we know, that the fall of Antichrist shall be accompanied by an universal spreading, and an universal success of the gospel. In this way Christ shall come, and be present in his church, in such a remarkable manner, that it is said the saints shall then "reign with him on the earth a thousand years." And this coming of Christ shall be the very mean by which the destruction of the man of sin shall be accomplished. We have reason to think that it has begun to be so already; and it is but a little, when it shall be completed, by the same means by which it has been begun. This coming of Christ may be understood, either of a more clear, and full, and extensive dispensation of the gospel externally; or of a more plentiful inward communication of his grace to the souls of his people. Or rather, both these take place together, as often as Christ comes to his church in this respect. Such a coming is the most desirable thing that the church can enjoy in this world. For this she prays continually, and so does every one of her genuine members when rightly exercised. *Fourthly*, We read of his coming to the general judgment at the last day. Concerning this he testifies, saying, "Surely I come quickly." And his church, when acting like herself, will still reply, "Amen, even so come, Lord Jesus." For this also we ought all to pray, that the Lord may hasten it in his time. I apprehend it is the third of these that the spouse has an eye to in the text. She
prays

prays that Christ may graciously maintain a clear, extensive, and regular dispensation of his own ordinances; and may so communicate himself to the souls of his people, by these means, that their communion with him may be intimate, and the effects of it upon them lasting and evident.

2. We may not expect the personal presence of Christ, in human nature, in the church, until his final coming to judgment. Once he came in that respect; but so were the men of the world infatuated, and even the professed members of the church, that they knew him not; and therefore "crucified the Lord of glory." After his resurrection "he ascended up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God." There he must continue till he come to bring home his spouse into the "palace of the King," there to abide for ever. Even when he shall reign on the earth, after the total downfall of Antichrist, during the more eminent glory of the latter days, his bodily presence shall be confined to heaven. In that respect, he will never come into his garden on earth, till that awful day when "every eye shall see him." It is only by his Spirit, working in the church, and in the hearts of his people, that we can expect him now to come into his garden. Yet,

3. The coming of the Beloved into his garden, which is here prayed for, is not the same with the blowing of the wind, mentioned in the preceding clause of the verse. There the church prays for those influences of the Spirit, by which she may be fitted to hold communion with Christ on her part. Here she prays for those fruits of the Spirit, by which Christ manifests himself

himself as graciously present with his people, and by which he maintains the communion on his part. All real fellowship must be mutual. Whenever communion with Christ is enjoyed, the person maintains it, on the one side, by pouring out his heart into Christ's bosom; and cheerfully giving himself, and all that he can claim any interest in, to his beloved. For this we can never be qualified, unless by the communication of the influences of the Spirit. And therefore, whenever we wish to do so, we must pray for the blowing of the wind. But then, at the same time that we are thus exercised, Christ, on the other side, maintains the communion with us; by graciously accepting what we offer to him, and intimating his acceptance of it, by discovering to us his glory, and imparting to us out of that infinite fulness, which God has laid up in his hand, what he finds agreeable to our need; thus he makes us happy, beyond what any unrenewed person is able to conceive, in the enjoyment of himself. And this is it for which we are taught to pray in this clause of the verse.

III. WE are now to speak a few words concerning that entertainment, which the spouse of Christ is willing to give him in his own garden; or concerning his "eating his pleasant fruits." And here it will be necessary that we enquire, What are those *fruits* that she wishes him to eat? Why they are called *his fruits*? Why they are denominated *pleasant-fruits*? And what we are to understand by his eating them?

I. If it is asked, What are those fruits which Christ is here invited to eat? We answer, They are of two sorts. The *first* comprehends all those benefits that
Christ

Christ has bestowed upon his church and people. All those external privileges that accompany or flow from our membership in the visible church; whatever they are to others, to real Christians they are the fruits of Christ's mediation. More especially, all those inward and spiritual blessings that are peculiar to a state of grace; justification, adoption, sanctification, and all the benefits that justified persons enjoy by Christ, are to be considered as *his fruits*. They are always to be found in his garden, and they proceed from himself. Hence, when Christ is compared to the apple tree, these fruits are said to grow upon him; for of these is the spouse to be understood, when she says, "I sat down under his shadow with great delight; and his fruit was sweet to my taste*."

The *other* sort contains all those graces which the Spirit of Christ has implanted in the hearts of his people; comprehending the exercise of those graces, and all that course of holy evangelical obedience which they produce. These are called, even in the language of the New Testament, "the fruits of the Spirit †. And these are mainly intended, by the fruits of Christ, in this text. Against this, it is no sufficient objection that they are called the spices of the garden, in the preceding part of the verse; seeing it is well known, that nothing is more usual in Scripture, especially in this book, than to represent the same thing under various metaphors; the further to illustrate, and set forth the excellency of it. As the spices of a garden are fit emblems of the graces of the Spirit, on account of their fragrant smell; so are likewise the fruits

* Song ii. 2.

† Gal. v. 22.

fruits that grow in a garden, on account of their agreeable taste and flavour.

2. If it is enquired, Why these are called Christ's fruits? We shall only mention the following reasons for it.— They are all the fruits of his mediation. The graces of the Spirit are so, as well as the benefits that accompany a gracious state. It was as impossible for us to have been conformed to the image of God, as it was that we should be restored to his favour, or admitted into his family, unless upon the footing of the payment of our ransom in the "precious blood of Christ." They are the fruits of his cultivation. Christ is appointed by his Father, to dress and keep the garden of the church. And it is solely owing to his diligence and activity in this work, that her members enjoy either the benefits, or the graces that are here comprehended under the fruits of Christ. They are fruits that spring from himself as their root. How this is the case, as to the benefits derived from him, is not dubious. It is as truly the case with regard to all the graces, and all the holy obedience of his people. Upon him, as the living stock, they are all ingrafted; and all the fruit that they bring forth is in consequence of their union to him. Hence his exhortation to his disciples: "Abide in me, and I in you; as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me*." In a word, they are fruits prepared for his entertainment, and devoted to his use, by his spouse. And it is to eat these fruits that she invites him into his garden. Whatever a Christian enjoys from Christ, he is concerned to improve it for
Christ's

* John xv. 4.

Christ's glory. All his graces, and all his gracious exercises, are dedicated to Christ. And it is always his highest ambition, that, in his endeavours after obedience, he may be accepted of him.

3. Why these are called *pleasant fruits*, we need not be at a loss to know. They are things really pleasant and desirable in themselves; and every Christian feels them to be so. All the things that this world can afford, yield no pleasure comparable to what the child of God enjoys in the possession, or even in the believing prospect of the fruits of Christ's purchase. Nor is there any other employment in which he could enjoy half the satisfaction, as in bringing forth the fruits of holiness, under the influence of the Spirit of Christ. These fruits are also pleasant to Christ himself. He takes pleasure in bestowing upon his people those benefits that are the fruits of his love to them. And he takes no less pleasure in observing about them those graces, and those exercises, that are the fruits of his Spirit in them.

The word which we render *pleasant*, signifies also *precious*; and the phrase might be read, 'the fruits of his precious things.' According to the idiom of the Hebrew language, this may be put for his *precious fruits*. And all that is comprehended under his fruits is as precious as it is pleasant. The least valuable of these fruits could not be purchased with all the "gold of Ophir." But I apprehend the expression imports something more than this; namely, that all that the spouse had, or expected to have ready, for the entertainment of Christ in his garden, was only the fruit of those precious things which himself had done for her

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her and given to her. It was all his own that she proposed to give him.

4. The last enquiry here proposed was, What we are to understand by Christ's *eating* those precious and pleasant fruits, which are here mentioned? To this, it will, perhaps, be unnecessary to answer, that the whole passage is allegorical; and, therefore, this expression cannot be meant of literal *eating*. Though Christ, in *the days of his flesh*, had occasion to eat and drink, for the support of nature, as other men do; this neither was the case when this book was composed, nor is it the case now in his glorified estate. Neither are the fruits here mentioned capable of being eaten in a literal sense. The expression includes the three things following.

(1.) His graciously accepting, at the hand of his spouse, what she has provided for him, and offers to him; as a man who is invited to an entertainment, receives what is set before him, that he may feed upon it. As Christians make an offering to Christ of all the benefits that they receive from him, and of all that they can do through the assistance of his grace in his service; so Christ is graciously pleased to accept the spiritual sacrifice. And that he may do so, is the matter of their earnest prayer and supplication.

(2.) His taking pleasure and delight in those fruits of his garden, as a man does in the food that he eats. Not only does Christ accept the offering that his spouse makes unto him, he accepts it with divine pleasure and satisfaction. The most sumptuous feast cannot afford such pleasure to the greatest sensualist, as Christ enjoys, in observing the fruits of his Spirit about his people; in taking notice of the improve-

ment that they make of his gifts and benefits to his glory; and in graciously accepting all from their hand.

(3.) His holding communion with his people in all these; as a man holds communion with his friend, when he sits at his table, and feeds upon what he had provided for his entertainment. If ever friends have comfortable intercourse with one another, it may be expected when one entertains and feasts the other with the best that his house can afford. When the spouse invites Christ to an entertainment in his garden, she means not that he should eat his morsel alone. She wishes to partake with him. That she may enjoy communion with him in it, is one principal part of her design, in preparing him such a repast. And, whatever provision she makes for him, his company and fellowship she always considers as the best part of her cheer.

V. WE are now to apply the subject, in the following inferences.

1. Though the gracious presence of Christ is always in his Church; there are seasons when he may be said to come to her, and to be present in her in a peculiar manner. Otherwise such a prayer as this would never be requisite, nor proper. The same is the case with particular persons among his people. From the moment, Christian, in which your happy union to him commenced, you never have been without his presence, and never will. Nay, your communion with him has never been wholly interrupted. You have, at least, had communion with him in his righteousness; which can never cease to be yours, for
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all the purposes of your salvation. But your mournful experience can testify, that he has oft been absent to your apprehension; and oft have you wanted the comfortable sense, both of your union to him and of your communion with him. On the other hand, there are times when he enlightens your eyes to see him present with you; when the effects of his presence are so visible, that you have no room to doubt of it; and when he maintains communion with you in such a manner, that you cannot choose but be sensible of it. Of this also, some of you, I trust, have had experience. And you are all warranted to pray that it may be so.

2. There is nothing in the Church of Christ, suitable for his entertainment, but what proceeds from himself. His spouse can only invite him to eat his own fruits. In your natural estate, Christian, you had nothing about you that was not an abomination unto Christ. And now, if you differ from what you was before, or differ from what the world is, that lieth in wickedness, you owe it solely to the love and grace of Christ. If there is any thing that you enjoy, any thing that belongs to your nature, or any thing that appears in your practice, capable of acceptance in the sight of God, or capable of being viewed with pleasure by Christ, it is all his own. And when you offer it to him, you should say, as David on another occasion, *Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly? For all things come of thee; and of thine own have we given thee* *.

3. The blowing of the wind of divine influences upon the Church, or upon any particular believer,

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may

* 1 Chron. xxix. 14.

may be considered as a happy earnest of Christ's gracious coming to hold communion with that Church, or with that person. As the last words of the first clause, so the whole of this clause of the verse, may be read indicatively. *Blow upon my garden, and the spices thereof shall flow out: then my beloved shall come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.* If you have enjoyed to-day, or formerly, any rousing blast of the north wind of conviction, succeeded by any warming and cherishing breeze of the south wind of divine consolation; you may consider it, and plead it as a pledge of his coming into your *garden* to *eat his pleasant fruits*, on every proper occasion.

4. Every person who invites Christ into his garden, ought to be concerned about having some proper entertainment ready for him. When Queen Esther invited her husband, she did not set him down at a table uncovered. She had her banquet of wine prepared. Indeed no wise man would invite any friend to be his guest, without having somewhat ready for his entertainment. And how shall your glorious Husband take it well, if you give him an invitation, and yet have nothing ready for him? The spouse here invites the wind to blow, that her spices may be ready, before she invites her beloved to come and eat his fruits. Her spices and his fruits are the same thing, under different names. You who have been inviting Christ, or wish now to invite him to be present among us, be careful, as you would avoid his displeasure, as you would not affront him openly, to have some of those pleasant fruits, that his garden produces, ready to set before him, when he condescends to accept your invitation.

5. Here

5. Here also we may find various marks, by which intended communicants may try themselves, about their fitness for a seat at the Lord's table. All who are in a capacity to feast with him, are persons disposed to invite him to an entertainment with them, as in the words of this text. More particularly, (1.) They readily acknowledge his rightful propriety in them, and the whole Church, as his garden. (2.) They consider him as their beloved, in preference to all other objects. As none ever loved as he did, they do not entertain a thought that any other should be loved as he should. (3.) They earnestly desire his presence, with themselves, and in the Church; and long for communion with him in his own ordinances. If they have a prospect of attending ordinances, they will not fail to invite him to meet with them in his own garden. (4.) They will be concerned to have their spices flowing out, *i. e.* their graces in exercise; and to have the fruits of holy and evangelical obedience ready for his entertainment. (5.) The fruits of Christ will all be pleasant and precious in their sight. Not only will they find pleasure in enjoying the precious gifts and benefits that are the fruits of Christ's purchase, they will find an equal pleasure in being enabled, by his grace, to bring forth the fruits of holiness to Christ; in their life and conversation. In a word, (6.) They will be careful to have every thing removed out of the way that may render his garden disagreeable to him; and so provoke him either to refuse their invitation, or to reject their entertainment, or speedily to withdraw, after condescending to be present. They who are not diligent in "purging out the old leaven," are very unfit to

keep our New Testament *feast*, as it ought to be kept, "with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

6. We may here see the indispenfible duty of all that wifh well to the interefts of Chrift in the Church, or are concerned about the eternal interefts of their own fouls. It is earneftly to cry for the prefence of Chrift, in the Church, and in their own fouls; and, in order that we may be capable to give him a proper reception, to pray for the wind of divine influences to blow upon our garden. Let all perfons who attend ordinances pray in this manner; for themfelves, and for all their brethren. Unlefs he be prefent among us, we can have no feaft. Unlefs he feaft with us, our provifion cannot be bleffed; and therefore it cannot be profitable to us. Invite him then, tenderly and earneftly invite him to "come in-
"to his garden and eat his pleafant fruits." Con- fider your garden as his garden, your fpices as his fruits. Pray for his prefence with you in particular: and fee that you have fome fruits ready for his entertainment. Unlefs he is prefent, there will be no fatisfaction, no advantage enjoyed in an outward attendance upon his ordinances. He will not be prefent, unlefs there is fomething prepared for him. There will be no fuitable preparation made, unlefs a blaft of this fpiritual wind fpread abroad the fragrance of our fpices, and ripen our fruits for Chrift. And we have no reafon to expect, either that the wind will blow, or that our Beloved will come, unlefs in the way of our asking it. But we know who has faid, "Ask
"and ye fhall receive; feek and ye fhall find; knock
"and it fhall be opened unto you." Let us, there-
fore,

fore, now join together, in a public manner ; and let us all separately exercise ourselves, in our families and retirements, from this day till the day when *our solemn feast is appointed* ; in lifting up the prayer which is taught us in this verse, and saying,

“ Awake, O north wind, and come thou south
“ *wind* ; blow upon *our* garden, that the spices there-
“ of may flow out : Let *our* beloved come into his
“ garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.”

S E R.

S E R M O N IX.

The Invitation accepted and returned; or, Christ's gracious Presence vouchsafed to his Church, in Answer to her Prayer.

SONG V. I.

I AM COME INTO MY GARDEN, MY SISTER, MY SPOUSE: I HAVE GATHERED MY MYRRH WITH MY SPICE; I HAVE EATEN MY HONEY-COMB WITH MY HONEY; I HAVE DRUNK MY WINE WITH MY MILK: EAT, O FRIENDS, DRINK, YEA DRINK ABUNDANTLY, O BELOVED.

WE are met for the celebration of a great feast: a feast made by the Redeemer and Husband of souls, for the refreshment of his spouse, whom he kindly invites to partake in it with him: and yet a feast kept by the spouse of Christ, for the entertainment of her *Beloved*; in which she humbly, yet tenderly, invites him to be graciously present with her.

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We may attain a pretty distinct view of the nature of this feast, of the guests who partake in it, and of the provision upon which they feed, if we duly attend to what is set before us in this text.

There can be no doubt that these are the words of Christ. They contain his gracious answer to the request of his Church, which is expressed in the last verse of the preceding chapter. He says to her; yea, he says to every person in this assembly who has been essaying to pray for his presence, as she there does; "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse," &c.

In the words we may observe three things, in general.

1. An intimation of the gracious presence of Christ in his Church. "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse." 'O thou my loving and affectionate bride, who so ardently longest, and so loudly callest for my presence, in the garden of my Church; I tell thee that I am present, according to thy wish: *I am already come into my garden, agreeably to thine invitation.*'

2. An account of Christ's employment in the Church. "I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honey-comb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk." 'I am not only present, ready to partake of that entertainment which thou hast provided for me; I have tasted of it already. The fruits of my Spirit in thee, and of thy love to me, are savoury as myrrh and the most fragrant spices; they are sweet as honey in the comb; they are cheering as wine, and

‘ and delicious as milk. I accept and take pleasure
‘ in them accordingly.’

3. An invitation, tendered by him to his people, to partake with him in his repast. “ Eat, O friends; “ drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved.” ‘ I never took pleasure in eating my morsel myself alone; ‘ thou didst kindly invite me to eat with thee; and ‘ I, in my turn, invite thee, my spouse, and all you ‘ my friends, the objects of my love and delight, to ‘ eat and drink plentifully with me.’

The words, thus divided and paraphrased, afford us the following doctrinal proposition.

All the friends and lovers of Christ may be assured that he is present in his Church, according to their desire; feeding, with pleasure, upon the produce of his garden; and graciously inviting them to feed, and feast with him.

In speaking from this subject, we shall, through divine assistance, take a brief view,

I. Of the presence of Christ in his Church, as here intimated.

II. Of the provision upon which he feeds.

III. Of his feeding upon that provision.

IV. Of the kindly appellations which he gives to his Church and people in this text.

V. Of the gracious invitation that he gives them to feast with him.

And then we shall conclude with some improvement.

I. That

I. THAT you may understand the intimation that is here given, of the presence of Christ in his Church, it must be observed,

That Christ is not now present in his Church in human nature, nor in any corporeal manner. Once he came into his garden in this sense; and, though he was *the heir*, the keepers did not hesitate to *kill him*, as this day's work evinces. But in this manner he returns no more, till *the time of the restitution of all things*. It is a foolish and absurd notion, that Christ's body and blood are corporeally present in the *sacrament of the supper*; equally repugnant to scripture, reason, and common sense. Nay, Christian, your expectations must not be so gross or sensual. It is his spiritual presence, by his Spirit working graciously in your hearts, that you are to look for in this solemn ordinance. And this may be enjoyed in every ordinance, at every time, and in every place. Concerning this, besides what was said upon the preceding verse, we may observe the following things.

1. The gracious presence of Christ, by his Spirit, is always in the Church, and with every one of his people. And, when their faith is in exercise, they will always see it to be so; that is, they will always believe him to be present, because himself has said it. When you pray for his presence, you ought always to guard against hearkening to the suggestions of unbelief, so far as to apprehend that he is really absent. This mistake his people too often fall into. And if we consider the spouse as labouring under this mistake in her prayer, these words contain a gentle reproof for her unbelief. 'Why shouldst thou intreat me, O my dearest sister, my beloved spouse,

' to

‘ to come into my garden ; as if I were now absent
 ‘ from it, or ever could be so? I am come into it
 ‘ once for all ; and have ever continued in it since it
 ‘ was first planted. If thou didst not see me, the
 ‘ fault was thine own. Thou didst not look where I
 ‘ was. Look, by the eye of faith, into my word of
 ‘ grace and promise, and thou canst not but perceive
 ‘ that I am always present with thee.’

2. He sometimes condescends to be present, even to the sense of his people ; so that their own feelings may convince them that he is *come into his garden*. Though his usual method is to carry on his work in a secret manner, and to discover himself only to the eye of faith ; yet, when his people have any peculiar trial to undergo ; when they have any piece of work uncommonly difficult to perform ; when their faith is so weak as to need a prop to lean upon ; or when any other peculiarity in their condition makes it necessary, he sometimes condescends to manage his work so visibly, that they cannot choose but see it, and see his hand at it : he discovers himself to them so clearly, that they can no more doubt of his presence, than they can doubt of the shining of the sun at noon day. These manifestations, as they are usually very short, so they are often balanced, either by some trial that went before them, some stroke that accompanies them, or some *messenger of Satan* that follows them. Hence, though we may pray for them, we should always do it with much resignation. And we have no reason to be dissatisfied when we want them. When he comes into his garden in this sense, he needs not tell his spouse that it is so. Her own eyes inform her of it. But,

3. There

3. There is another sense in which he may be present in his Church at one time more than at another: I mean, in respect of his efficient, or operative presence. He may be said to be present, most remarkably, where he works in the most effectual and obvious manner. Sometimes his work, in the Church, or in the soul, is apparently at a stand. In such a case, he may be said to be absent in a great degree. But when he plucks his hand out of his bosom, and sets forward his work with speed and vigour, he may then be said to return, and come to his garden anew. Many instances might be produced from Scripture, in which his coming, or his being present, is to be understood in this sense. One very remarkable, you have in these words of the Psalmist Asaph: "Before Ephraim, and Benjamin, and Manasseh; stir up thy strength, and come and save us *." To this coming, the prayer of the Church in the preceding context refers. And to this also refers the declaration in the text. When any person is truly desirous of his coming in this way, and prays for it in faith, it may be considered as a token for good, not only that he will, come according to their request, but that he is come already, and his work is going forward in them, whether they be sensible of it or not. The same thing may be said of any church, or of any particular congregation, or society in the Church. He is really present with you, and his work in your soul is making progress, if you do but sincerely desire, and believingly pray for it. And if the body of this congregation has been offering such a petition this morning, or is presently entertaining such a desire, then he

is really come into his garden among us; and, whether his hand be seen at his work on this occasion or not, the happy effects of it shall both be seen and felt among us many days hence.

II. WE proceed to speak of the provision upon which Christ feeds; as himself gives us his bill of fare, in the text. Concerning it we shall only take notice of the following things.

I. The provision here mentioned is of various kinds; for, *1st*, There is myrrh and other spices for perfume. Common people, at their meals, satisfy themselves with what is necessary to eat and drink. But kings and great men have their banquetting houses sprinkled with the richest perfumes, that the smell of their guests may be regaled as well as their taste. And the feast at which Christ is present must be according to the state of so great a King. *2^{dly}*, There is *honey-comb with honey*, for the nourishment of the guests. Honey, as it is one of the most pleasant, is likewise one of the most nourishing things in nature. And when eaten in the comb, it is both most pleasant and most wholesome. Jonathan did but taste a little of it upon the top of his staff; and his *eyes*, which were ready to fail through weariness and fasting, *were enlightened*. Of such nourishing provision there is plenty in Christ's garden. *3^{dly}*, There is *wine and milk*, for refreshment. At feasts, there must be somewhat to drink, as well as to eat. And here is drink of various kinds. Here is wine, for cheering and exhilarating the spirits; and milk, for restoring the decayed constitution. Strong men may

may here be refreshed with wine; and babes may be suckled with milk.

If it should be asked, What spiritual things are represented by all this variety? We answer, in general, it represents all the fulness of the new covenant. But if you ask, more particularly, What is meant by each piece of this provision? For instance, what are we to understand by the *myrrh* and the *spices*? what by the *honey-comb* and the *honey*? &c. I can only reply, that I do not apprehend any one spiritual blessing to be represented by each of these. It seems rather the design of the Spirit of God, by all these together, to exhibit the various excellencies of that provision which stands upon Christ's table, and upon which he feeds with his people. This provision has a sweet favour to God, to Christ, and to all that feed upon it, like that of myrrh and other spices. It is sweet and nourishing, like honey in the comb. It serves to revive the drooping spirits, like the best wine; and to restore the soul, when in a weak and declining condition, as milk does the bodily constitution. In a word, it is suitable to the weakest, and within the reach of the poorest, as milk is in the world of nature; and yet, like wine, it is adapted to strong men, and to those who are rich and honourable.

2. The provision here mentioned, though the very best in nature, is yet the most plain and simple. We hear of no rich sauces, none of the refinements of cookery. These may please the palate; but they tend to ruin the constitution, and destroy the wholesome and nourishing quality of the food. In the natural world, that food is ever most wholesome which

is used as it comes from the hand of the God of nature; much more is this the case in the spiritual world. All the refinements of human art, in dressing out the food of souls, tend to spoil the relish of the provision; and are hurtful to the spiritual constitutions of the children of God. The garden of Christ is like the land of Canaan; it “flows with milk and honey.” But all those pretended delicacies, that are the effects of human art, ought for ever to be banished from it. If they are introduced, Christ does not feed upon them. He *eats* but the *honey-comb with the honey*; he *drinks* only the *wine* and the *milk*. And if ever his people taste what he rejects, it must be to their hurt. Those *enticing words of man’s wisdom*, which many affect to use in dispensing to the people of God their spiritual food, may gratify those *itching ears*, which God, in his just judgment, has made the plague of this generation; but they must always prove hurtful to the interests of genuine religion in the Church, and are often no better than a gilding to some dangerous pill. That sublime and elegant simplicity of style for which the Holy Scriptures are so remarkable, will ever be the most ornamental, as well as the most useful, in speaking or writing about divine things.

3. The provision upon which Christ feeds is all his own. It is so in a twofold respect. *1st*, It is all his own property: “I have gathered MY myrrh with MY spice, eaten MY honey-comb with MY honey, drunk MY wine with MY milk.” Though Christ will feed with his Church and people, so as to hold communion with them in their solemn feasts, he will not feed at their cost. Nay, all that he feeds upon

is his own ; so is all that upon which they are invited to feed with him. It is all the produce of his own garden, the purchase of his own blood. *2dly*, It is all of his own providing. The *myrrh* and the *spice* are of his own gathering. The same may be said of the other articles. All human inventions, in the worship of God, are an abomination. All human endeavours, in the service of God, when they are not assisted by the Spirit of God, are incapable of acceptance. It is only what the working of his own Spirit prepares, that can be suitable entertainment for this Divine Guest. And is it not matter of praise, believer, that when Christ proposes to feast with you, he does not leave it to you to make the provision? Alas! If he did, God knows there would be little, either for his entertainment or yours. But, when he comes into his garden, he brings his whole feast along with him. And, though you can, of yourself, provide nothing, you shall find abundance on the table, if he is present, both for him and you.

But does Christ, then, make no use of what was provided for him by his spouse? Did she not, when inviting him into his garden, plainly enough intimate, that she intended to prepare an entertainment for him, both of spices and fruits? Was it not for this purpose, that she so earnestly requested the blowing of the north and south winds? And is all her labour now in vain? Will he affront her so egregiously, as to taste of nothing that she had prepared? Nay, he means not at all to affront her ; nor does he reject her provisions. The myrrh and the spice which he gathers, are the very spices of her garden, which the blowing of the wind has caused to flow out. The

honey, the wine, and the milk, are the same with those pleasant fruits which she had provided for him, and which she invited him to eat. But how can these things be prepared for him by his spouse, and yet be all of his own providing? They who are acquainted with the *mystery* of the Christian life, will see no inconsistency here. The truth is, the spouse of Christ must still be active, and ever diligent, in making provision for him. But all her activity, as well as all her success, is his work; for he it is that works all her works in her. So much she plainly acknowledges, when she prays for the blowing of the wind: and he again puts her in mind of it, when he calls the provision *his*. Keep this ever in mind, Christian, on this, and on all after occasions; Christ's feast is all of his own providing. And yet you must always exert yourself, in making preparation for him. You must be as diligent in your preparation, as if you were to provide all: and yet, if he is pleased to feast with you, you must be as humble, and as thankful, as if you had done nothing; knowing, that whatever was on the table, capable of entertaining either him or you, he brought it all along with him.

III. WE were next to speak of Christ's feeding upon this provision, In this we are much prevented by what was said, when we spake of his *eating his pleasant fruits*; as requested in the last verse of the preceding chapter. To what was then observed, we shall only add the two following observations, arising from the manner of speech used in the text.

I. Christ, in describing the satisfaction that he takes in the fruits of his own grace about his people, mentions
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all the actions of one that feeds plentifully and deliciously. *I have gathered, I have eaten, I have drunk*; intimating the fullest acceptance of what was offered to him, and the fullest satisfaction in it. As he is not scanty or churlish in what he bestows upon his Church, but allows her a full feast; so neither is he sparing or scrupulous in feeding upon her provision. He likewise enjoys a full feast with her.

2. He speaks not, by way of promise, in the future; but he speaks in the past time. Or, according to the Hebrew idiom, it may be read in the present time. 'I am come, I have gathered, I am eating, I am drinking.' No sooner had his spouse said, "Let my beloved come, and let him eat," than he instantly replies, "I am come, I am gathering, I am eating, I am drinking." Believing communicant, you cannot be more desirous of a feast with Christ than he is of a feast with you. You cannot be more earnest in inviting him than you shall find him ready in accepting your invitation. *As soon as you call he will answer; and whiles you are yet speaking he will hear* *. Yea, we dare affirm, that if you have been inviting him into his garden on this occasion, and to his own table, then he has heard you already, and granted your request. Already is he present in this assembly, feasting with you at the Gospel table; and taking pleasure in the fruits of his Spirit about you. For thus saith your beloved, and you know he cannot lie, "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice, I am eating my honey-comb with my honey, I am drinking my wine with my milk; eat,

* Isa. lxx. 24.

“ O friends; drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved !”

IV. THE next thing proposed in the method was, to speak of those endearing appellations that Christ here makes use of, when addressing himself to his Church and people. They are, in number, four; two of them applicable to the Church in general, and two more directly applicable to particular believers.

The two that more directly apply to the Church, are,

1. *My sister.* This intimates that the Church is related, not only to Christ, but likewise to his God and Father. She is “ the daughter of the King * ;” of the same eternal and almighty King whom Christ acknowledges as his Father; and all her genuine members belong to the same family with him. God has made him *first-born*; and he is the “ first-born among many brethren;” for all Christians are his brethren and sisters, being graciously adopted into that family of which he is the Head. Hence “ he is not ashamed to call them brethren † .” Nor is God ashamed to call them children. He says to them, “ I will be to you a Father; and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty ‡ .” This happy relation is likewise acknowledged on their part. Being endued with *the spirit of adoption*, they learn to cry *Abba, Father*. Among the Jews, it seems to have been usual to give the designation of sister to one’s wife; but the Church is a sister to Christ, not only as she is espoused to himself, but likewise

* Psal. xlv. 13.

† Heb. iii. 11

‡ 2 Cor. vi. 18.

wife, as she is adopted, and acknowledged for a daughter by his Father.

2. *My spouse.* The former is expressive of the relation in which she stands to God; this expresses the relation by which she is joined to Christ himself. And this, on many accounts, may be compared to that which subsists between husband and wife. Like the marriage relation, it is constituted by virtue of a mutual engagement, or voluntary covenant, between those who formerly were not related by blood. Like the other, it subsists while the parties continue to live; and that shall be through all eternity. The glorious Bridegroom was once dead; but he is now *alive, and behold he liveth for evermore.* And, by virtue of her relation to him, his spouse also is secured against dying. *Because he lives, she shall live also.* The marriage relation is closer than any other upon earth; so that *a man ought to leave his father and mother, and cleave unto his wife.* This is still nearer than the marriage relation itself. And with this ancient law of marriage Christ has literally complied. He left his Father's bosom, when he came into our world, to lay the foundation of his union with the Church. And he left his mother, weeping and disconsolate, at the foot of his cross, when he was about to leave our world and return to his Father. All this he did, that he might cleave unto his Church; that she, and all her members, might continue, through eternity, to enjoy the closest union, and the most intimate communion with him. In a word, as the marriage relation is usually prolific, having been instituted for the propagation of mankind; so, in consequence of this relation, a numerous and holy seed is brought

forth to Christ in the Church. It comes to *be said of Zion*, and of particular churches,—I hope it shall be said of this place, “that this man and that man was born there; and the highest himself shall establish her*.”

But, though these two designations, as here expressed, apply most directly to the Church in general, it is manifest that they likewise apply to every particular believer; as they are all adopted into God’s family, and espoused to Christ by faith. In like manner, those appellations may be understood of the Church in general, which are more immediately directed to particular believers. These also are two; for,

1. He calls them his *friends*. *Eat*, says he, *O friends*. The reason of this compellation our Lord himself intimates, when he says to his Apostles, “Henceforth I call you not servants, but I have called you friends; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doth; but all things which I have heard of my Father have I made known unto you.†.” A person may sometimes have secrets, which he finds it improper to reveal, even to the wife of his bosom. But if he has a trusty friend, he can tell him all that is in his heart. Thus does Christ with his people; for “the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant ‡.” He hath given them such proofs of a constant, an extensive, and unalterable friendship, as the world never heard of in any other instance. And he expects that they, in return, should maintain and give evidence of a faithful and inviolable friendship to him; for

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* Psal. lxxxvii. 5. † Jo. xv. 7. ‡ Psal. xxv. 24.

“ he that hath friends must shew himself friendly ;”
“ and *this is the* friend that sticketh cloſer than a
“ brother *.”

2. He calls them his *beloved*. Concerning this word, as it ſtands in the original, two things are to be obſerved. (1.) It is in the plural number ; and may be read, *my beloved ones*. Frequently does Chriſt addreſs the Church, in this book, as his love, or his beloved, in the ſingular number. Here the word is plural ; intimating, that in the love which Chriſt bears to the Church, every particular Chriſtian has his ſhare. (2.) It is of the maſculine gender. All earthly marriages muſt take place between perſons of different ſexes ; and this difference of ſex enters into the ground of all conjugal love among men. But the love between Chriſt and his people has no ſuch foundation. And when we think of the ſpiritual marriage between Chriſt and his people, we are carefully to abſtract from all ſuch carnal views. Here the bridegroom and the bride are both expreſſed by words of the ſame gender, intimating what an inſpired Apoſtle more fully expreſſes ; *As in Chriſt there is neither Jew nor Greek, circumciſion nor uncircumciſion*, ſo neither is there *male nor female* ; but *in Chriſt Jeſus all are one*, both head and members.

Now, as every member of the Church allows the higheſt place in his heart to Chriſt, and loves him above all other objects ; ſo Chriſt has a love to them, that infinitely more than correſponds to their love to him. He loves them more than he does all the creation beſides. He loves them to ſuch a degree, and has given ſuch evidence of his love to them, that
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* Prov. xviii. 24.

the world never afforded, nor ever will afford any similar, or any comparable example. The tongues of all the angels about the throne, joined with those of all the redeemed from among men, though eternally employed on the subject, shall never be able, Christian, to tell how much he loves you; or with what propriety he calls you his *beloved*.

V. WE now come to the last thing proposed on the doctrinal part of our subject; which was to speak of the gracious invitation which Christ here gives to his Church and people, to feed and feast with him. Concerning this we shall only take notice of the following things.

I. He invites them to a full feast. "Eat, drink, yea drink abundantly." Here is not only food for nourishment, but also drink for refreshment. In a spiritual sense, hunger and thirst may be the same thing: hence our Lord speaks of both as terminating upon the same object, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness*." Consequently eating and drinking, in a spiritual sense, may signify the same thing. But this variety of expression is not used in vain. It signifies, that whatever be the Christian's desires, if they are such as he ought to encourage, he will find that on Christ's table which will gratify them. As that feast would not be complete where either meat or drink should be wanting, so Christ would not think his table sufficiently furnished, if there wanted any thing that any of his guests could stand in need of, or could reasonably wish for. The feast, believer, to which you are invited, is full
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* Matth. v. 6.

and complete. Whatever is adapted to your various necessities, you may have it for the using. If you are *straitened*, therefore, it must be *in your own bowels*; in your Husband you cannot be straitened. Whether you are strong or weak, a babe in grace or a grown Christian, a disconsolate mourner or one that shouts for joy; you will find on Christ's table all that is suited to your condition, and that in exhaustless plenty.

2. He invites them to a fulness in feasting. As he is not sparing in his acceptance of what his spouse, under the influence of his Spirit, provides for him, but takes and feeds upon the whole; so neither does he wish any of his friends to be sparing, in their acceptance and use-making of what he has provided for them. He invites, not only to eat, but to eat plentifully. He says, not only *drink*, but he adds, *drink abundantly*. The original word literally signifies, *drink and be drunken*. This, in our language, carries an idea, that is far from being comely; and therefore our translators have rightly paraphrased it, *drink abundantly*. But, in the first language, the world conveys no such image. It means, that you are invited to drink of the *cup of salvation*, as deeply as they drink of wine and strong drink, who are thereby stupified and made drunken. The wine and milk that are here provided do not intoxicate. The more you drink of them, the more active and vigorous will all your spiritual senses be. Drink, therefore, and drink abundantly, of all that is brought to hand. Here there can be no excess. Though all the fulness of the New Covenant is set before you, there is nothing to which you are not welcome. Take not sparingly;

sparingly; take all that is on the table. You will not leave the less to your brethren; nor will you ever find the less served up for yourself on any after occasion. Appropriate to yourself by faith, all that you can need in time; and all that is sufficient to make you happy in perfection through eternity. "The liberal deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand."

3. He invites in the most pressing and importunate manner; *drink, says he, yea drink.* Nothing can be more disagreeable to Christ, than to see any person at his table with *his hand in his bosom.* Not only they who are his genuine friends, but all who hear the invitation, provoke him egregiously if they eat not. Think not, sinner, that you have no concern in this matter, because you are none of his friends. You appear *as* his friends, while you sit around his table attending a gospel dispensation; and to you also is his invitation addressed. The invitation in this text is indeed tendered, in a peculiar manner, to his friends. But the feast that he makes *on this mountain is a feast unto all people.* We, as the servants of the great King, are commanded to invite, to press, yea, even to *compel you to come in; that his house may be filled,* and his table furnished with guests. Oh! that the guests were as numerous, as the provision is ample and various! "We then are ambassadors for Christ: As though God did beseech you "by us, we pray you in Christ's stead," to eat and drink abundantly of his provision. *Eat,* and be the bridegroom's *friends.* "Drink, yea drink abundantly;" and so shall you be among the number of his beloved

beloved ones. If you resist all his importunity, yourselves, and not he, will be the losers.

4. He invites them to feast with himself. Christ tells you that he is present in his garden; that he has eaten and drunk; or, as we told you the words might be read, that he is now eating and drinking. At the same time, he invites you to eat and drink in company with himself. It is not in your husband's family, as it was in Joseph's; where they behoved to eat at different tables, because one part of the company were an abomination to the other. Here all the guests are reputed the friends of the master of the feast. He sits at the same table with them, and entertains them in person; while himself is entertained by them and with them. As Absalom was not content with being at Jerusalem, without seeing the king's face; so no real Christian will be satisfied with eating of Christ's provision, if he be deprived of his own company. His presence at the table makes the principal ingredient of the feast. And you need not fear but you shall have it. He is not so inhospitable or unfriendly, as to invite his friends to an entertainment and never *come in to see the guests*. Nay, he sits at the table during the whole repast. Himself tastes of every dish. And he it is that distributes to every one his portion. Not only will he send messes to each of you, as Joseph to his brethren; himself will lay your messes in your dish. Yea, his own condescending hand will put every morsel into your mouth. For thus saith your beloved, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."

5. In a word, He invites them to a feast upon the same provision upon which himself feeds. You may eat

eat the same honey-comb which he eats. You are to drink the same wine and milk of which he drinks. And the same myrrh and other spices, which give a smell to his own garments, shall both gratify your spiritual senses, and cause you to send up a pleasant savour in the nostrils of God. The same fruits of his Spirit, that constitute a feast to him, you also may feast upon them; for if he takes pleasure in them, all the profit of them accrues to you. And the same fruits of his purchase, which himself enjoys in his exalted state, are really served up to you, on his table, both in word and sacrament. Those very blessings which God, according to the tenor of his covenant, hath bestowed upon him as the first-born of the family of grace, he also bestows upon you; and exhibits to you in the gospel-feast. These are the gifts which he *received for men*, when he *ascended on high*; and it is thus that he gives them unto men, in a gospel dispensation. You are called to take them, to use them; and to unite with them, as a man does with the food that he eats. Yea, a chief part of the satisfaction that Christ has in them, arises from your participation of them with him. You know, it is long since he said, "My meat and my drink is to do the will of my Father, and to finish his work." This is the case in his exalted state, as really as it was in his humiliation. And the work which his Father now employs him in, is to bestow upon his people those benefits which he purchased by his obedience unto death. Thus every blessing that you receive from the hand of Christ is a feast, both to him and to you. You feed upon the same provision that he eats. You do so now at the table below. And, through
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all eternity, you shall do so, at the table in the upper house.

VI. WE shall now draw to a conclusion, with some practical improvement of the subject. For the present, we shall satisfy ourselves with the following inferences. From what has been said, we may see,

1. How highly the Christian is dignified and honoured. Barzillai the Gileadite, notwithstanding all his wealth and greatness, counted it a very great honour to sit at the table of an earthly prince. So did Mephibosheth, though himself the grandson of a king. How much greater is the honour to which you are advanced, Christian? You are permitted, nay you are commanded, to sit always at the table of the *King of Glory*; and to eat and drink in his presence! Even this is not all. You are admitted into the family of God. You are acknowledged, by Christ, as his brethren and sisters. You are called his friends, and allowed to share the secrets of his bosom. You are even espoused to himself, and made the objects of his love, that wonderful *love that passeth knowledge*. Oh! dishonour not yourself, nor affront your husband, by whom you have been so dignified, by a conduct unworthy of yourselves, or of him.

2. How richly the Christian is fed and provided for. Your food, you have heard, is all the fulness of God's covenant, "the fatness of his *covenant*." You have even the flesh and blood of his feed upon. Is not this *meat indeed deed*? What a glorious difference is there between this and those withered *bushes*, that the world eat; and with which you

to fill your belly! Since your provision is so exquisite, is there any danger that ever it should become loathsome? Since it is so plentiful, can there be any danger that ever you should want? Nay, “the young lions may lack, and suffer hunger; but they that truly seek the Lord shall not want any good thing*.”

3. How comfortably Christians are matched. Even the honour of being espoused to *the Prince of the kings of the earth* is not all that makes your marriage comfortable, Christian. Such is the character of your Husband, and his disposition towards you, that you can think of nothing about him which may not afford you comfort and satisfaction. He is a Husband that treats you as a *sister*, and as a *friend*. He is ever ready to come to you at your call; for he takes pleasure in your company. Though he has all the affairs of heaven and earth on his hands, yet he is ever at leisure to wait upon his beloved, when she calls upon him, or has need of his presence. He has made such provision for you, that you can never want. And he never desires you to take a meal without his presence. He loves you as never another husband loved the wife of his youth; and it is impossible that ever his love should change. To crown all, he never dies; nor will he ever suffer you to die. That grim messenger, which dissolves all earthly marriages, will only bring you home to the everlasting consummation of your marriage with him. And where, in heaven or in earth, can you find another husband like him? Or who are they that are such strangers in Israel, as to say, or have any occasion

* Psal. xxxiv. 10.

sion to say concerning him, "What is thy beloved, more than another beloved? O ye that are still married to the law, that tyrannical, oppressive, and cruel lord, see that you lose not a moment, but presently sue for a divorce, and rest not till you obtain it; that you may be married to this better, this incomparably best of husbands.

4. How little reason the people of God have, at any time, to complain of Christ's absence; and how groundless all such complaints must needs be. Be not surprised, Christian, at the assertion. Methinks I hear you saying, 'What! shall I not complain when my husband withdraws himself? Surely if such a complaint be groundless, there is nothing in hell itself a sufficient ground of complaint. Is not his absence the principal ingredient of the misery of that dismal place? And why should not I complain heavily when my Lord is away?' Yes, poor soul, thou shouldest have reason to complain indeed, if it were possible that ever he should be absent from thee. But sooner shall "the mountains depart, and the hills be removed," than any such thing shall take place. You shall see these "heavens rolled together as a scroll, the earth and the works thereof burnt up, and the *very* elements melting with fervent heat; *but never shall you, nor any other for you, see* Israel forsaken, nor Judah of her God; though her land *should* be filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel:" Aye, and filled with blood too, on account of that sin. The same is equally true of every particular believer. He may withdraw from you the sense of his presence; or you, by reason of your unbelief, may lose sight of him.

But

But the declaration in the text is, and ever will be, a current truth. He has said, and who ever heard him say an untruth? "I will never, never, never leave thee, nor forsake thee." His gracious presence shall never be withdrawn from you; nor shall you ever want his operative presence, when you sincerely desire it. Therefore, all complaints of his absence, in this respect, must be worse than groundless. They are so many slanderous lies, to the prejudice of his faithfulness and love.

5. What encouragement they have, who continue strangers to Christ, presently to match with him. You have heard, sinner, that every such person as you are, has an invitation to partake in the feast of fat things that stands on the gospel table. But you cannot partake in it, without closing with Christ himself. Along with an invitation to his marriage-supper, he gives you an offer of himself, as your Lord and Husband. And declares himself willing to *betrothe* you to himself *for ever*. In a way of accepting this offer, you are welcome to all that stands upon his table, either in word or sacrament. But while you refuse himself, you cannot taste of his supper; for himself and his benefits can never be separated. If, therefore, you wish well to your own soul, if you desire to feed eternally upon the fatness of God's house, if you would not starve within sight of plenty; if you wish to escape all the severity that you must otherwise suffer, from that fiery law which is your present husband; if you would shun those gnawings of conscience, that must eternally be the result of a final rejection of this offer; I beseech you
consult

consult your own happiness; and let me, this day, have the honour of espousing you, *as a chaste virgin unto Christ*. Then all the great things that his spouse enjoys, as the fruits of her union to him, shall be yours. He will count you his *sister*, his *spouse*, his *friend*, his *beloved*. He will hearken to your calls; and be ever present with you, at your desire. He will graciously accept the provision that you make for him, however unworthy of him it may appear. Himself will make ample provision for you, in every case. You shall be nourished at his cost, while you continue in this world; and it is but a little when you shall be set down with him at the table that shall never be drawn. And what objection can you have against such a match? Can you ever be as happy in the arms of any of his rivals? Surely no. *He is fairer than the children of men*. All created beauty disappears, like a glow-worm before the meridian sun, in his presence. You may despise him, because you never knew him. But surely there was never one who saw him, that could think of a comparison between him and any other; nor one who was not ready to join in the declaration of the spouse concerning him—"My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand. His mouth is most sweet, and he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved." Oh! that every person in this assembly would join, this moment, in saying, "This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem."

6. In a word, we may see from this subject, what plentiful encouragement they have, who wait upon

divine ordinances with a desire to see Jesus, and to have fellowship with him in them; particularly, what encouragement we have, to set forward, with cheerfulness, in the great work of this day. You have been wrestling, I trust, for the blowing of the *wind* of divine influences, to make the *spices* of your garden to *flow out*. You have been endeavouring to provide an entertainment for your beloved, in his garden. And you have been giving him repeated invitations to come and feed upon it. After all, you are sensible that your provision is unworthy of him; and perhaps you are doubtful whether he will accept your invitation or not. But we come, in his name, to assure you, that all your doubts are groundless. The unworthiness of your provision shall be no bar in his way; for he will bring his provision with him. Yea, he is already present among you; his provision is in his hand; and it is richly sufficient, both for him and you. Already is he begun to feast upon it; and he is tenderly inviting you to feast with him. Set but the eye of faith to the glass that is presented to you in this text; look through it to the head of his own table; and you shall assuredly see him present, feeding and inviting. Let us, therefore, show ourselves as ready to accept his invitation, as he has been to accept and comply with ours. And let us go forward, with cheerfulness and joy, to meet him, to adore him, to commemorate his dying love, and to feast with him at his table. It is the voice of our beloved! Hear him just now saying, and saying it to every person among us, that sincerely desires his presence,

“ I am come into my garden, my sifter, my spouse;
“ I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I am
“ eating my honey-comb with my honey; I am
“ drinking my wine with my milk: eat, O friends,
“ drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved.”

*An Use of Trial, delivered as the Fencing of the
Tables.*

AS we are now to set forward to the celebration of the sacramental feast, which Christ has instituted in the New Testament Church, for the entertainment of his friends and beloved ones; and as none but such can be welcome to this table, it is necessary that every person, who has received a token of admision, should bring himself to the test of the word of God; that he may know both his state and his exercise, how far they do, or do not, correspond to the character of the bride of Christ. Your having essayed the duty of self-examination before, does not render it unnecessary now, whatever reason you then had to consider yourselves as among the friends of Christ. On the contrary, the nearer you come to the solemn action, the more strict and impartial should you be in your scrutiny; that you may be in a condition to make use of your provision, in a manner adapted to the present necessities of your soul. To assist you in this duty, the text will furnish a variety of questions; which we go on to put to every conscience among you, in the name of the Great Master of this feast. And we charge you, that you do not satisfy yourself with any answer, but such as will be sustained at the tribunal in a little.

1. Are you a member of the same family with Christ, and a child of the same Father? In our natural estate, we are all the children of the devil. And
you

you still belong to that accursed family, if you bear the devil's image, delight to be employed in his work, and seek to fill your belly with those husks which are the only provision that his house affords. In that case you cannot be welcome at the Lord's table; for you *cannot drink of the cup of the Lord and of the cup of devils*. But if you have been determined to forget your own people, and your father's house; if you have been taken into the family of God, and endued with the spirit of adoption; if you wear the robe of righteousness, with which all the family are covered; and have tasted of the provision of the family, so as to be now appetised for a new feast upon it; then you are a brother or a sister of Christ, and himself invites you to his table.

2. Are you truly espoused to Christ? She whom he invites is his spouse, as well as his sister. And there are no single persons, in a spiritual sense. You are all married, either to Christ or to the law. The last is the cruel husband, to whom we are all joined in our natural state. And they all continue so joined, who seek *righteousness as it were by the works of the law*; who allow themselves in having any dependence upon any thing wrought in them, or done by them, as any part of the ground of their acceptance with God; who indulge themselves in making free with Christ or his benefits, because they think themselves so and so qualified; or yet in standing at a distance from him, because they find those qualifications wanting about themselves. If you are of that number; you cannot be a welcome guest at this table, in your present state. But we are warranted to invite you to it, if you *through the law* are become *dead to the law*,

law, that you might be married to Christ; if you are sensible that your own righteousness is but *filthy rags*, and are willing to “count it loss and dung for “the excellency of Christ Jesus *your Lord*;” if you have heard Christ engaging to *betrotte* you to himself *for ever*, and have been determined to consent to the happy match; if you are presently disposed to say concerning him, as the spouse does, in a former part of this book, “My beloved is mine, and I am “his;” for, in this case, you are considered in heaven as espoused to Christ, and we invite you to his table accordingly.

3. Are you really the friends of Christ? They are such, and such only, whom he invites in the text. And the friendship between him and them is mutual; while all the rest of the world are enemies to him, and objects of his enmity. More particularly here,

(1.) What evidence has ever he given of his friendship to you? He calls his people friends; because he *shews* them *all that he has heard of his Father*. Has he, then, made known the mystery of his Father’s will to you, and admitted you to know the secrets of his covenant? I do not mean it of external revelation only; this you all enjoy; for I see Bibles in your hands. Neither would I be understood of any new revelation, not contained in the Bible; this none of you can reasonably expect to enjoy. But has he brought home his written word, with power and efficacy upon your heart and conscience, so as to let you see and feel that in it, of which no carnal mind was ever apprized? Have you felt *the word of God* to be *quick and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword*; separating between you and those corruptions,

corruptions, that were as closely united with your nature as *the soul* is with *the spirit*, or *the joints* with *the marrow*? Has he brought you to see the plan of salvation, which is revealed in the word, as in every respect worthy of that infinite wisdom which laid it down; and every way suitable to the necessities of your soul? Then he deals with you as friends; and you are welcome to a new proof of his friendship at his table.

(2.) What evidence can you produce of your friendship to him? "He that hath friends must shew himself friendly; and *this* is the friend that sticketh closer than a brother." Are you disposed, like John the Baptist, to rejoice at the hearing of his voice? Do you rejoice at seeing him increase, though you should decrease? Are you happy to see his work prospering, though it should be at the expence of your reputation, or of all that is dearest to you in the world? Do you use that familiarity with him which a man uses with his intimate friend? Is it your ordinary method, to take the first opportunity to impart to him all your secrets; to acquaint him with all your perplexing cases; and to unbosom yourself to him, in another manner than you could do to any person on earth? Do you always take his part behind his back; and bear your testimony against all the slanderous aspersions that are cast upon him, all the indignities that are done him, and all the treasonable consultations that are held against him in your sight? Are you concerned about all his interests, and ready to put to your hand for maintaining and promoting them; and for rectifying all that you see amiss in his house? In a word, Are you friends to those

thoſe who are his friends, and enemies only to his enemies? Do you *hate all thoſe that hate him*? Are you *grieved with thoſe that riſe up againſt him*? But are they who bear his image the objects of your delight, the companions of your choice; and, as occaſion offers, the chief objects of your beneficence? Then, all theſe are undoubted evidences of friendſhip to him; and himſelf invites you to his holy table.

But we muſt debar you from this table, while you neither have any genuine friendſhip for him, nor have enjoyed any ſaving communications of his friendſhip. All ye to whom the Bible continues to be a ſealed book; you who have never ſeen any beauty, nor felt any power or efficacy in the word of God, ſerving to convince you, more than a thouſand arguments, that it is no mere human compoſition; you to whom the plan of ſalvation, through a crucified Redeemer, ſtill appears to be fooliſhneſs, you are hitherto enemies to Chriſt. So are all ye who wiſh yourſelves to encreaſe, though Chriſt ſhould decreaſe; who can uſe more freedom with any other than with him; who have no concern about the diſhonour that is done him in the world, unleſs when you apprehend yourſelf liable to be puniſhed for it; who cultivate the friendſhip of his enemies, or entertain hatred and enmity againſt his friends. Such perſons can have no buſineſs at his table; unleſs it be, that, while they *eat his bread*, they may the more ſucceſſfully *lift up their heel againſt him*.

4. Are you among the number of his *beloved ones*? Theſe are they whom he invites to a feaſt with him. ‘Alas!’ may ſome ſay, ‘This is the main thing that I am at a loſs to know. Could I be ſenſible that I
‘ was

‘ was chosen in him, and was an object of his love
‘ before the foundation of the world, this would set
‘ my heart at ease; and I could go forward with
‘ cheerfulness to the work of the day.’ But you
should take care not to begin at the wrong end of
your work. It is not electing love that was exercised from eternity, but his love of complacency that terminates upon his people just now, that is directly intimated in the text. And it is this, not the other, about which you are called, more immediately, to examine yourself. If once you find yourself to be an object of this, then you may likewise be sure, that you was an object of the other. Nor have you any other method of attaining such assurance. Now you are presently the objects of his love, if you bear his image, and are daily pressing after more conformity to him; for he loves all that are like himself. He really loves you, if you have ever been enabled to appropriate to yourself those intimations of his love, that he makes to his people in his word; and to trust in his love, so intimated, for all those fruits of it that you need. You may certainly conclude that he loves you, if you feel, or ever have truly felt, the constraining power of his love; if a view of his unmerited love to you, has kindled in your heart a flame of love to him that many waters cannot quench; and if this love operates, as an invincible cord, in drawing you after him, in a course of evangelical obedience to his law, and in a diligent attendance in those places where his presence may be expected; if, in a word, it is your earnest desire, and, through grace, your fixed resolution, to *live henceforth, not to yourselves, but to him that loved you in such a degree,*

gree, that he *died for you*. All these may likewise be considered as sure evidences that he loved you from all eternity, when he struck hands with the Father, in the making of the covenant of grace; that he had you, in particular, on his heart, when his love affixed him to the accursed tree; and that he had a special eye to your spiritual nourishment, when he instituted this feast, in the *same night in which he was betrayed*.

But if you are strangers to his image, and neither desire to be like him, nor to walk as he walked; if you have always considered the offers and intimation of his love as things in which you had no personal concern; if you have never felt the constraining influence of his love, nor consider him as deserving your affections, more than any other beloved; then you have nothing about you that can appear lovely to him. You are still an abomination in his sight; and your appearing at his table, in your present condition, would only tend to expose you to his wrath.

5. Have you seen him present on this occasion, ready to feed you, and to feast with you? It may be thought hard to exclude all from his table, who have not already seen him since they came to the place. And, doubtless, it would be hard to exclude all who have not seen him in a sensible manner. But surely none can be welcome to it, who have not seen him by faith. He has been setting himself before you, in the clearest manner, in the text; as already *come into his garden, as gathering, as eating, as drinking*; and as inviting his friends to eat and drink with him. You have all heard him making that declaration; and you have either believed him or not.

If

If you believe that he speaks the truth, you must have seen him present; for this act of believing is that seeing of him, which we require as a mark of your fitness for his table. If, therefore, you have not seen him, it must either be, because you do not consider these as the words of Christ to this assembly, or because you consider him as speaking a falsehood when he says so. In either case, you have called him a liar to his face, as often as you have heard the text repeated; you continue to do so still; and surely, while that is the case, you cannot be fit for a seat at his holy table. But if you have seen him present, according to his word; if you consider these words as the words of Christ to you; if you believe that he brings no false report concerning himself; if you propose to go forward in his work, trusting that you shall find him present according to his promise; if it is your sincere desire thus to believe his word, though you may be sensible of a sad prevalence of unbelief, then you are invited by Christ himself, in the text; and we should contradict our Master, if we should take upon us to keep you back. We, therefore, invite you kindly, to your seat at the holy table of the Lord.

6. What think you of the provision that stands upon Christ's table, in word and sacrament? Are you pleased with the perfume of that myrrh and those spices which Christ has gathered? Is his honey-comb sweet to your taste? Do you consider his wine and milk as nourishing and delicious? Is the flesh of Christ meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed, in your esteem? To speak without allegory; the righteousness of Christ, and all the fruits of his righteousness,

righteousness, to be enjoyed in grace here and in glory hereafter, even to full conformity to the image of Christ, and a complete enjoyment of all his fulness; this is what you are now called to feed upon. And does your soul lothe it as light bread? Is your own righteousness better than Christ's, in your esteem? — Would you rather be conformed to the present world, than transformed into the image of God? Would you choose to possess a few handfuls of white and yellow dust, rather than to inherit all the fulness of God? Then you need not go to the Lord's table; it will afford nothing suited to your taste. But if you are weary of those empty husks which this world affords, and long for the bread of your Father's house; if you consider the food that Christ exhibits to you, as comparable to honey for sweetness, to wine for richness, and to milk for its pleasant simplicity and suitableness to your weak condition; and if the whole dispensation of grace, in which this provision is exhibited, smells to you like aloes, myrrh, and cassia;—then your taste resembles Christ's, and you are welcome to a feast with him.

7. Are you disposed to accept Christ's invitation, and to eat and drink *abundantly* at his table. He is much displeas'd to see his guests, like the sluggard, putting their hand in their bosom, and grieving to bring it to their mouth. If you mean to satisfy yourself with an outward attendance, or with a bare participation of the external elements, you will but mock Christ, and befool yourself by coming to his table. But if you truly hunger and thirst after Christ's righteousness; if you resolve, through divine
 grace,

grace, to receive, appropriate, and use all that Christ brings to hand, and sets before you; if you are presently endeavouring, by the exercise of faith, to do so, then you are a hearty guest, fit for the table of such a liberal giver; and we invite you to your seat among his beloved ones.

8. How long do you wish the feast in Christ's garden to last? Are you, like Doeg, detained before the Lord, already weary of attending public ordinances; and saying, when will the Sabbath be over, that we may return to our business, and to our gain? Is it enough to you that you feed upon Christ's provision, while a sacramental occasion lasts, though you return afterwards to the devil's fare? Then you had better keep at a distance; for you cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils. But, on the contrary, all you are welcome to this table, who come forward saying, as did the Jews of Capernaum, "Lord, evermore give us this bread;" who, though you know the sacramental table will soon be drawn, resolve every day to *keep the feast* upon the same provision, as it stands always ready on the gospel table; longing for that happy period, when you shall be set down at the table above, which shall stand covered for ever.

9. In a word, What returns do you propose to make to Christ, for all this ample and rich provision that he has made for you? Is all this insufficient to make you ashamed of dishonouring him by sin? Are you still disposed to persist in breaking all the commands of both tables of his holy law? Do you love and worship and serve the creature, more than the Creator? Will you still despise, neglect, or profane the ordinances

ordinances of divine appointment? Can you think of polluting his holy name among his enemies; or defiling his sanctuary in the same day, and profaning his Sabbaths? Dare you live in the neglect of relative duties; or persist in lying, stealing, killing, committing adultery; or any other practice, inward or outward, tending thereunto? And is your heart still going after your covetousness? Then surely you were never apprised of the value of what Christ brings to your hand, nor affected with gratitude for what he has done for you. And while this is the case, we cannot but debar you from this holy table.

But if the consideration of his undeserved and inestimable goodness fills you with shame and self-loathing, on account of your past sins; and makes you resolve to *take the cup of salvation, to call upon the name of the Lord, and to pay your vows unto the Lord, now and in all time coming, in the presence of his people*; if you sincerely resolve upon a constant, regular, universal, and evangelical obedience to all the laws of Christ; in the inward, as well as in the outward man;—if you are determined, through divine grace, that Christ's God, and he alone, shall be your God; that Christ's ordinances shall be carefully observed by you, without addition or diminution; that his name, and his Father's, shall be objects of your habitual reverence, and his Sabbaths your delight; if you resolve to imitate your husband's example, by a dutiful and affectionate behaviour towards all your relatives, natural, civil or religious;—if you are disposed, not only to abstain from every thing injurious, but even carefully to maintain and watch over the life, the chastity, the outward estate,

and

and the good name of all your neighbours, as well as you own; and if you hate covetousness as idolatry; —if such is your present disposition, however opposite your former practice has been, then you are the very persons to whom our Lord addresses himself in this text. He most tenderly and importunately invites you to his table, promising his gracious presence with you there; yea, declaring that he is present already, with all his rich provision in his hand, kindly to welcome, and liberally to entertain you. These are the words of your Beloved, and he speaks them to every one of you, “ I am come into my garden, my
“ sister, my spouse, I have gathered my myrrh with
“ my spice; I have eaten, I am eating my honey-
“ comb with my honey; I am drinking my wine
“ with my milk: Eat, O friends; drink, yea drink
“ abundantly, O beloved.”

SER.

S E R M O N X.

*Israel's Power with God; or, The Blessing of
God upon his People, a happy Consequence of
his gracious Interviews with them.*

GEN. xxxii. 29.

—AND HE BLESSED HIM THERE.

IT is a great happiness to be allowed to attend upon the ordinances of God, as we do this day. And it is matter of thankfulness, that such a number of persons, as I see before me, are brought up, in providence, to keep the solemn feast which we have in view. Yet all this will avail us nothing, unless Christ himself be present among us, to bless our provision, according to his promise, and to bless us. But it will be a day much to be remembered unto the Lord, if there be reason, in the issue, to say concerning us, in this place, as it was said of Jacob at Peniel, in the words of this text,—“He blessed him there.”

From

From the 24th verse of this chapter, we have an account of a very remarkable interview that Jacob had with *the angel of the covenant*, at the ford of the river Jabbok. It may not be improper to take a view of the happy issue of this wonderful contest; in Jacob's obtaining that for which he wrestled so powerfully, while the angel *blest him there*.

Besides the conjunctive particle *and*, by which the text is connected with what goes before, it consists but of four words; each expressive of something deserving our attention.

1. A glorious agent is spoken of, in the pronoun *he*; the man who wrestled with Jacob. This was no other than Christ himself, putting on an appearance of that humanity, which he afterwards really assumed.

2. We have an action ascribed to him, in the word *blest*. The blessing was that for which Jacob had wrestled long. And it was bestowed upon him at the last.

3. The object of this action is expressed, in the pronoun *him*; referring to the patriarch Jacob. Though the angel had disjointed his thigh, and hitherto seemed to refuse him what he fought, yet he prevailed at last.

4. We have the place where this transaction happened, in the particle *there*; including also the time of it. At the place where Jacob had wrestled so long, at Peniel, by the ford of Jabbok, just as the day began to dawn, when Jacob's presence could no longer be wanted with his family, then and *there he blest him*.

It would afford little edification, and would be in a great degree foreign to the work of this day, to speak of the text barely as recording an attainment of the patriarch Jacob, near four thousand years ago. But Christ is still ready to deal with us as he did with him; we need the blessing as much as he did. And, in the way of wrestling for it, after his example, we have the same reason to expect it; for,

Wherever our blessed Lord condescends to meet with his people, and allows them to wrestle with him for that effect, there is the fullest encouragement to expect that he will bless them there.

IN discoursing from this text and doctrine, we propose, through Divine assistance, to enquire,

I. What it is that we are here encouraged to expect?

II. From whom we are taught to expect it?

III. Who they are that may look for it?

IV. When a person may be said to receive it?

V. Where there is ground to expect it? And,

VI. What improvement should be made of the whole?

I. IN general, what we are here taught to expect is *the blessing*. For understanding hereof, you will do well to attend to the following things.

I. As *blessing* is every where opposed to *curfing*, fo the blessing which we may expect from Christ, is opposed to that curse under which all mankind lie, in their natural estate. That curse, you know, is the sentence of God, the supreme Judge of all the earth, condemning the sinner to undergo the punishment
which

which is justly due to him, as a transgressor of the Divine law. The blessing, therefore, must also be *a judicial sentence, past by a similar authority, setting the person free from all the effects of the curse; and adjudging him to the enjoyment of a happiness, worthy to be bestowed by him that passes the sentence.* Hence,

2. To *blefs*, in a strict and proper sense, can be the work of none but a divine Person. God alone can effectually curse; because none else has power to execute the sentence of eternal condemnation. In like manner, God alone can blefs; because none but he can execute the sentence of blessing, by putting the person in possession of that happiness to which he is thereby adjudged. Besides, all mankind being naturally under the curse, a sentence of blessing, relative to any of them, must needs include an abrogation of the curse. But the curse which God has pronounced, no other can have authority to reverse. What Balak said of Balaam, can only be said, with propriety, concerning the supreme God. *He whom thou bleffest is blessed; and he whom thou cursest is cursed* *. Yet,

3. The act of *bleffing* is sometimes ascribed to men in Scripture. And they are said either to blefs God, or to blefs men like themselves. When a man is said to blefs God, it can only be meant of an ascription of blessedness to him; including a declaration of our persuasion, that God is infinitely blessed, or happy, in himself; and is the sole fountain of all happiness to his creatures, together with our holy and humble acquiescence in him as such. In this sense must we

Z 2

understand

* Numb. xxii. 6.

understand the frequent exhortations to bless God, which we have in various places of Scripture.

When one man is said to bless another, it either means no more, but his praying to God for a blessing upon him; so it is to be understood in this expression, “ We bless you in the name of the Lord * ;” which is thus paraphrased in the verse translation :

“ We in the name of God the Lord
“ do wish you to be bless'd.”

Or otherwise, it must be understood ministerially, of a person having a commission from God for that purpose, pronouncing, in the name of God, a blessing which none but God can execute. Thus the patriarchs, under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, blessed their children. Thus the priests, of old, were authorized to bless the people. And thus the ministers of the gospel are warranted to do still.

4. Sometimes the word is used, to signify the actual communication of that happiness, to which the person had been previously adjudged by a sentence of blessing. To this purpose, God is said to have “ blessed us with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus †.” Not only has he, by a judicial sentence, appointed us to enjoy all those spiritual benefits that are laid up in the hand of Christ, in heaven; but, in consequence thereof, he hath given to every genuine Christian a real and personal interest in the whole. And, even while they continue in this state of mortality, he distributes to them, out of that fulness, according to their necessity, *even grace for grace.*

5. It

* Psal. cxxix. 8.

† Eph. i. 3.

5. It is impossible for any of mankind to enjoy a blessing, in any proper sense, unless through the Lord Jesus Christ. When our first parents were created, God was pleased with the workmanship of his own hands; and he *blessed them*. But when sin entered, that blessing was forfeited; and a curse was denounced against them, which is entailed upon all their posterity. And so strictly just is the great *Judge of all the earth*, that none of them can get free from the punishment to which they are adjudged, till their sentence has been fully executed, and the law satisfied for their offence. This can never be accomplished in the sinner himself; but it was accomplished in Christ, when he “was made a curse for us, that the blessing of Abraham might come upon us through him.” It is, therefore, in his right only, and in consequence of the imputation of his righteousness to us, that any of us can inherit a blessing. And in this way only it is promised to us. For *men shall be blessed only in him; and all nations shall call him blessed* *.

6. They who are thus blessed *in* Christ, must also be blessed *by* him. What he purchased for us, by his blood, as the surety of the covenant, he likewise bestows upon us as the administrator of it. This leads us to enquire,

II. FROM whom it is, that we are here taught to expect the blessing. It is from no other than Christ himself.

We shall not need to insist in proving, that it was *he* who blessed Jacob on this occasion. He who

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wrestled

* Psal. lxxii. 17.

wrestled with the patriarch, though in appearance a man, very plainly calls himself God, when he says, "As a prince hast thou power with God *." Jacob was sensible that he was a divine Person, as appears from his saying, "I have seen God face to face; and "my life is preserved †." The prophet Hosea plainly determines that he was an *angel*, and yet *the Lord God of Hosts*, whose *memorial* is *JEHOVAH ‡*. Surely all these characters can belong to no other person but Christ. He is God, equal with the other divine Persons. Yet he is the Angel, or Messenger of God's covenant. Now he is also truly man; and, though he had not then actually taken upon him our nature, it was fit that he should appear as a man, to furnish, both to Jacob and others who should hear of this interview, a happy pledge and prelude of his actual incarnation.

Neither shall we detain you long, in proving that it belongs to him to bless his people; in the manner above explained. If we view him as God, equal with the Father, he has the same authority to bless, and the same power to execute his sentence, that the other persons of the Godhead have. If we consider him as Mediator, it belongs to him to perform this, and every other act of judgment, in the Church. For himself informs us, "the Father judgeth no man, "but hath committed all judgment unto the Son ||." He had power, even when he was on earth, to forgive sins. That power he actually exercised. And, now that he is in heaven, it is one special end for which "God hath exalted him a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel and the forgiveness

* Ver. 28. † Ver. 30. ‡ Hof. xii. 3, 4, 5. || John v. 22.

“givenness of sins.” The forgiveness of sin cannot be given, without giving the blessing at the same time; for both are only parts of the same sentence of justification, which it belongs to Christ, as a branch of his kingly office, to pronounce. Yea, the actual communication of that happiness, to which believers are adjudged by this sentence, is likewise his work; as he is the administrator of God’s covenant, or the executor of his own testament. Were we to speak at large concerning this glorious Person, time would fail; yea, eternity should be too short, to number up all his excellencies. The following considerations concerning him, serve greatly to enhance the value of every blessing that he bestows upon us.

1. He is one, from whose hand, instead of deserving the blessing, we had amply deserved the curse. That he gives the blessing freely, is matter of wonder and of praise. But even the freeness of this gift is not the most wonderful circumstance concerning it. Adam, in innocence, was blessed freely, without any merit on his part; for, even according to the tenor of the covenant of works, Adam merited nothing, till the condition of that covenant was fulfilled. But to us, Christ gives the blessing not only without, but against merit. We have merited the curse, though he gives us the blessing. We deserve death in its utmost extent,—he gives us eternal life. We deserved to have sunk for ever in the bottomless abyss of misery,—he exalts us to an inconceivable height of glory and happiness. Yet all the sin, by which we had deserved this, was committed against him. And he was as much displeased with it as he possibly could be. But his displeasure against the sin
does

does not stop the egress of his mercy to the sinner. He gives *pardon* and the blessing to us, though he necessarily must *take vengeance on our inventions*.

2. He is one who actually had cursed us, condemning us to suffer all the punishment that our sin so richly deserved. King Darius was reduced to a sad *dilemma*, when he had bound himself by a law, which the constitution of his kingdom rendered unalterable, to cast Daniel, his principal favourite, into the den of lions. From this he could not extricate himself; though *he laboured*, for that purpose, *till the going down of the sun*. At last he was obliged to execute his own sentence, though he did it with the utmost reluctance. But such a situation proved no *dilemma* to Christ. He had passed a sentence much more unalterable than the *laws of the Medes and Persians*; condemning all his elect, among the rest of mankind, to be cast into the den of that *roaring lion*, who *goes about incessantly, seeking whom he may devour*. But infinite wisdom, prompted by infinite love, found out a method to maintain his faithfulness inviolate; and yet to deliver his people from the punishment which they had been condemned to suffer. Their sentence is reversed, and yet executed to the full. The first sentence is not altered, and yet an opposite sentence is both passed and executed upon them. He who formerly cursed you, believer, in the most dreadful manner, now blesses you in most ample form. This he does without any change at all on his part; and without any previous change to the better on your part.

3. He is one who is infinitely beyond either enjoying any advantage, or suffering any disadvantage,
by

by any thing that ever could have taken place with regard to us. He was from eternity, he will be to eternity,—he unchangeably *is* from eternity to eternity, incomprehensibly blessed in himself. He can neither be more nor less so, whatever take place among his creatures. Neither our blessing nor our curse can add any thing to him, or diminish any thing from him. In all the beneficence that one man shews to another, there is usually a great mixture of self. But no such principle could have influence with Christ, in any part of what he did for us. However ample the blessing is which he bestows, nothing could move him to bestow it, but pure, unmerited, and disinterested love. Oh! that it did but meet with suitable returns, from those who are the happy objects of it.

4. He is the same who endured the curse for us; and bare all that punishment, which that curse denounced, in our room and stead. Our sentence of cursing was incapable of being wholly reversed. All that could be done was to divert the execution of it, from the sinner to a surety. But where should a surety be found, that was, at the same time, willing to underly the punishment in our stead; and able to satisfy divine justice, by suffering all that was contained in our sentence? All the creatures, though joining their power into one, had been for ever unequal to the mighty task. Neither heaven nor earth could furnish a proper person, below the throne of God. But the eternal Son of God, in his love to our family, undertook, from all eternity, to be our Surety, and to bear our curse. This undertaking he cheerfully executed, *when the fulness of the time was come.*

Thus

Thus he shed his precious blood, that we might be capable of enjoying the blessing. Had he given us what cost him nothing, however valuable it was to us, there had been no such display of love or grace on his part. But now his love shines, in the whole transaction, beyond all parallels, beyond all comparison, beyond all expression, beyond all finite comprehension. It shines with a lustre that will astonish heaven, and confound hell, through all the ages of eternity. And what is it, Christian, that you may not expect from this love? He *gave himself for you*, to procure your right to the blessing. And he gave himself to you, as your Lord and Husband, when he met with you, in the day of espousals, and *blessed you there*. And dare you, after all, pour disgrace upon his love, and upon himself, by your unbelieving doubts about his willingness to give you any thing that you need?

5. He is the same person who is to execute the sentence of blessing, by putting us in full possession of all that happiness to which we are thereby adjudged. He who gave him authority to pronounce the blessing, gave him likewise a commission to make it good. And he gave into his hand, for that effect, all that infinite fulness which himself possesses. For "it hath pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell *." Neither is there any thing in his commission, that he has not sufficient power to execute; whatever opposition he may meet with from enemies, in bringing us forward to the state of promised blessedness. Already have we seen him assaulted by the powers of hell and earth, combined

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* Col. i. 19.

to prevent his procuring the blessing for you, believer; and that in the very instant when he had the full flood of divine wrath to conflict with, and none to help or uphold him; yet his *own arm brought salvation* unto him; and his enemies were trodden down in his anger. Surely they will never again attack him at such a disadvantage. And, seeing he was then victorious, you may be assured that he will be so on every occasion, till he have brought you, and all your brethren, home, to the full possession of all that to which you are entitled by virtue of the sentence which he has passed upon you.

III. WE now proceed, through divine assistance, to inform you, who they are to whom Christ gives this blessing. Upon this head we mean not to insist. Only, that every person present may know what right he has to expect a blessing from Christ, we shall here observe the two things following.

I. He offers and exhibits the blessing to all that hear the gospel indiscriminately. Whatever is your character, or whatever it has been; whatever it was that brought you hither, or in whatever manner you are just now employed, *life and death are set before you, the blessing and the curse*; and you are at full liberty to choose for yourselves. As really as Christ stood in the temple, on the last and great day of the last feast of tabernacles, "and cried, If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink," so really is he present in this assembly, on this great day of our gospel feast, crying, by the mouth of a sinful worm like yourselves, and saying, 'If any man, or any woman, young or old, rich or poor, saint or sinner, pro-
' fessor

‘ fessor of religion, or profane person ; if any descendant of Adam, sensible of his misery under the curse, wishes to be delivered from it, let him come unto me, and I will bless him.’ Yea, though you are not sensible of your condition, nor have any desire after Christ, nor after any blessing that he can bestow, even this stupid insensibility does not exclude you. Nothing on this side death can shut the door of access upon you, which Christ himself has opened. For he *opens and none can shut*. Come to him, then, whatever you are. If you cannot come of yourself, he will draw you ; and, as he draws, he will bless you. He will bless you so as none in heaven, earth, or hell, shall ever reverse it. He will bless you this very moment. He will bless you here.

2. He actually bestows the blessing ; he has bestowed it already, upon every person who is but willing to receive it. In the moment of a person’s union to Christ, he undergoes a twofold change. There is a real change made upon his nature and disposition ; by virtue of which he loves Christ, whom he hated before ; becomes willing to embrace those gracious offers which he formerly rejected ; willing to be blessed in Christ, and cheerfully to call him blessed. There is likewise a change made in his relative state, or in his standing before the law and justice of God ; by which he is set free from the curse, and made to inherit a blessing. Now, as these two always go together, the person who has undergone the first change can never want evidence that he has undergone the other. Consequently, he who is really willing to receive the blessing, in the way in which it is offered, is blessed indeed. At what time soever

soever it was, or in whatever place, that you found yourself made truly desirous to be blessed in Christ, or sincerely willing to receive the blessing from him, you may be as sure, as you are of the present shining of *that* sun, that *he blessed* you there.

IV. IF it is enquired, When Christ may be said to bless a person, as Jacob was blessed at Peniel? We answer, in the following particulars.

1. He does so, when, by a sentence of justification, he abolishes the curse under which the person lay in his natural estate, and adjudges him to the enjoyment of the favour of God, and of all that happiness that proceeds from it. Then it is that the man *receives the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation* *. In what place soever you was, Christian, when such a sentence passed in your behalf; it may be said, with the greatest propriety, that *he blessed* you *there*.

2. When, by a new intimation of that sentence, he gives ease to the troubled conscience, and allows the person a comfortable view of it, that he is blessed. When the sentence of justification is past in heaven, it is ordinary for God to intimate it in the court of conscience, by a word of grace. The sentence itself will stand for ever; nor can there ever be occasion for any renewal or ratification of it. But the intimation of it to the conscience is in danger of being forgotten. The impression of it wears gradually off. And the person is in danger of being perplexed with apprehensions, however groundless, of the curse still hanging over his head. To remove these apprehensions

* Psal. xxiv. 5.

fions, and to restore that comfort and joy in the Holy Ghost, which are among the fruits of justification, the same word of grace, by which the sentence was intimated at the first, or another of the same import, is sent home upon the conscience with the same power as before. The person's faith is drawn forth into exercise; so that he gives credit to the divine testimony contained in that gracious word. His soul is, by that means, filled with joy and peace in believing. And he is enabled to consider himself as a blessed person. If ever you have had experience of such a thing as this; if God has brought home upon your conscience such a promise as this, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousnesses, their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more," enabling you to make a believing application of it to your own soul; then you surely felt a blessedness, that nothing sublunary could equal. And you may be assured that you still are, and ever shall be *blessed of the LORD that made heaven and earth.*

3. When, in a time of peculiar necessity, he discovers to them the applicableness of their sentence of blessing to their present condition; the security it affords them against any danger that they fear, or the encouragement it affords them to expect any benefit which they need. It was such a blessing as this that Jacob insisted for, and obtained, on this occasion. God had appeared unto him at Bethel, and had blessed him twenty years ago *. The blessing which he had then received stood in the same force now as before; so that he did not now need to be blessed, as one that had always been under the curse hitherto. Yea, what

* Chap. xxviii. 13, 14, 15.

what God said to him at Bethel, included all the blessing that he now either received or sought for. But at this time a peculiar danger hung over him; his brother was coming against him with *four hundred* armed men. The aspect of Providence was peculiarly dark before him. On this account his faith began to stagger; and he was ready to doubt whether the blessing formerly granted him, was any security to him in his present case or not. Therefore he fought, and the LORD granted him, such an explication and enlargement of his former blessing, as convinced him that it was applicable to his present circumstances; and determined him to set forward in his journey, at the call of God, despising all the dangers that threatened him. The same, Christian, may often be the state of matters with you. The blessing that was past upon you, in the day of your justification, extended to every case that ever you can be in. But, when the aspects of Providence begin to darken, when all seems going to confusion, within you and around you; and when, to crown all, God himself seems to deal with you as if he had become your enemy, then you begin to apprehend, that no promise, upon which you was caused formerly to hope, has any relation to your present condition; and you are ready to give up all for lost. In such a case, has not the great angel of the covenant sometimes paid you a new visit? Has he not discovered to you some other promise, whose application to your present condition you could not dispute? Has not this been a happy mean of clearing up all your doubts, relative to former experiences; and convincing you that your former blessing extended also to your present.

sent case? And, wherever this happened, you will surely acknowledge, that *he blessed you there.*

4. When, from time to time, he communicates to them, according to their necessity, those benefits which the blessing ensures. This happy sentence begins to be executed the moment that it is past. The happiness to which Christians are thereby adjudged, begins that moment to be enjoyed. And what they enjoy here, is, for substance, the same with what they shall enjoy hereafter; though much inferior, both in the degree, and in the manner of enjoyment. All the fulness of God is theirs, in consequence of the blessing which Christ pronounces upon them. To bestow upon them of this fulness, is one main design of every visit that he pays them. And he sometimes bestows so largely, that they enjoy a foretaste of heaven. And, oh! how they then *rejoice, with joy unspeakable and full of glory!* Such communications are usually allowed them, during their attendance upon divine ordinances; of one kind or other. And this is one thing that strengthens their attachment to the courts of God's house. If this has contributed to bring any of you to this assembly to-day, you may consider it as a token for good, that he will *blefs* you here.

In these four consists that blessing, which the Christian may expect, at the ford of Jabbok, during his pilgrimage on the wilderness side of the river. But something incomparably better shall be enjoyed, when once he has past the ford of Jordan. Then will Christ meet with you, believer, never to part again. And he will blefs you in a manner corresponding to such a meeting. He will then bring you
home,

home, to the full, immediate, and eternal enjoyment of all that your sentence bears. He will then say to you, as himself assures us, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world." But how he will bless you then it is impossible for us to tell. Though an angel from heaven should attempt it; though one of your brethren, who is already in possession of that blessedness, were to return to this world for the purpose of describing it, they would find it impossible to do it in any language that mortals could understand. Your own happy experience will inform you in a little, to better purpose than any words can, in what manner he will *bless* you *there*.

V. WE hasten to the next enquiry proposed; namely, Where it is, that such a blessing may be expected from Christ? The sentence of blessing is always past in heaven. But, as to those communications of divine goodness that are the fruits of it, they may be enjoyed any where. But, as particular notice is here taken of the place where Jacob obtained this blessing, I apprehend it is done with a special design to encourage others to expect a similar blessing, when they come to be in circumstances similar to those in which Jacob was at Peniel. For the encouragement, therefore, of such as desire the blessing, we shall observe, that Christ blesses his people,

I. Wherever he condescends to meet with them. In a proper sense, he and they never have a meeting but one; and then they meet, so as never totally to part again. I do not speak of the day of death, nor of the day of Christ's second coming, but of the day

of their effectual calling. Then an union commences, between him and them, that shall never be dissolved. And from that time forth his gracious presence is continually with them, while they remain in this world. Surely, wherever they are, when this happy meeting takes place, it will not be doubted that he *bleses* them *there*. But there is another sense, in which there are many meetings between him and them, and many partings. I mean, in respect of his sensible and comforting presence. Though he is ever with them, *their eyes*, like those of the two disciples, are often *holden*, *that they do not know him* to be present. They can perceive no evidence of his being with them; and therefore they not only think him absent, but doubt if ever he was present with them, or ever will. Then they sore lament his absence, and *go mourning without the sun*. When he finds their faith in danger of failing, and that they can no longer bear the apprehension of his absence, then he is pleased again to draw aside the veil, and open their eyes to see him present with them. Now they can trust him, that he never will be absent; and, perhaps, are convinced that he was present, when their complaints of his absence were loudest. Then their mouths are opened, their hearts are enlarged. They find themselves supernaturally assisted in wrestling for the blessing. And they prevail. If ever you enjoy such a visit, it will be a disappointment to him, as well as to you, if you do not refuse to let him go, except he bles you.

2. He does so wherever they wait upon him in the believing expectation of enjoying a blessing. Jacob, on the occasion to which the text refers, could have

have no reason to stay behind his company, unless to seek an opportunity of holding communion with God, in the duty of secret prayer. For this he had a loud call in providence; and in this exercise he met with the blessing. The ordinances of divine grace are trysting places; where Christ has engaged to be present with his people, and bless them. What he said to Moses long ago, he as really says to us: "In all places where I cause my name to be recorded, I will come unto you, and I will bless you." And when any person attends upon his ordinances, in the faith of this, or any such promise, it is impossible that that person should go away without the blessing. Is there, then, any person in this assembly, attending ordinances, under the influence of a sincere desire to meet with Christ, and to receive the blessing from him? We are warranted to assure such a person, that he shall not lose his errand. Nay, *the LORD, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple.* Yea, he is come already; for the appointment cannot be broken on his part. He is come to bestow upon you whatever blessing is suitable to your present condition. And, whether you are sensible of it or not, we dare assure you, that he will *bless* you here.

3. Wherever they wrestle with him for the blessing. This was Jacob's exercise at the ford of Jabbok; and the text informs us of his success. Our Lord gives nothing to his people for their asking; but he loves to give them all, in the way of their asking it of him. It is no wonder that they have not, when they ask not; or when they ask amiss. But we have an express command to ask, accompanied with a promise equally express, that, in so doing, we shall receive.

And we may be assured, that he who hath made the promise will accomplish it. Consequently, when any person asks, according to the command ; he shall be sure to receive, according to the promise. Perhaps you may not receive the very thing that you asked. Or, if you do, it may not come at the precise time, or in the exact manner in which you looked for it ; because the infinite wisdom of God knows much better how to give, than you know how to ask. Besides, he often delays the answer of your prayers, that he may lead you out to wrestle with him for it, in a persevering and importunate manner. But, if you ask any thing that is contained in the covenant of grace, and persist in wrestling for it, as Jacob did for the blessing, you shall assuredly receive it, or else something better instead of it, in God's good time and way.

4. He often blesses them even where he seemed to deny their request, and made as if he intended to leave them without the blessing. This was the case with Jacob here, as the context informs us. The woman of Canaan is another memorable instance of the same thing. At first he seemed utterly to neglect her. When the disciples applied to him to dismiss her, he gave them an answer that seemed to import a refusal of her petition. When she still continued to cry, he gave her not only what any other would have construed into a flat denial ; but, along with this, he seemed to call her a dog, and to spurn her from his footstool. Yet, after all, when her faith, supported by secret communications from himself, surmounted all these difficulties, and wrestled on ; he was pleased to make her own will the measure of his bounty

bounty towards her *. “Go and do likewise.” Then, before you leave the spot, where he seemed to give you the refusal, you may confidently expect that he will *blefs* you *there*.

5. In a word, He often bleffes them in the same place where he had pled a controversy with them, and touched them severely with his afflicting hand. The *angel* wrestled against Jacob, while Jacob wrestled with him. Yea, so far did he carry his testimony against the sins of the patriarch, that he left upon him a standing mark of his displeasure, in the dislocation of his thigh. Yet, after all, he granted him the blessing that he prayed for. There is much sin about the best Christian in this world; and, though Christ loves their persons, he cannot but hate their sin, and testify against it. When he bestows any blessing upon them, he often does it in such a way as to recal their sin to their remembrance; and make them sensible how much they deserve the curse. As soon as he has laid them low enough in humiliation, and made them, like Jacob, confess what is their true name, he begins to raise them up; gives them a new name and a blessing.

I know there are various persons present, upon whom the Lord has been laying his hand of late, by various kinds of trials. On this account their heads hang down, perhaps, and their hearts are heavy. ‘Alas!’ say they, ‘how shall I expect the blessing? God has a controversy with me; and he has been pleading it with much severity. He has laid afflictions on my body, deprived me of my dearest relations, subjected me to the scourge of the tongue;

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and,

* Matth. xv. 22,—28.

‘ and, which is worst of all, left me to walk in darkness, with regard to my spiritual case. And what can I expect, but that he will continue to plead his controversy even at his table, if I shall venture forward to it? I am convinced that he will be just in so doing. And I dare not expect,—I scarcely dare ask the blessing.’

But, “ O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted ; *he will yet lay thy stones with fair colours, and thy foundations with sapphires.*” What do you know, but it was one principal design of his past contendings, that his controversy might be happily taken up ; and might not stand in the way of your receiving that blessing which he intends this day to bestow upon you? The chastisements that he lays upon his people are influenced by fatherly love, as well as by fatherly displeasure. And the same love which moved him to chasten you before, may now influence him to bless you. However severely he has chastened you of late,—yea, though his hand be ever so heavy upon you at this moment ; instead of doubting his willingness to bless you, you may even draw an argument from your afflicted condition, and plead with him, that proportionable to the severity of the touch that he has given you, may be the value of the blessing with which he will bless you here.

VI. WE are now to conclude with some improvement of the subject. At present we shall but name the following inferences.

1. There is a happy difference between the people of God and the rest of mankind. All the posterity of Adam, having sinned in him, and fallen with him,
come

come into the world under that curse which the law of God denounces against every transgressor. By that fearful sentence, they are bound over to a punishment which they can never fully bear. And it is every moment in danger of being executed. Thus the sinner hangs continually over the mouth of the *bottomless pit*; suspended by the bare thread of life, which is liable to be broken by every accident. But the people of God, having met with the angel of the covenant, have obtained the blessing from him. Their sentence of condemnation is reversed. They have an interest in all that fulness which God has caused to dwell in Christ. They are entitled to have their journey-charges defrayed out of it, while they are here; and have security for the full possession of the whole in due time. Thrice "happy is the people that is in such a case. Yea, happy is the people, whose God is the LORD."

2. We here see the real importance of a meeting with Christ; and the improvement that Christians should make of such a privilege, when allowed to enjoy it. If the blessing of God is a thing of any value; if the curse of God is terrible, in its nature and its consequences, then a meeting with Christ must be a thing of the greatest moment; for wherever he meets with his people, he blesses them there. Strangers to Christ may now cease to wonder, why Christians are so anxious in seeking him whom their soul loveth. They have good reason to seek him above all things. Oh! that they were more sensible of their duty and interest in this respect. You whose business it is really to seek him in his ordinances to-day, see that you desist not till you find him. Having
found

found him, wrestle with him; and let him not go till he bless you. Wrestle for a blessing to your families and relatives, to your brethren in Christ, to the Church of God. If you are enabled to do so, he will certainly bless you here.

3. We may here see the true value of gospel ordinances, those means of grace which we enjoy. These are the places where Christ has appointed to meet with his people, and to bless them. And surely an opportunity of attending, where Christ has promised to come, must be precious. Good reason have the people of God to *love the habitation of his house, and the place where his honour dwelleth*. However much divine ordinances may be despised by those who are strangers to Christ, and to that blessing which he bestows, the time is hastening on, when one of these *days of the Son of man* will be considered, even by the most profane, as more valuable than a thousand worlds. So soon as the sinner is beyond a possibility of enjoying such a privilege, he will begin, alas! too late, to be sensible of its true value. “Tremble at *this*, ye that are at ease in Zion; be *fore* troubled, “careless ones.” Those things which you esteem, and upon which your hearts are set, are no more than empty bubbles, mere *vanity and vexation of spirit*. The things which you despise, and turn to ridicule, are much more precious than diamonds. Oh! be not so foolish, as still to contemn *the things that belong to your peace*, until they be *hid from your eyes*.

4. We here see good encouragement to perseverance and importunity in prayer, however little success we may have for a long time. In the days of his flesh our Lord taught, “that men ought always
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“to pray and not to faint.” He taught the same thing, by his manner of dealing with this patriarch long before. Jacob had wrestled long; he was detained the whole night, even to the breaking of the day; he had met with many apparent refusals; the Lord had testified his displeasure against his former sins, and even seemed to shew displeasure on account of his present importunity; yet, after all, his importunity prevailed, and he obtained the blessing which he sought. Let neither delays, nor seeming refusals, nor rebukes in Providence, nor any thing in God’s manner of dealing with you, nor any thing in your past conduct towards him, nor any other consideration whatsoever, prevail with you, to desist from pleading with him for any blessing that you find necessary. If you are enabled to follow Jacob’s example, by continuing to wrestle in faith, we dare promise you an answer of peace in the issue.

5. We may hence learn the true character of all genuine Israelites. They are persons who are sensible that they are, by nature, under the curse; and that deliverance from that dreadful sentence can only be obtained through Christ. They are persons who not only desire freedom from the curse, but earnestly wish for communion with Christ, and with God through him; and embrace every opportunity of seeking after it. They are willing to bless themselves in Christ; and to be indebted to him for every blessing here, and for all blessedness hereafter. They are endowed with a wrestling spirit; and, like princes, have power with God, and prevail. They have some experience of the answer of prayer; and of being blessed, in consequence of their wrestling for it.

it. And they are disposed to manifest their gratitude for what Christ has done for them, by cheerfully calling him blessed ; and by yielding a willing and universal obedience to all his commandments. By these things you are called to try yourselves. If this character suits you, it is a comfortable evidence that you may be welcome to the Lord's table ; and an encouragement to hope, that, according as your circumstances shall require, he will bless you there.

6. We may here see both what we have to do, and what we have to expect from the hand of Christ to-day. The solemn ordinance, which we are about to celebrate, is one place of meeting, where Christ has promised to be present, and to bless us. Come forward, then, to his table, with the prayer of faith in your mouth, and you shall find Christ present, with blessings of all kinds in his hand, to be distributed to every wrestler according to their desire. If you hesitate to come forward, from an apprehension that you are still under the curse, apply to him now for a previous blessing ; and you may receive it, even before the communion-table be covered. If you are sensible of the deficiency of your preparation, apply to him also for that blessing. And when you come to the banquet of wine, be not shy in presenting your petition. If what you desire is included in that fulness which God has made to dwell in Christ, you may be certain that it shall be given you, *even to the whole of the kingdom.*

7. In one word, We may here see how precious is the opportunity that is now enjoyed by every person in this assembly, and in what manner it should be improved. You have heard that Christ has engaged
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to be present wherever his *name* is *recorded*; and to bless those who are employed in recording it. We are met here for this express purpose; and, by profession, we are employed in that work. Can there, then, be any reason to doubt of his being present to bless us? What Peter once said to the Jews, we have an equal warrant to say to every person present. "Unto you God, having raised up his Son Jesus Christ, hath sent him, to bless you, in turning every one of you away from his iniquity *." Is there, then, any person present, groaning under a sense of his just subjection to the curse, and desirous to obtain the blessing? Is there any sensible that the things of this vain world cannot yield happiness, and desirous to be blessed with all spiritual blessings? Is there any who has found himself disappointed in all his pursuits after happiness hitherto, and knows not where to go next in quest of it. Let them all come to Christ and be blessed. Yea, let those also come, who never had a serious thought, either about the blessing or the curse. Christ is now present among you, with the blessing in the one hand, and the curse in the other. Every one of you has an opportunity of choosing for yourself. And, for any thing that either you or I know, the choice that you now make may be confirmed for eternity. The difference between those who are under the curse, and those who enjoy the blessing, is apparently small in this world. But in the world to come it shall be as wide as the distance between heaven and hell; between the height of consummate happiness, and the depths of intolerable misery.

And,

* Acts iii. 26.

And, which is still worse, there will be no possibility of passing from the one to the other. By refusing the offered blessing, and continuing to do so till death surprize you, you bind yourself irrecoverably under all that wrath which the curse denounces. And Oh! how *fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God!* Perhaps this may be your last opportunity of escaping. But if you come to Christ, at his call, however little you deserve it, however much you deserve the contrary, you shall find him ready to do with you as he did with the little children of old; he will *take you in his arms, and bless you.*

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S E R M O N XI.

*The returning Prodigal's Attire; or, The Robe
of imputed Righteousness actually put upon every
penitent Sinner.*

LUKE XV. 22.

—BRING FORTH THE BEST ROBE, AND PUT IT ON
HIM.

THE parable recorded from the 11th verse of this chapter, is one of the most significative that our Lord delivered in the days of humiliation. In it, under the similitude of a prodigal son, returning penitent to his father, and kindly received by him, he represents the gracious reception that God gave to the Gentiles, when returning from the vain superstitions of paganism; and still gives to every sinner, when sincerely returning from the evil of his way. Having been informed of the prodigal's folly, ver. 11, 12, 13.; of the misery to which his folly reduced him,

him, ver. 14, 15, 16.; and of his resolution to return to his father's house, ver. 17, 18, 19. We hear, in ver. 20. of his actual return, in pursuance of that resolution; and of the kindly reception with which his father surpris'd and prevented him. And, in ver. 21. we are inform'd of the free and voluntary confession that he made of the sin and folly of his past course of life.

The tender and affectionate father, having heard his confession, makes no direct reply. But, that he might evince his design of receiving him into the family, not as a hired servant, but as a son, he calls his servants, and gives them injunctions to do every thing for him that was necessary to make him appear like a child of the family; as we see in this verse and the following. Thus, when any sinner returns to God, by faith and sincere repentance, he is received among the number of the sons of God. And, as one consequence hereof, all the servants of the family receive a charge concerning him. And they all contribute their endeavours to fit him for his place and station in his father's house. The orders given by the father to the servants, relative to his son, now restored to him, consist of four particulars.

1. As his clothing was worn to rags, they have orders to *bring forth the best robe, and put it on him.*

2. As his jewels were forfeited, even to the ring that contained the family seal; they are commanded to *put a ring on his hand.*

3. His shoes being worn out, and his feet sore bruised with the fatigues of his journey; they are ordered to *put shoes on his feet.*

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4. To relieve him from that famine, by which he was ready to perish; and to give opportunity to the whole family, and the friends of the family, to partake in the joy that was felt by his father at his return; he enjoins them to *bring the fatted calf, and kill it*, that they might all *eat and be merry*.

We only propose to consider the first of these at present; as we have it in these words, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him." In which words we have the following things deserving notice.

1. The piece of clothing appointed for the returning prodigal, a *robe*. Critics observe, that the word signifies a long loose garment, like a cloak, or mantle, that was worn above all the rest of the clothes. This piece of dress no slave was permitted to wear; but it was so necessary to free men, that it was a shame for any person of character to appear without it. The prodigal had reduced himself to the shameful necessity of appearing, like a slave, without a robe. But his father, that he might be habited like a free man, and like a son of his family, orders him to be furnished with one.

2. The quality of the robe that he was to wear; it was *the best robe*. In the original, it is the *first robe*; and may either be understood of the same robe that he wore at the first, before he left the family, or of the first in point of quality, that is, the best in the wardrobe. The last of these seems the proper meaning; as it is manifest that the robe which he formerly wore had been carried into the far country, and worn out.

3. The orders that were given concerning this robe; the servants were required to *bring it forth*,
and

and *put it on him*. He who was formerly employed in the meanest drudgery, is now served like a prince. He is not allowed to put on his own clothes, but has servants appointed to dress him. Neither was he first taken home, and then adorned with the robe. It was brought forth and put upon him where he was, that he might not enter his father's house in a garb unbecoming a son of the family.

The spiritual meaning of all this may be summed up in the following proposition.

It is the express will and pleasure of God, that every sinner of Adam's family, returning from that dissolute course of life in which we are all naturally engaged, be covered with that robe of righteousness, which is incomparably the best in all the wardrobe of heaven.

WHAT we propose on this subject, is only, through divine assistance,

I. To speak a little of the best robe here mentioned.

II. To explain the orders here given concerning it.

III. To endeavour some improvement of the whole.

I. ALL that we have to say concerning the *best robe*, shall be comprised in the following particulars.

1. That spiritual blessing, which is here represented by the best robe that was to be put upon the prodigal, is no other than the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. This will clearly appear, by comparing

ing the text with these words of the Prophet: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God: for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness *." Some, indeed, understand both passages of that inherent righteousness, with which the child of God is endued, by the working of the Holy Ghost. But this deserves not to be called a robe. It is only our inner garment, which is covered; and stands in need to be covered by another. It is so far from being the *best robe* that our heavenly Father has to give us, that, while we continue in this world, it is no better than *filthy rags*. Besides, it is never completely put upon us, till we come to heaven; whereas the robe here mentioned is put upon the returning prodigal before he taste of his father's provision, or enter the door of his house. It is, therefore, the surety righteousness of Christ, imputed to us in the day of our union to him, that we are to consider as our *best robe*.

2. This righteousness is fitly compared to a robe, on various accounts. It hides our spiritual nakedness in the most perfect manner. To cover shame is the principal use of all garments. Other garments cover but a part of the body; but the robe covers the whole. And this righteousness actually covers the whole man in every Christian, so that no part of his shame appears: it covers every member of the mystical body of Christ. Hence he is represented as "clothed with a garment down to the foot †."—It covers all the defects of our other garments, so that our filthy rags appear not to our confusion in the sight of God. It

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* Isa. lxi. 10.

† Rev. i. 13.

is observable, that the servants are not here commanded to strip the prodigal of all his rags ; and to clothe him, from head to foot, in change of raiment. They are only to put a robe upon him, which may cover all the defects of the rest of his clothing ; till the whole might be changed at leisure. This is a lively representation of God's method of dealing with penitent sinners. He will have them at length made " all glorious within ;" being covered with a garment of inherent holiness that shall be absolutely perfect. But this he does not all at once. And while it is gradually accomplished, it is necessary that the defects of this inner garment, as well as all that shame which cannot be hid by these rags, be covered by the robe of imputed righteousness ; so as to be hid from the piercing eye of divine justice.—This righteousness, like an impenetrable robe, screens us from every spiritual storm ; whether we suppose it to blow from heaven, earth, or hell. Hence it is said concerning Christ,—“ A man shall be an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest ; as rivers of waters in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land *.”—Like a robe, it serves to keep our other garments clean. Yea, it excels every other robe in this ; that, after our other garments are defiled, it serves to make them clean. Hence the distinguished company, who stand before the throne, are said to have “ washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the lamb †.” The robes which they are there said to wash, cannot be the same that is mentioned in this text. It is incapable of defilement ; and therefore can stand in no need of washing.

* Isa. xxxii. 2.

† Rev. vii. 14.

washing. Besides, this robe is the same with "the blood of the Lamb," in which the others are washed. The meaning of the passage is, that the inherent righteousnesses of the saints; which are liable to frequent defilements, while in this world, are gradually cleansed and made white through the efficacy of this imputed righteousness; which is the spring of their sanctification, as well as of their justification. — This righteousness, like the robe of old, is a badge of freedom. It is worn by none but free-men. So long as a person continues enslaved by Satan, and is employed in feeding his swine, he can have no such robe. But Christ having redeemed us by power, at the same time that he redeemed us by price, the moment that we are covered with that righteousness, which was the price of our redemption, we are also made partakers of that liberty which is the fruit of his victory. And while we wear the robe, we can never be "entangled again with the yoke of bondage." — In a word, as no person of character used to be seen abroad without his robe; so none of the family of God, none of the citizens of the new Jerusalem, ever appear without this righteousness. From the moment that it is put upon them, in the day of their union to Christ, it is never more put off; nor will be through eternity. They are peculiarly careful to have it on at public feasts, and on days of spiritual solemnity. Hence they endeavour, by renewed actings of faith, in the prospect of such occasions, to comply with the Apostles exhortation; by "putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, and making no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."

3. This righteousness is fitly denominated the best

robe. Heaven itself cannot afford a better. Nor was ever any comparable to it worn in the family of God; as might be shewn by various considerations. It is, by far, the most precious and expensive robe. The goodness of things ought to bear a proportion to their price. By this rule, this robe is infinitely better than all others; as being purchased at a higher price. Indeed, it is often lightly esteemed among men; but it bears such a value in heaven, that it could not be purchased by any thing less than "the blood of God."—It is the most beautiful, sumptuous, and magnificent robe. It is called, by the inspired Psalmist, "a garment of wrought gold." Such is the beauty of it, that angels gaze upon it with admiration. Yea, such is the beauty of it, that God himself is well pleased with it, and with all who are clothed with it.—It is a garment universally esteemed, by all the members of God's family, beyond all others whatsoever. You may take the Apostle Paul for an example. He counted all "things but loss and dung, that *he might win Christ; and be found in him,*" covered with this robe.—It is a robe of most universal usefulness. It serves the best purposes, and that in the best manner. You have heard that it covers our shame, screens us from the storm, and keeps our other garments clean. We may add, it recommends us to the favour and blessing of God; as the smell of Esau's garments recommended Jacob to Isaac his father. It makes us fit to appear in the house of God, and among his children. It serves as a wedding garment; in which even thieves and robbers, the inhabitants of the high-ways and hedges, may be welcome at the marriage-supper of the lamb. It serves as an armour of

proof,

proof, to defend us “on the right hand and on the left,” against all the wiles, and all the “fiery darts of the wicked one.” Yea, it serves to reconcile us to ourselves; and to introduce that peace into our consciences, to which we must ever have been strangers without it.—It is, of all others, least subject to injuries of any kind. It can neither be torn nor worn out. Though it keeps our other garments clean, itself is incapable of pollution. It needs no reparation; nor can it ever wax old. It will ever be as new, and as perfect, as in the day it was first put on. Consequently, it is the most durable and lasting of all robes. It is infinite in duration, as well as in value; for it is an “everlasting righteousness.” And every person upon whom it is put in time, shall continue to wear it through all eternity,

We might likewise have shewn it to be the *best robe*, by comparing it with all others that are worn, or have been worn, in the family of God. It is better than the robe of original righteousness, with which our first parents were covered, before they played the prodigal, and left that family. That robe was pure indeed, but it was never complete; for the covenant of works was never perfectly fulfilled. And the event shewed how subject it was to decay. But this, you have heard, is perfect, everlasting, and incapable of decay.—It is better than the garment of inherent righteousness, which is put upon the saints by the saving operation of the Holy Ghost. While they are in this world, that garment is both imperfect and defiled. And even in the other world, it will only be capable of such a perfection as is competent to a finite subject. And all its perfection will be wholly owing

to the other. But this robe is infinitely perfect, and it derives none of its excellencies from any other. It is better than the robe which is worn by confirmed angels—Their righteousness is no more than commensurate to the demands of their Creator's law; nor can it be profitable to any but themselves. Their robe is too narrow to wrap any other person in. But this is a righteousness that no law could ever have demanded, if Christ had not voluntarily made himself under the law for us. It is more than answerable unto the natural demands of that law to which he was made subject; for it “magnified the law, and “made it honourable.” This robe is also broad and large enough to cover all the members of the mystical body of Christ. In a word, it is even better than the robe of immortal glory, that shall eternally be worn by the children of God in the upper house. The robe here mentioned is the cause of the other; and the cause is always more excellent than the effect. That robe, however magnificent, had never been half so glorious, if it had not been “washed and “made white in the blood of the Lamb.” When all these things are considered, it appears to be a truth indisputable, that this is the *best robe*. The wardrobe of heaven affords none like it. The treasures of eternity cannot purchase a better. Nor can the hand of omnipotence, directed by infinite wisdom, work out one more excellent.

II. WE now proceed, as was proposed in the entry, to attempt some explication of the orders here given, for arraying the returning prodigal in this best robe. All that we intend on this head, is only to set before
you

you the few following things, which we consider as imported in the words.

1. They import, that finners, while they continue without God's house and family, stand much in need of this robe. Had the prodigal been sent to feed sheep, he might have expected to clothe himself with their fleeces; but his swine afforded nothing to cover his nakedness. And when his garments were worn out, he had no means to repair them. Not only was he ready to perish through hunger, he was also reduced to the last extremity for want of clothing. Hence, his father's first care was to have him provided with a becoming robe. In like manner, the sinner is as much at a loss for clothing as for food, in a spiritual sense. Our own "righteousness are filthy rags." In the house of our tyrannical master, there is neither food nor clothing. Our nakedness is exposed to every eye. Ourselves are obnoxious to every storm. And, sooner or later, we must feel ourselves miserable, without such a robe as this.

2. That such a robe is actually provided, and ready for the putting on. The father says not to his servants, go buy a robe, or make one, and put it on him; but go and bring it forth. There was not so much as occasion for any alteration of it, to make it fit for the stature of the prodigal. It was just ready to be put on. The robe of righteousness was prepared by Christ, during his humiliation on earth. It lies ready in the wardrobe of our heavenly Father. It suits the measure of every returning prodigal. Come, then, presently, and be covered with it. You shall find nothing ado but put it on. If you are unable to do this, it will be done for you. Already it is brought forth,

forth, and God has given commandment to put it on you.

3. That no sinner can be admitted into the family of God, nor suffered to enter his house, without it. The prodigal's father says not, Take my son home, introduce him to the family, and then clothe him with change of raiment. He was to be clothed with the best robe, before he entered the house, or was seen of any that were in it. So God first clothes the returning sinner with the robe of righteousness in his justification; then he brings him into his family, and admits him to all the privileges of his children. In point of time, there is no difference between our justification and our adoption. But we must view the one as following the other, in the order of nature. Surely none can be suffered to enjoy a place in the house of God, till he is first clothed with this robe.

4. That the righteousness of Christ must become ours in possession, and be actually put upon us; otherwise we can have no real advantage by it. No man can be the better for having a garment within his reach, unless it be actually put upon him, or applied to his body in such a manner as to cover his nakedness. So neither can any of mankind have any benefit by this righteousness, even though it is brought forth, and offered to him in the Gospel, unless it is actually made his, for the purposes of salvation. Now, in order hereto, three things are necessary. (1.) It must be received by faith. The person must consent to receive it, on the footing of the offer, as made to him in particular; and say, "in the Lord have I righteousness." (2.) It must be actually given us of God. The gospel offer gives every man a right of access to it; but the Christian, when he receives it by faith,

faith, obtains a right of possession in it, a real property of it; founded on the deed of gift in the gospel offer. What God offers in the gospel to all without distinction, he actually gives to the believer, when he is made willing to receive it. (3.) It must be imputed to us, or judicially *sustained* as ours in law. This act of *judicially sustaining* it is the consequence of both the former. This differs from the giving above mentioned, as a judicial sentence differs from an act of sovereign bounty; and it necessarily presupposes the other. Without such a deed of gift, this righteousness could not be ours indeed. And unless actually ours, it can never be justly sustained, or declared to be ours in law. And unless it is both ours indeed, and ours in law, it will avail us nothing to have an offer and exhibition of it made to us in the gospel.

5. The words import, that sinners are utterly insufficient, of themselves, to put on this robe, after it is brought to hand. If the prodigal had not laboured under some inability to put on the best robe upon himself, there had been no occasion for others to put it on him. So far are we from being able to work out a righteousness for ourselves, which may answer the demands of the law of God; that, even when such a righteousness is brought to our hand, we might perish, we certainly would perish for ever, before we could make such an appropriation of it as is necessary to our having an actual interest in it. Even that faith, by which we "put on the Lord Jesus Christ, *is not of ourselves*, it is the gift of God." If it were true, as some assert, that faith in Christ were the condition of the covenant of grace, and that condition to be performed by us, without any supernatural assistance;

ance; then we would be for ever incapable of salvation, and Christ would be dead in vain.

Finally, The words import, that all the servants of God, each in his proper station and place, are to use their utmost endeavours, that sinners may be clothed with this precious robe. The father of the prodigal does not bring forth the robe himself, and put it on; but orders the servants to do both. This shews plainly, that, though no creature can put the robe of righteousness upon any sinner, without the efficacious agency of God himself; yet every servant in God's family should be some way active about it. Angels, who are ministring spirits to God's adopted children, deal with them, in a manner of which we have very little knowledge, persuading them to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ." And even private Christians should take every opportunity of commending Christ and his righteousness to those around them: that, if possible, they may be the happy and *wise* instruments of *winning* some *souls*. But, in a special manner, it is incumbent upon ministers of the gospel to be active in this matter. The following things are expected of them to this effect.

(1.) They must employ themselves, "in season, out of season," in explaining the method of salvation by the imputed righteousness of Christ; in commending this righteousness to their hearers, as every way suitable to all their necessities, and to all the purposes of God's glory. This should be the main subject of all their preaching; the main scope and tendency of all their ministrations. Empty harangues of morality, such as might have been admired if coming from a Pagan philosopher, will not do. We cannot

cannot fulfil our ministry, by pompous declamations about the dignity of human nature, or the extensive powers of the human mind. We forfeit the name of gospel ministers, if we attempt to persuade men, that piety and virtue, faith, repentance and sincere obedience, all performed by our own natural abilities, are the proper means of recommending ourselves to God's favour. Every person, who takes upon him to preach the gospel, had need to be determined, like Paul, "to know nothing among *his people*, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified." (2.) They are to make a free and unconditional offer of Christ and his righteousness to every sinner, without exception; inviting every one to receive it, and, by faith, to *put it on*. We must not tell the world, that Christ "came not to call *self-righteous persons*, but *sensible sinners only to repentance*." The words of Christ to the Pharisees bore never such a meaning. We have no authority to require any previous qualifications about any of mankind, in order to his being welcome to come to Christ. This were to desire men to heal themselves, and then to come to the physician. Nay, the *righteousness* of God must be *brought near*, even to those "that are stout-hearted and far from righteousness." We are to consider ourselves as the *maidens* of divine Wisdom; and to publish the gospel offer, in the same universal and unlimited manner as she does. "Unto you, O men, I call: and my voice is to the sons of Adam *."

This call we are to enforce with all the arguments that the scriptures of truth, or the necessities of perishing souls, can suggest. We should set every motive

* Prov. viii. 4.

tive to the duty of embracing this call, in the clearest light; and insist upon it in the most pressing manner. This we are to do, not in any vain hope, that sinners are capable of being prevailed upon by moral suasion only, to put on the Lord Jesus Christ; but as knowing that the Spirit of God deals with men as with rational creatures, draws them efficaciously to Christ by means of such exhortations and arguments: making these the vehicles of that almighty power, by which alone they can be enabled to put on this *best robe*.

(3.) When exhorting sinners to believe in Christ, as *the LORD* their *righteousness*, we are to direct them to the only method in which it is possible for them to do so. As soon may a dead carcase rise out of its grave, at the call of some disconsolate friend who waters the sepulchre with his tears, and repeats the name of the deceased, as any sinner can exercise faith, or perform any other duty acceptably, without divine and supernatural assistance. All exhortations to duty, in which no eye is had to the strength of *the grace that is in Christ Jesus*, as alone sufficient to enable us to perform duty, are no better than Pharaoh's tyrannical edicts, that demanded the "full tale of bricks," but allowed no straw. When, therefore, we exhort them to believe, we must teach them to essay it, in imitation of the father of the lunatic, saying, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief."

Accordingly, we must publish those gracious promises, in which God has condescended to bind himself, actually to put this robe upon us; not only by imputing the righteousness of Christ to us, but likewise enabling us to receive it. We must commend
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the faithfulness of a promising God, and his ability to perform his engagements; and shew, that "he is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent."

(4.) We must, upon every proper occasion, put on this robe declaratively; intimating to the disconsolate Christian, that God has actually put it upon him. We are to lay before men those marks of a justified state which the word of God furnishes; that, by comparing themselves with these, the people of God may see themselves to be justified persons. This is not all. Nothing is more frequent than for real Christians, through the prevalence of temptation and of unbelief, not only to question their present interest in the righteousness of Christ, but even their access to it. They are ready to apprehend, like Cain, that their sin is greater than can be forgiven; and hence are in danger of giving themselves up to despair. A minister of the gospel, in dealing with such a person, may be able to discern about him those marks of a justified state, that he cannot, for the present, discern about himself; so that he may have no doubt of the person's being presently under this robe. In such a case, we may, and ought to say to the dejected soul, what the Prophet was commanded to say to Jerusalem; that his *warfare* is as good as *accomplished*; for his *iniquity is pardoned**. By this means peace may be restored to the troubled conscience, and the person may be helped to see that the *best robe* is already *put upon him*.

Here it must not be overlooked, that Christ, God's honorary servant, does much more, in execution of the

* Isa. xl. 2.

the order of the text, than any created servant can do, or all created servants together. He, in the exercise of his prophetic office, *brings forth the best robe*, by a full and free exhibition of it to sinners. This he did in his own person, while he was on earth; and he still does it by his written word, and by the voice of his servants. And, in the exercise of his kingly office, he both bestows the gift of faith, by which his righteousness is received, and passes that sentence of justification, by which it is judicially declared to be ours. Thus he who, by way of eminence, is called *God's servant*, does, in the fullest and properest sense, *bring forth the best robe*, to every returning prodigal, *and put it on him*.

III. WE now draw to a conclusion with some practical improvement of the subject. It affords us information in the following particulars.

I. It sets forth the shameful and deplorable condition in which mankind are by nature. We are all at a distance from God, enslaved by the devil; and employed in the basest drudgery, the feeding of our lusts. We are ready to perish for spiritual hunger; and when we think to satisfy ourselves with the husks of sublunary enjoyments, find nothing but disappointment upon disappointment. We likewise stand exposed to every storm, and to the scorn of all observers; without a rag to cover our nakedness, or to hide our shame. To crown all, we are utterly insensible of this last and greatest misery of our condition. It is remarkable, that notwithstanding all his complaints, whether of his condition or his conduct, whether uttered with himself in the far country, or to his father

at his return; we never hear a word from the prodigal about his nakedness, or the unseemliness of those rags with which he was covered: though this was a principal thing that affected his father, and the first thing that he provided against. A sinner, in a natural estate, may be sensible of his dangerous and perishing condition. He may see the folly of seeking happiness among sensual objects; and even be ready to acknowledge that he has sinned against Heaven and in God's sight: but never, till he is actually interested in the righteousness of Christ, having this *best robe brought forth* and put upon him, will he be properly sensible of the filthiness of his own righteousness; and convinced, that what he formerly counted his *glory* is really *the shame of his father's house*.

2. We have, in this subject, a clear discovery of the wonderful love and goodness, both of God the Father and of his eternal Son. The love of God appears wonderful, in that he deals with us, as the father of this prodigal is represented as dealing with him. Not only does he give us what we ask, and relieve us from all those miseries which we either feel or fear; but he begins with arraying us in the spotless robe of imputed righteousness, which is among the last things that a convinced sinner wishes for, or apprehends to be necessary for him. This robe he had provided and kept ready for us, before we had a thought of returning to him. The love of Christ is not less conspicuous in preparing such a robe, and working it out for us; at the expence not barely of the sweat of his face, but even of his heart's blood. The elder brother of this prodigal is represented as envying the reception that his father gave him; and so fondly selfish were

were the Jews, in their religion, that in them this figure had its antitype. But the glorious elder Brother of God's family is so far from being of this disposition, that when he saw us in our far country, rioting among harlots, and feeding the devil's swine, his bowels yearned upon us; himself undertook to bring us back to our Father's house: and, that we might appear in it, in a manner becoming the character of children, he purchased for us this robe, with his own precious life. Oh! what returns of gratitude and love are due for such unparalleled goodness!

We here see the brutish folly of legality; of all attempts "to establish *our* own righteousness, not submitting to the righteousness of God." Should not this prodigal have acted a foolish part, if, when he heard his father give out these orders, he had replied, 'There is no occasion for it; I am very well pleased with the clothes I wear, and am resolved that I will neither part with them, nor have them covered with any other: if I cannot be admitted into thy house in my present dress, I will not enter it at all; rather will I take my hazard of all the miseries of my former condition, than submit to be clothed with that *best robe* which thou hast ordered me?' But this is the very manner in which every person behaves, who unbelievingly rejects the righteousness of Christ; and persists in seeking righteousness, "as it were by the works of the law." And does not such a person justly deserve to be taken at his word, and given up to that ruin which would undoubtedly be the fruit of his mad choice? Oh! sinner, persist not in your folly, till God be provoked to do so.

4. We may here see when our humiliation for sin becomes so deep, as to be capable of acceptance in the presence of God. Never till our own righteousness be considered as serving to expose our shame, and we be convinced of the necessity of being arrayed with heaven's *best robe*. It is not enough that you be sensible of the sin and folly of your past course of life, and of the danger that you are in of perishing by the effects of it; you must consider your very *righteousnesses* as *filthy rags*. You must view all your obedience, whether performed before or after conversion, as serving to expose you to the stroke of God's wrath, instead of recommending you to his favour. You must learn to mourn before God for your righteousness, as a part of your sin; and for your trusting to your own righteousness, as one of the greatest sins that ever you committed, or ever were capable to commit.

Lastly, WE may here be informed how inconsistent it is, for a Christian to allow himself in any act of sin; to indulge any corruption, or to stop short of perfection in conformity to the image of Christ. What son of a king would satisfy himself with being covered with a magnificent robe without, while his other garments were nothing but rotten and stinking rags? You, believer, are a son of the King of heaven. The righteousness of Christ, as you heard, is your robe, or outer garment; your inner garment is your own personal inherent righteousness. And is it not fit that the one should correspond to the other? Every spot that remains upon your inner garment, is so much dishonour done to the robe that you wear. If you wish to ap-

pear like the family to which you belong, you must labour incessantly after perfection in holiness. You must *wash your robes daily, and make them white in the blood of the Lamb*; and give yourself no rest, till you be *all-glorious within*; as your garment, your robe is of wrought gold.

This subject may likewise assist us in the duty of self-examination. There is nothing about which you have more need to try yourself, than whether you have on this precious robe or not. That you may know it, ask your conscience the following questions.

1. Are you sensible that your own righteousness is but *filthy rags*; and cannot serve you for a robe in the presence of God? Are you convinced that you cannot deal with God in the way of the covenant of works; and yet sensible of your sinful attachment to it? Are you disposed to mourn for your legality; while you sincerely desire to renounce all dependence upon your own righteousness; and count it but dung that you may win Christ, and be clothed with the spotless robe of his righteousness? So was the Apostle Paul disposed; and so will every Christian.

2. Do you, indeed, consider this righteousness as the *best robe*? Have you seen its exact suitableness to your necessitous condition? Have you got a view of it, as securing the honour of all the divine perfections in the salvation of sinners? Is the method of free justification, through a crucified Redeemer, “the wisdom of God, and the power of God,” in your esteem? So it is “to every one that believeth.” And so it is to you, if you have any interest in it.

3. Have

3. Have you seen, with holy wonder, admiration and joy, this robe brought forth, in the dispensation of the gospel, and offered to you in particular? It is not enough that you have seen it in general, brought near to the stout-hearted, and them that are far from righteousness. If it is really put upon you, you have seen this to be your genuine character; and you have seen it brought near to you, as truly as to any other of the same denomination. And it has filled you with joy unspeakable, with unutterable wonder, that you, in particular, had access to have your nakedness covered by such a robe.

4. Are you presently disposed to receive it and to put it on? You have heard that it is to be received by faith. And the question that our Lord put to his disciples before his sufferings, he may be considered as putting to you, in the view of a solemn commemoration of his sufferings; "Do ye now believe *?" If ever you believed before, you doubtless have on this robe; and it shall never be put off again. But, if ever you have believed, the habit will continue with you, and you will be disposed to aim at the renewed exercise of it. Besides, it is not mainly your former attainments, but your present disposition and exercise, that you are called to examine. And if you are clothed with this robe, the present language of your heart will be, "In the LORD have I righteousness and strength."

5. In one word, Are you ever studious to have your inner garment more and more corresponding to this robe? Do you labour to have your own personal righteousness more and more perfect; that it may have

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* John xvi. 31.

more and more resemblance to the all-sufficient righteousness of your Surety? The beloved Apostle tells us, that "he who saith he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk even as he walked." If you are in him indeed, you will be sensible of the propriety of this; and will use your endeavours accordingly. That same law, in obedience to which Christ "fulfilled all righteousness," will constantly be the rule of your actions. The example of Christ will be considered as your pattern. And it will be your continual aim, to obey at all times, and to suffer when called to it, in the same manner as Christ did. If this is the case with you, it is the surest evidence that you can have, that this *best robe* has been actually *put upon* you.

THE subject likewise affords matter of exhortation.

Let me therefore conclude, by executing the commission, which the great Father of the heavenly family has condescended to give me, in the words of this text. In the name of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, I, though the most unworthy servant in the family, have the honour to bring forth this best robe; and make a free offer of it to every prodigal in this assembly. It is offered to young sinners, that are but setting out in their prodigal courses. It is offered to gray-headed sinners, who have grown old in the arms of harlots. It is offered to those mad sinners who still persist in their riotous living, without any concern about the consequences; and to those who begin to be in want, and to feel that universal famine, which prevails in the far country. It is offered to those who still continue to feed the devil's swine, employing themselves in making provision for the flesh, to fulfil
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it in the lusts thereof; as well as to those who begin to entertain thoughts of returning to their father's house. It is not only brought forth, and ready to be put upon all those who are already returned; it is brought abroad, even to the far country, to be put upon those who never yet had a thought of returning. If there is any other description of sinners, that has not yet been mentioned, if they only belong to the posterity of Adam, and have rational souls in union to their bodies; it is brought near to them also; and it shall be their own fault, if it is not just now put upon them.

As you tender your own happiness, or the glory of the God that made you; as you wish to have your shame covered, or to escape the storm and tempest of God's anger; as you desire to be admitted into his family, or to partake in the privileges of his children; if you are in earnest about appearing in a proper garb at the table of God now, or at the tribunal of God in a little; Oh! beware of rejecting or refusing it. Let every person that hears me be concerned, *now* to put it on. You who intend to be communicants, put it on: it is the only garment, in which you can be accepted, when *the King* shall come *in to see the guests*. You who wish to partake in that *feast of fat things* which stands on the gospel table, put it on: this is the marriage-supper which the King of heaven has made for his Son; and this *best robe* is the wedding-garment, which the Bridegroom himself has provided. You who have been adorned with it heretofore, put it on anew, by renewed actings of faith. And you who continue strangers to it, be persuaded to put it on; it is the only garment in which you can stand

with acceptance before God. Even you, who care for none of these things, are invited to put it on: a time is fast approaching, when you must either be clothed with this robe, or clothed, as enemies to Christ, with everlasting shame.

Oh! that I had the tongue of an angel, to commend this robe unto you; and to persuade you to consult your own happiness, by putting it on. Rather, Oh! that he who has "the tongue of the learned," would himself commend it to your hearts; and make me the happy instrument of conveying his powerful voice to you! Consider your naked and exposed condition without it. Consider the excellency of it; it is heaven's best robe. Consider the uselessness of every other garment; all other coverings are too narrow for a man to wrap himself in. Consider the absolute impossibility of entering the house of God without it. Consider the deplorable condition, to which you must be reduced in a little, if you persist in rejecting it. All the shame of your nakedness will be discovered, before an assembled world; and, when God "shall rain fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest upon every impenitent sinner;" that dreadful storm will irrecoverably sweep you into "the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." In one word, consider that indefeasible right which you will have, if once this robe is put upon you, in "all the fulness of God, as it dwells in Christ bodily." It will entitle you to God's protection from all your enemies; to God's blessing upon all your temporal, and all your spiritual privileges; to God's presence with you, under all the trials of life; to

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a complete deliverance from the sting of death; and to a dwelling "in the house of the Lord for ever." For thus saith he, who prepared this robe for you, and by whose authority we bring it near unto you,—
"Seek first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof; and all other things shall be added unto you."

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S E R M O N XII.

The returning Prodigal's Hand adorned.

LUKE XV. 22.

—AND PUT A RING ON HIS HAND.

AS all mankind are, by nature, in a state of distance from God, and are the children of the devil; so we have all cast off the badge of God's children, and openly bear the mark of the family to which we belong. But when sinners are brought back to God's family, they receive his seal in their foreheads. The spirit, under whose influence they act, gives a manifest indication to what family they belong. This is what our Lord intimates in these words; which contain the the second branch of those orders which were given, by the father of the prodigal, to the servants of the family, concerning him. In them we may observe, more particularly,

1. The ornament which was appointed for the returning prodigal, *a ring*. When persons of rank are reduced to straitening circumstances, the last things that

that they usually part with are their jewels; especially such as are peculiar to the family of which they spring, and serve to illustrate their pedigree. This unhappy man had forfeited even his jewels; and had not so much as reserved the family ring.

2. The place where this ornament was to be worn; *on his hand*. As early as the days of Abraham, it was usual to wear rings, or bracelets on the hand; for his servants put a pair of bracelets on the hands of Rebekah *. Neither were they worn by women only; but also by men: as is plain from the instance of Judah, who left his bracelets with Tamar †.

It seems to be agreed, among interpreters of sound reputation, that the ring here spoken of is emblematical of the *gift of the Holy Ghost*; which every sinner receives in the day of his restoration to God; and which is of the same use to them as such rings were to the children of great men in those days. Hence we take the sense of the text to be, that

Every penitent sinner, upon returning to the house and family of God, is sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.

ALL that we now propose is only to enquire, Why the gift of the Holy Spirit is compared to a ring on the hand; and then to conclude with a few inferences.

The Holy Spirit, which they who believe on Christ receive in the day of their restoration to God's family, may be compared to a ring on the hand, on the following accounts.

1. The

* Gen. xxiv. 22.

† Gen. xxxviii. 18.

1. The rings which were worn in those eastern countries were considered, by persons of distinction, as their principal ornaments. So is the Holy Ghost to the Christian. In our natural estate, every thing about us is filthy and polluted. Ourselves are loathsome in the sight of God, and incapable of appearing with acceptance in his presence. But when the Holy Spirit is given us, the comeliness of God is put upon us; we are freed, in some degree, from our natural defilement, and made fit for standing in God's holy place. Not only is the Spirit himself an ornament to us; he is the author of all those graces, which are as so many jewels, with which the Christian is adorned, "as a bride is adorned for her husband."

2. Those rings were only worn by the rich and great. The poor, however fond they may be of ornaments, are obliged to repress such desires; and either to be content with necessaries, or else to satisfy themselves with ornaments of a coarser kind. Gold rings and bracelets are not within their reach. So while persons continue in that impoverished state in which they were by nature, they are strangers to the inhabitation of the Spirit of God. This privilege is, to the Christian, a sure sign that he is enriched for eternity. He could not have enjoyed it, unless he had hearkened to the call which infinite wisdom addresses to all who hear the gospel. And all who comply with this call are convinced, by their own happy experience, that "riches and honour are with *her*: even "durable riches and righteousness."

3. Such rings were oft given by princes to their prime ministers, and chief favourites, as a pledge of their favour, and of the trust that they reposed in them.

them. Thus, when Pharaoh advanced Joseph to be lord of all the land of Egypt, he “took his ring off his hand, and put it on the hand of Joseph*.” On the same account did king Ahasuerus, long afterwards, give his ring to Haman; and upon his disgrace, to Mordecai the Jew †. In like manner, the Holy Ghost is bestowed, by God, upon none but favourites. The moment that a person is delivered from that wrath and curse under which he formerly lay, and restored to the favour of God, this unspeakable gift is bestowed upon him; and not before. Every person who has it, may consider it as an inviolable pledge of God’s love. And every fruit of the Spirit appearing about him, he may look upon as an incontestible evidence that he is a person in favour at the court of heaven.

4. These rings usually contained the armorial bearings of the person who bestowed, or of the person that wore them: these, you know, are the honours of a family, the badges of its nobility. And the Holy Spirit, given to the Christian in the day of his conversion, is the badge of his spiritual nobility; the sign of his restoration to all the honours of God’s family. When a man is attainted for any crime, the arms of the family are broken; he is stripped of all his honours, and his blood is rendered infamous in all after generations. This is the very case with all Adam’s posterity, in a spiritual sense. Our first father, being “in honour, abode not.” By his unprovoked rebellion, he forfeited all his honour, as well as his happiness. His blood was attainted; and all his posterity are covered with dishonour and infamy. But, upon our return to God, we are not only restored to all the honour

* Gen. xli. 42.

† Esth. iii. 10. & viii. 2.

honour that we forfeited, we are even invested with new honours, of which none of our family would have been capable, if the forfeiture had not taken place. We are admitted to be members of God's family. He gives us his own ring, when we receive the Holy Ghost; and he dwells in us, as a sure evidence that we are advanced to all the dignity, and entitled to all the honours that belong to the sons of the Most High.

5. These rings usually contained the seal which was used by the person to whom they belonged. It is still usual, you know, for persons of distinction to have their coats of arms cut upon a seal, which they use in transacting business; and annex to such deeds as they intend should be pleadable in law. So it was as early as the reign of Ahasuerus king of Persia. Accordingly, the ring which he gave to Haman contained the king's seal; and when he wrote the bloody decree, for exterminating the Jews, he had no more to do, for rendering it authentic, but to seal it with "the king's ring," which he wore. In like manner, the Holy Spirit is the seal of God's family. By it is every deed stamped, that God intends to be pleadable in law; and nothing pretending to contain any declaration of the will of God, can be considered as authentic without it. By it is every thing marked that truly belongs to God, and every person; so that nothing that wants this mark can be considered as any of his. By this are the children of God distinguished from all others. The sacraments are the outward and visible seals of God's covenant; and by them his people are confirmed in faith and holiness, and in respect of their interest in all the benefits of the covenant. But the
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Holy Spirit is the inward and invisible seal, without which the others can have no saving efficacy. It is only by the "Holy Spirit of God," that Christians are effectually "sealed unto the day of redemption *."

6. When a ring is worn on the hand, it will scarcely be possible for the person to do any piece of work, or to handle any thing, without touching it with the ring that he wears. And, if the materials are capable of receiving it, the impression of the ring will probably be left upon what the person has among his hands. In this respect also the comparison holds just. The Holy Spirit, who is given to the Christian in the day of his union to Christ, influences all the work of his hands. And it is only in proportion as they are so influenced, that his works are capable of being accepted in the sight of God. Every act of acceptable obedience is a fruit of the Spirit. What the Christian puts his hand to, is stamped with the impression of this spiritual ring. It ascends to God, through the mediation of Jesus Christ, bearing his own seal upon it; and hence it becomes a "spiritual sacrifice, holy and acceptable, through Jesus Christ." As the Holy Ghost renews the nature of the Christian, after the image of him that created him; so it is under *his* influence that he is enabled to conform his practice to the law of God, and to "walk in newness of life."

THIS subject affords us the following practical inferences.

1. The doctrine of justification by imputed righteousness is far from encouraging licentiousness, as its enemies falsely suggest. Indeed, this doctrine, like every

* Eph. iv. 30.

every other, is capable of being abused by the corruption of men. And it has been abused to the encouragement of licentiousness. As early as the days of the Apostle Jude, there were some who turned "the grace of God into lasciviousness." And no wonder that there should be some such in the world still. But they who allow themselves to make such an use of this doctrine, must be persons who continue strangers to any experimental acquaintance with the truth of it. Every person who is clothed with the robe of imputed righteousness, has his hand adorned, at the same time, with God's family-ring; that is, he is endued with the gift of the Holy Ghost. By his saving operation, the person is gradually cleansed from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. Not only is he restrained from licentious courses, but his disposition towards them is gradually rooted out; and he is made holy in heart, and "in all manner of conversation." The man who vainly hopes to be saved by his own works, is restrained from outward acts of sin by the force of arguments; and experience may teach him, that arguments have very little force against the corrupt bias of nature in its lapsed state. But the man who is "justified freely by God's grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," is restrained from all licentiousness by almighty power. And he cannot sin habitually; because "the seed of God abideth in him."

2. Even in the communication of the gift of the Holy Ghost, the servants of God may be some way instrumental. You see the servants are ordered to "put a ring on *the prodigal's* hand;" as well as to "bring forth the best robe, and put it on him." And, though

though we must not look upon every circumstance in any parable as significative ; yet this seems evidently to point out both the duty and the privilege of those who are honoured to be servants in God's family ; especially of ministers of the gospel. We saw that there is much incumbent upon them, relative to the clothing of sinners with the robe of righteousness. And they have not less concern with their being brought to receive the Holy Ghost. Indeed, the actual bestowing of this gift must be the work of God ; but so must the actual imputation of Christ's righteousness. And it is the design of the gospel, which we are called to dispense, to exhibit to every sinner the gift of the Spirit, as well as the gift of righteousness ; to invite sinners to receive it ; to declare, that, as men, " being evil, " know how to give good gifts to *their* children, much " more will *our* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him ;" and to publish all those salutary truths, and precious promises, which the Spirit of God makes use of as vehicles for conveying himself, (if the expression may be allowed), into the hearts of his people. Paul appeals to the Galatians, if they had not " received the Spirit by the hearing of faith." And if the hearing of faith is the mean by which the Spirit is received ; surely they who are employed in publishing the doctrines of faith, must have some kind of instrumentality in this matter.

3. The best mark of a justified state is the person's being endued with the saving inhabitation of the Spirit. In vain does any person pretend to be clothed with the *best robe*, unless he has also this spiritual *ring on his band*. For " if any man have not the Spirit " of Christ, he is none of his *." On the other hand, it

* Rom. viii. 9.

it is equally vain and groundless for any person, who enjoys the inhabitation of the Spirit of Christ, and lives under his influence, to be afraid of condemnation; or to look upon himself as a stranger to imputed righteousness; for it is given as the distinguishing characteristic of "them who are in Christ Jesus," and to whom "there is no condemnation, *that they walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit* *."

But perhaps it may be considered, and not without some justice, as a pretty difficult matter, for a person to know whether he has the Spirit of Christ or not. If you really wish to examine yourself in relation to this matter; we are warranted to inform you, that you are hitherto strangers to this privilege; unless you are disposed to consider the inhabitation of the Spirit, as your chief ornament, as the seal of your union to Christ, and as the pledge of the heavenly inheritance. If the holy Spirit really dwells in you, you have enjoyed his salutary influences; as a spirit of wisdom and understanding, enlightening your minds in the knowledge of God, of his Son Jesus Christ, and of the method of salvation through him; as a "spirit of grace and supplication;" enabling you to *look upon* Christ as *pierced* by your sin, and "to mourn for him;" as a spirit of prayer, making *intercession* within you, and enabling you to pour out your hearts before God, "with groanings which cannot be uttered;" as a spirit of adoption, enabling you to cry to God, *Abba, Father*: and as a spirit of holiness, powerfully inclining you to press after more and more conformity to the image of God; to die more and more unto sin, and live unto righteousness. If this

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* Rom. viii. 1.

is the case, the fruits of the Spirit will appear about you; in the exercise of the graces of faith, love, joy, in the Holy Ghost, and all the rest, which he implants in his people; and in the practice of all those holy duties, by which you may glorify God in the world. You will be concerned, not only to be much engaged in those duties of religious worship, which you owe to God himself; but also to have "holiness to the "Lord" inscribed upon all the duties of your ordinary calling, and upon every part of your conduct towards fellow-creatures. Thus, upon every thing that you put your hand to, you will leave the impression of this precious ring, which your Father has put upon your hand.

4. To conclude, We may see how much it is the interest of every person who hears the gospel to have this ring on his hand; or, in other words, to enjoy the presence and inhabitation of the Spirit of Christ. If you wish to enjoy this blessing, and therein to have a pledge of your restoration to God's favour, of your advancement to the dignity of sonship in his family, and of your interest in the family inheritance; pray for it. Christ himself has assured us that no earthly father can be so willing to "give good gifts to his "children, as *our* heavenly Father *is to* give the Holy "Spirit to them that ask him." If you cannot ask him, do but give him admittance. He "stands at "your door and knocks," in the dispensation of the gospel, ready to enter, and to dwell with you, if you do not keep him out by your unbelief. Beware of resisting his motions, and thereby provoking him to withdraw them. Woe will be to you indeed, if he

finally depart from you. But if you are enabled to give him admittance, he will continue to dwell in you; and will be “as a well of water springing up to everlasting life.” He will “guide you into all truth,” while you continue in this world. And he will not leave you till he has finally brought you home to the place where Christ is, that ye may behold his glory.

S E R.

S E R M O N XIII.

The returning Prodigal's Feet shod; or, The Penitent Sinner furnished with the Preparation of the Gospel of Peace.

LUKE XV. 23.

—AND PUT SHOES ON HIS FEET.

THESSE words contain the third branch of the orders, which were given to the servants of the family, concerning the prodigal, at his return. His shoes, as well as every thing else that he possessed, had been forfeited in the *far country*, to satisfy a luxurious appetite. He had accomplished a long journey, in returning to his father's house. And now his feet were sore beaten with the way, and miserably scorched with the heat of the sun, so that he could neither walk nor stand. To remedy this, his affectionate father gives orders to "put shoes on his feet."

That we may understand what our Lord means to represent by the emblem of the shoes that were ordered for the prodigal; we may compare this text with that of the Apostle Paul, where he exhorts his

Ephesians, to have their "feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace *:" by which we are to understand that habitual preparation, or readiness for every thing that we have to meet with in the course of providence, which the gospel of peace recommends, and with which it furnishes every one that believes it. We are all engaged in a spiritual journey. The people of God are so in a peculiar sense. There are a variety of difficulties to be surmounted, a variety of hardships to be endured, while we are in the way. By reason of these, the Christian is often in danger of becoming like a person whose feet are so beaten, bruised, and wounded, that he cannot prosecute his journey. To defend us against all real injury by those hardships and difficulties; to ease the smart of those wounds which we may have already received; and to enable us to prosecute our journey, however rough the way may be; nothing can have such a tendency, under the influence of the divine blessing, as "the preparation of the gospel of peace." This, therefore, is the shoes intended in this text, as well as in the parallel text just quoted. And the sense of the words may be summed up in the following proposition.

It is the express will and pleasure of God, the Father of the whole family of grace, that every returning prodigal have his feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Not only has he commanded us to provide ourselves with such shoes. This he knows we cannot do of ourselves. He has them ready in his house; he has given commandment to bring them forth,

* Eph. vi. 15.

forth, and put them upon us; and the moment that we return to his family we shall find ourselves furnished with them.

IN speaking from this subject, it is only proposed,

I. To enquire, a little more particularly, What is that preparation which is represented by the shoes that were appointed for the prodigal's feet?

II. To consider how these shoes are to be put on? In other words, How this preparation may be attained? And then,

III. To apply the whole.

I. IN relation to the first of these, we may observe, that there are, in general, four things for which we stand in special need to be always ready.

1. We should always be prepared for the acceptable performance of every piece of work that God calls, or may call for, at our hand. Every Christian has some piece of work assigned him, for the glory of God in the world; in the performance of which he must occupy his talents, in view of the Master's coming. And this is comprehensive of every duty required in the law of God, and every thing to which we have the call of God, in the course of providence. We should therefore live in constant readiness, not only to perform every religious and moral duty in its proper season, but also to follow every call of Providence; and so to accomplish every piece of work, however difficult, that our God and Father may see meet to employ us in.

In order hereunto, the following things are continually necessary: (1.) A proper acquaintance both

with the word of God and with the *language* of Providence ; that, by comparing both together, we may be in case to set forward to our work, in the firm persuasion that we do our duty. When a person does any thing, even though it be lawful and warrantable in itself, without a well-grounded persuasion that it is so ; to him it is sin. A due respect to the authority of God requiring it, is a necessary ingredient of all acceptable obedience ; for “ whatsoever is not of faith “ is sin *.” (2.) A due sense of the importance of the work in which we are engaged, and of the difficulty of performing it acceptably. As nothing lays us more open to temptation to the commission of any sin, than an apprehension that it is a little one ; so nothing has a greater tendency to make us remiss in the performance of any duty, than our entertaining a thought that the duty is of small moment, or is easily accomplished. (3.) A deep sense of our own weakness, and utter insufficiency for the acceptable performance of any duty. Confidence in his own strength, is almost a constant prelude to a Christian’s fall. (4.) Some acquaintance with that inexhaustible fulness of grace and strength, which is lodged in the hand of Christ, and of our access to it. No person can rationally set about any enterprize without some probable hope of success. And, seeing we can have no hope of success in any duty from our own strength, it is necessary that we have some competent knowledge of that stock of spiritual strength which God has laid up in Christ : And, (5.) Such dependence upon that fulness, and upon the faithfulness of him who has promised to furnish us with supplies from thence,

as

* Rom. xiv. ult.

as may encourage us to set forward, under a sense of our being capable to do nothing of ourselves. Every Christian, in setting about every duty, is to consider himself as going to perform what is to him an impossibility. But he knows, that what is impossible to him, is possible and easy with God. He knows who has said, "My grace is sufficient for thee, and my strength is made perfect in weakness *." And, though he does not yet feel the promise accomplished, nor himself possessed of the promised strength; yet he dares set forward, in the faith that this strength shall be communicated to him in the moment of need. Like the man with the withered hand, he sets himself to obey the divine command; though sensible, that, in present circumstances, it is beyond his power; trusting, that he who has given the command will also give power to obey it. Unless this is habitually the case with *you*, you cannot be rightly prepared for any piece of work or duty; you are hitherto a stranger to the shoes mentioned in the text.

2. We should likewise be in a state of constant readiness for prosecuting our spiritual warfare, either by way of defence or assault, according to whatever orders we may receive from the "Captain of our salvation." Shoes are peculiarly necessary for a soldier, not only to preserve his feet from cold and from bruises, in marching and counter-marching; but also to secure them from those weapons that the enemy may strow in the way, purposely to wound his feet, and disable him for the service. Every Christian is a soldier; and the shoes mentioned in the text are expressly recommended as one branch of his armour. And

* 2 Cor. xii. 9.

And unless we are in a state of habitual preparation, and readiness for every event of the war, it is impossible that we can prosecute it to advantage.

For this purpose, it is necessary, (1.) That we have a rooted principle of enmity against Satan, and all the interests of his kingdom, within us and without us. When this war was first proclaimed, God promised to put such an enmity into the hearts of all the seed of the woman. And while the love of sin remains, or where a person is not a sincere enemy to Satan's interests, it is impossible that ever he will exert himself in the war. (2.) That we have a superlative love to Christ, and the interests of his kingdom. Unless a man's love to his king and country be so strong, as even to balance the principle of self-preservation, he will never willingly expose himself to danger for their sake; consequently he is unfit for the soldier's calling. And we can never exert ourselves, in behalf of Christ or his interests, against the common enemy, till we love him to such a degree, as to be willing to expose ourselves to any possible hazard for his sake. (3.) That we be duly sensible of the enemy's strength and cunning, and of our own weakness and folly. Nothing is more dangerous for a warrior, than to despise his enemy, or to be confident in the superiority of his own strength. Much more is this the case in this warfare; where the soldiers of Christ are a composition of weakness and folly, while all the power and policy of hell are employed against them. (4.) That we be ever watchful. So Christ himself exhorts, "What I say unto you, I say unto all, watch *." In every army some are appointed to watch and keep guard,

* Mark xiii. 37.

guard, while the rest sleep. But in times of extreme danger, the whole army must watch, and every soldier must rest on his arms. This is always the case in the camp of Christ. "Let us not, *then*, sleep as do others; but let us *always* watch and be sober." (5.) That we have always our armour on. As our Lord sends not any a warfare on his charges, so neither does he send any to the war without armour; both offensive and defensive. We are presented with a complete set by the Apostle Paul; and, if we would war successfully, we must comply with his exhortation, by putting and keeping it on *. (6.) We must daily endeavour to learn the use of our armour; that, when we are called to use it, we may not find ourselves like David, who could not go against the Philistine in the king's armour, because he had not proved it. Even in time of peace, soldiers exercise themselves to the use of their arms. And we will never be expert in repelling the assaults of the enemy, unless we live daily in the exercise of those graces that are peculiarly necessary in a time of temptation. (7.) Our eye should be continually upon our colours; that we may be ready to follow them, or to defend them, as circumstances require. The colours, you know, are the principal means of directing the motions of an army in the time of action. And for this, among other reasons, the enemy's attacks are chiefly directed against them. We also have our colours; the *banner* which God has "given to be displayed because of truth." Our eye should be continually upon the *present truth*, the testimony of the day; that we may keep the word of Christ's patience; for
against

* Eph. vi. 12,—13.

against it particularly are the enemy's attacks directed. (8.) We should be ever attentive to the motions of our Captain general, and to the orders that he issues; that we may be ever ready to obey him, and to "follow him, whithersoever he goeth." In a word, We must have a constant dependence upon him for making us successful in the war; and a continual assurance that he will bring us off conquerors at the last. A man would not hesitate to expose himself to the greatest danger, or to undertake the hardest piece of service, if he were assured of success before hand. This cannot be the case in any other warfare; but such assurance we have. The faithfulness of God is engaged to "bruise Satan under *our* feet shortly;" and to "drive out *all enemies* before us, by little and "little." Were this always in our eye, there is no piece of service, to which our Captain might appoint us, for which we would not be habitually ready.

3. We need to be always ready for a profitable enjoyment of our privileges, and of the benefits which God bestows upon us, whether in the dispensations of grace, or of common providence. We are as much in danger of miscarrying in prosperity as under adversity. And when we are loaded with God's benefits before we are duly prepared for them, they often prove a curse in the event rather than a blessing. With regard to spiritual benefits, there are some of them for which we are no otherwise prepared than by our extreme need of them; such are regeneration and justification. But there are others of such a nature, that we can neither be profited by them, nor can we glorify God in the use of them; unless we are, in some measure, prepared for them before hand.

This

This is the case with many of those blessings which are conferred upon Christians in the progress of sanctification. It is peculiarly so with regard to those precious interviews with God, which they are allowed to enjoy in their attendance upon divine ordinances.

To prepare us for these, and for every other branch of prosperity, spiritual or temporal, the following things will be found of special use. (1.) A deep and humbling sense of our own sin and unworthiness; that we are "less than the least of all *God's* mercies." That he may not give his *glory to another*, the Lord will always have his people convinced, that what he does for their advantage he does not for their sakes. "Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel *." When a person imagines that his own merit or industry has procured what he enjoys, he will ever be disposed to assume to himself a part of the praise that is due to God. And therefore, when God bestows any thing in mercy, he first brings the person to be sensible that he must owe it to mercy and free grace only. (2.) Some degree of resignation and denial, not only to those benefits that are merely of a temporal nature, but even to those spiritual enjoyments which are to be attained in this life. When young David was anointed to the kingdom, he was doubtless elated with the hopes of his future advancement, and thought himself somewhat. But before he was put in possession of it, God, by casting a variety of disappointments in his way, and subjecting him to various reverses of fortune, brought his soul to be "even as a weaned child;" capable of living

* Ezek. xxxvi. 32.

ving content and happy, either with the kingdom or without it, as God saw meet. To the same disposition must every Christian be brought, with regard to all that can be enjoyed in time. And if he is brought to that temper before the enjoyment of what he seeks and hopes for, he will find an unspeakable advantage in it. (3.) Some competent degree of mortification. As far as pride, or any other corruption, remains unmortified, even Christians themselves will be in danger of abusing their privileges, and turning them to be food for their lusts. Uzziah, Hezekiah, and others, have left us mournful evidence how far worldly prosperity is liable to be so abused. And that spiritual attainments are not less so, the example of Paul himself may convince us. His exaltation *to the third heavens*, and the *abundance of revelations* which he there enjoyed, made a *messenger of Satan*, and a severe buffeting necessary; otherwise he was in danger of being *exalted above measure*. The more that corruption is mortified before enjoyment, the less buffeting will be necessary after it. (4.) The setting of our hearts and affections upon the things that are above, in preference to all that can be enjoyed on the earth. So far as this is wanting, we will always be in danger of resting in what we enjoy here, and acting as if we thought this our home. This is one reason why the prosperity of the people of God in this world is often so short-lived. They become secure, and dream of building tabernacles, as if their journey were ended; and they need a new trial, to put them in mind that this is not their rest. But if our hearts and our conversation were in heaven, as they ought; if we considered “the things that are not seen, and
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“are eternal,” as our only portion; and were daily pressing forward in the hope of enjoying complete happiness *there only*; we would often be in less danger of abusing our prosperity; and a state of adversity would be less necessary.

4. We need to be always prepared for those trials and afflictions, that God may be pleased to lay upon us in this life, and for death itself in the end. No man can expect to be without afflictions in this world. Neither can any man foresee what trials are awaiting him, or from what quarter they shall come. The people of God have a double share of them. Their heavenly Father will not suffer them to be without chastisement, so long as they are not without sin. The world hates them, because they are not of the world. And Satan will ever do them all the mischief for which he can obtain a permission. Thus they are often “plagued all the day long, and chastened every morning;” while wicked men are suffered to prosper at their will. When public trials are inflicted, they seldom escape a share in them; yea, “judgment *often* begins at the house of God.” And every Christian, as well as every stranger to Christ, has death to meet with in the event; for “there is no difference in that warfare.” But it is impossible to bear any trial, so as to reap spiritual advantage by it, or to give glory to God under it, unless we are some way prepared for it before hand. As you may all lay your account with personal trials, and more especially, as God is loudly threatening to visit us with public calamities; you may consider him as addressing every one of you, in the words which he spoke to Israel by the prophet Amos, “Because I will do this unto thee,
“ prepar :

“prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.” What preparation is necessary in the prospect of coming trials, we shall endeavour to point out, in the form of an exhortation, in the following particulars.

(1.) Above all things, be concerned to be in Christ, and so in a state of peace with God. Then, however severe your afflictions may be, they shall neither be fastened upon you by the curse of God, nor shall they be embittered by vindictive wrath. Christ is that hiding-place, without which no man can be safe in a time of the greatest prosperity; and in which every person is safe in the time of the sorest adversity. Here you can never be wholly unprepared for the worst that can happen, however unexpected it may be; and any where else you can be ready for no trial, however light it may seem, or however much you was aware of its coming. This is that chamber of safety, which is recommended by the Spirit of God himself in such a time as this. “Come, my people, “enter thou into thy chambers; shut the doors about “thee; hide thyself, as it were for a little moment, “until the indignation be overpast. For behold the “LORD cometh out of his place, to punish the inha- “bitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth “also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover “her slain*.”

(2.) Maintain a constant impression of your own demerit, and of the many just causes of the Lord’s contending against you. The man who is not sensible of any cause, why God should plead a controversy with him, cannot be supposed to lay his account with the pleading of it. If it is pleaded, it will be
matter

* Isa. xxvi. 20, 21.

matter of surprize to him ; and he will be in danger of charging God both with folly and injustice. But he whose sin is ever before him, and who knows the exceeding sinfulness of it, will ever be sensible that God may justly contend against him on account of it. If he does contend, the man is in case to ascribe righteousness to him, while he takes shame and confusion of face to himself. And, instead of finding fault with God's procedure, as too severe, he is ready to acknowledge that he is punished less than his iniquities deserve ; and to say, with the church, " It is of the Lord's mercies, that we are not consumed, and because his compassions fail not *."

(3.) Live always denied to the world, and all that it contains. The greatest part of the afflictions of this life arises from our being deprived of some supposed good, that we either enjoyed or hoped for. When we lose our health, our reputation, our worldly substance, or our earthly relations ; these are among the severest trials that we meet with. And never will you be properly ready to bear any such trial, till you be convinced that all sublunary enjoyments are but vanity, and give over looking for solid or lasting happiness in them. As the child, while it continues to suck, will not be pleased without the breast, whatever else you give it, but after it is weaned, can be as happy without it, as it was with it before ; so you, while you continue unduly attached to any earthly good, will find it impossible either to be happy or content without it. Indeed, you can neither enjoy it, nor part with it in a becoming manner, till your soul be, with regard to it, " even as a weaned child." You
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* Lam. iii. 22.

are incapable of behaving as you ought, either when you have it or when you come to want it, unless you are ready and willing either to have it or to want it, as God sees best for you.

(4.) Pretend not to be a Christian without first counting the cost; nor think of following Christ, and becoming his disciple, without *taking up your cross*. Our Lord does not mean to entice any to his service by false and delusive hopes, that he never intends to gratify. He, therefore, assures us, in the entry, that through "much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom." He that would be his disciple must "take up his cross, and follow *him*;" that is, he must lay his account with trials, not only in the way of following Christ, but even on that account. Not only must he suffer reproaches, cruel mockings, and some lesser evils; he must look for the severest persecutions, if God be pleased so to permit; even to the ignominious death of the cross. And he must be resolved, that, if ever it is put to his choice, he will take his cross on his shoulder, as malefactors used to do, and carry it forth to the place of execution, in order to be immediately nailed to it; rather than escape that barbarous death, by turning his back upon Christ, in whole or in part. If a man looks only for sunshine and fair weather in the way of godliness, he must needs be surprised, and disconcerted, and discouraged, when he sees the clouds to gather, and feels the storms to blow. But the man who expected no better, "thinks it not strange concerning the fiery trial; *because he knows* that the same afflictions are accomplished in *his* brethren that are in the world." He considers what he suffers as an accomplishment

accomplishment of the word of God : and instead of being thereby discouraged, he considers it as a pledge, that “ not one good word *shall* fail, of all that the “ Lord hath spoken.”

(5.) Beware of ever giving yourself up to security, or putting the evil day far away. If you have long enjoyed prosperity, dream not that you shall enjoy it always. The longer it has continued with you, the nearer it is to a period ; and you should be so much the more ready for the approach of adversity. If you have been long under trouble, and now have obtained a little revival ; that must not be considered as an evidence that you will enjoy any long exemption. On the contrary, for ought you know, God may have visited you with lesser trials heretofore, with a view to prepare you for heavier trials that may be yet a-coming. If ever you imagine that your “ mountain stands strong, “ and *you* shall not be moved,” even though you impute it to the love of God ; you may be sure that it is but a little, if indeed you are an object of God’s love, when your *prosperous state* will be *turned into misery*. And the less the change was looked for, the more difficult will you find it to behave properly under it. Job found it no easy matter to be rightly exercised under his affliction, though he met with nothing but what he had *greatly feared*. How much more would it have been so, if he had been *in security*, or *in rest*, or *in quiet*, when *trouble came* * ?

(6.) Be ever denied to your own will, and let it be sunk in the will of God. Christ himself is our best pattern in this, as well as in every other branch of the

Christian practice. Though he prayed most fervently, and repeated his prayer thrice in the same words, about a matter that was of the greatest importance to him, yet he concludes the whole with this memorable expression, "Nevertheless, not my will, but thy will be done." A similar prayer he taught his disciples; and every genuine disciple will be concerned to use it in sincerity. If such a prayer became his lips, whose will could never be contrary to his Father's; how much more does it become us, whose wills are so perverted, that we are incapable of chusing or following, of ourselves, either what tends to the glory of God, or what tends to our own advantage? Our will must needs be crossed, so far as it is contrary to the will of God; for his "counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure." The man who has not learned to submit his will to God's, must needs rage, when his schemes are disconcerted, "like a wild bull in a net." But he who has learned to bring his own will into subjection to the will of God, will be in a condition to hear the heaviest tidings without undue emotion; and without any other reply, than that which old Eli made to Samuel's message, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good."

(7.) Keep it ever in mind, that you are not your own, but bought with an immense price; and, by your own voluntary deed, given away and devoted unto God. While a man considers himself as his own master, he doubtless will think that he has a right to dispose of himself at his own pleasure. And no wonder that he take it amiss, when he finds his lot otherwise disposed than he wished it to be. But it is impossible

possible for any person to be a Christian, without having dedicated himself to God as one of his people; because such a dedication is necessarily included in his acceptance of the covenant of grace. And after having devoted himself to God, he cannot reasonably find fault, because God disposes of him as his own; even though it should be in a manner not very agreeable to his inclinations. If you would always maintain a due impression of this, you would have a ready answer to all temptations to repining under trials, as well as to all other temptations to sin of any kind, in the words of Jephtha the Gileadite; “ I have opened
“ my mouth to the Lord; and I cannot go back*.”

(8.) Learn always to consider your own interest as subordinate to the glory of God. This is the ultimate end of your being. It is the ultimate end of all God’s dealings with you. And, so far as you are exercised like your profession, it will be your ultimate aim in all your actions. Satan could never fall upon a more effectual method, to baffle the whole design of divine revelation, than to persuade men, that self-love, interest, or pleasure is, or ought to be, the principal motive of religious actions. Nor did he ever fall upon a scheme better calculated to establish his own kingdom, upon the ruins of the kingdom of Christ, in this world, than the selfish mode of religion which he is now endeavouring to introduce. So far as that prevails, the consequence must be, that whenever the methods that God takes with us, or the duties that he requires of us, are inconsistent with our mistaken and contracted views of interest; the latter must preponderate with us, to the neglect of our duty, and to the

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* Judg. xi. 39.

condemning of God's dispensations. It will never be an easy matter to persuade carnal sense, or bewildered reason, that trials and afflictions are not contrary to the person's interest. And unless he has learned to acquiesce in them, from a persuasion that they are for God's glory, and from a superior regard to that, as the end of his being; he will never find it easy to be reconciled to them.

(9.) Study always to live by faith, and to view every dispensation of Providence in the light of the word of God. It is not in human nature; perhaps it is not consistent with any nature; for a person to acquiesce, with satisfaction, in what he really believes to be against him. Though our own interest ought never to be our ultimate end, it will ever be a subordinate end, in the view of every person that is influenced by a principle of self-preservation. Resignation, therefore, to the will of God, under afflicting providences, is an absolute impossibility, while you look upon God as your enemy, and consider his dispensations as intended for your hurt. But if you look into the word of God, you shall find reason, from his own gracious grant and promise, to consider God as your kind and loving Father; to consider all his chastisements as intended for your profit, both in this world and in the world to come; and to see them all working, together with every other dispensation, for your good, as well as for his glory. And then, instead of repining against them, you shall find good reason to submit to them all, as just and necessary; to acquiesce in them all, as good; and even to be thankful for the worst that you suffer. Thus, faith in God's
word

word of grace and promise is the best preparative for an afflicted lot.

Finally, Be concerned daily to imitate the example of Paul and his primitive brethren, by “looking, not “at the things which are seen, *and* are temporal; but “at the things which are not seen, *and* are eternal*.” If you compare the verse to which we refer, with the preceding part of that chapter; you will find that this was the happy mean by which they were prevented from fainting under their adversities; so that they could be “troubled on every side, *without being* distressed; perplexed, *and yet* not in despair; “persecuted, and not forsaken; cast down, and not “destroyed.” By this means they came to be satisfied, that their “light affliction, which *was* but for a “moment, *wrought* for *them* a far more exceeding “and eternal weight of glory.” And hence they were not only resigned to tribulation, but even gloried in it. And the same exercise will have the same influence upon you. If your attention is fixed upon the unseen objects of an eternal world, you will find so little proportion between them and the transient vanities of a present life, that you will not count these worthy of a look, in comparison of the other. The good things of a present world you will consider as being so empty, and so transitory, that you will be ashamed, either to rejoice in the possession or to grieve for the loss of them. And the evil things of this seen world you will also consider as so light and momentary, that you will count it unworthy of a person that was made for eternity, to make himself uneasy on account of them. In a word, The blessed hope of an

* 2 Cor. iv. 18.

eternal and uninterrupted enjoyment of those unseen things, upon which you now look by faith, will be found the most powerful cordial, to support you under all the troubles of this passing world. By this means you will be enabled, under the heaviest of them, to “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

If these things be in you and abound, they will make you ready for all that you can be called to; and for all that you can be visited with in the present world. You will never be unprepared, either for work or warfare, for prosperity or adversity, for life or death. And all these are included in the shoes that our heavenly Father has provided for the feet of his returning prodigals. It will now be a native question, among all those who are truly attentive to their own interest, How these shoes are to be attained? Or in what manner it is that they are put on?

II. AND this was the *second* thing of which we proposed to speak. All that we intend on this head, you may take in the following observations.

I. God himself, and he only, can effectually put these shoes on our feet. It will readily have occurred to every exercised Christian, that the several pieces of preparation which have been mentioned, are so many fruits of the Spirit of God, and can only be attained by his saving and efficacious operation. This might be particularly evinced concerning each of them. It shall suffice to give one general proof, comprehending them all. The inspired Preacher assures us, that “the preparations of the heart in man, as
“ *well!*”

“ *well as* the answer of the tongue, are from the “ Lord *.” All our endeavours to attain such preparations would be vain, if we had not reason to expect success from God’s concurring operation; and they will be vain, unless he concur with them indeed. We could have no reason to hope for such concurrence, if he had not graciously promised it; nor will any persons enjoy it, unless their endeavours are accompanied with a believing dependence upon him, for the accomplishment of his promise. But if we continue in the use of appointed means, depending upon him for success, and wrestling with him, by humble supplications to that effect; we may be assured that our “ labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. LORD, “ thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt “ prepare their heart, and thou wilt cause thine ear “ to hear †.”

2. The gospel of the grace of God is the principal mean of furnishing those shoes, and putting them on. They are the “ preparation of the gospel of peace.” They who have never heard the gospel, nor enjoyed divine revelation, can be prepared for nothing. No work that they do is capable of being viewed as an acceptable service to God. Instead of accomplishing a warfare against their spiritual enemies, they are all combined with the enemy for their own destruction, as well as for breaking God’s bands, and rejecting the government of his anointed. Their corruptions are fed by every prosperous, and irritated by every adverse dispensation. Every change that passes over them finds them unprepared; and therefore every thing leaves them worse than it found them. The same

* Prov. xvi. 1.

† Psal. x. 17.

same is indeed the case with all those who hear the gospel, and never yet felt its powerful efficacy for changing the heart. But every one, whose heart the Lord has opened to attend to the things that are spoken in the gospel, knows in his happy experience, that all the branches of preparation which have been mentioned, and every other which has not been mentioned, are to be attained through its instrumentality.

The gospel reveals and exhibits Christ, as the only hiding-place for perishing souls, in which, as you heard, every person may be habitually ready for every thing; and out of which none can be ready, either habitually or actually, for any thing. The gospel is the vehicle which the Spirit of God makes use of for conveying into the heart, that almighty power by which alone the sinner can be determined to come to Christ, and to embrace the favour of God, as exhibited through him. The gospel sets before us, as in a glass, those unseen and eternal things, which may attract our attention, and draw us off from all undue attachment to the vanities of a present life. The gospel is the mean by which the Holy Ghost works in subduing corruption; in implanting every grace, and drawing it forth into exercise; and in working in us “all the good pleasure of his goodness.” It animates us to press after every piece of necessary preparation, by assuring us of success, not by might nor by power, but by the Holy Spirit of God. And it sets before us all those great and precious promises, upon which our faith may rest in every case; so that we may neither be surpris'd, nor disconcerted, nor dismayed; what-
ever

ever should happen to ourselves in particular, or take place in the world around us.

3. The servants of God, particularly they who labour in word and doctrine, are the happy instruments of bringing forth those shoes, and putting them upon the feet of returning prodigals. Hence the command in the text is addressed, by the prodigal's father, to the servants of the family. Indeed, every Christian may be useful to his brethren in this respect; and he ought to make it his study to be so. We are all bound to strengthen one another's hands, in the work and way of God. We are to "strengthen the weak hands, "to confirm the feeble knees;" to stir up and awaken the secure, and to give warning to every one of every danger that we see approaching; that our brethren, as well as we, may be ready to meet our God. But this is the province, in a peculiar manner, of the ministers of the gospel. As the publication of the gospel is their main work, whatever the gospel is a mean of accomplishing, they have the honour of being instruments in it; though the effect is neither owing to any intrinsic efficacy in the mean, nor any kind of activity in the instrument; but solely to him, who has chosen, "by the foolishness of preaching, to save "them that believe."

4. In this whole matter, returning prodigals themselves must be "workers together with God." Though we can do nothing of ourselves, and though it is God that does all our works in us, yet he does all, in a way of stirring us up to be active and diligent, in a humble dependence upon his gracious assistance. Indeed, there are some things that God does, both in us and for us, in which we are not capable of any activity.

vity. Thus, in regeneration we are as little active as Adam was in his own creation, or as the dead will be at the last day in their own resurrection. But, in all that belongs to the progress of sanctification in us, we necessarily must be active. And in this way it is that our shoes must be put on. While Christians continue inactive, the work of God makes ever slow progress in their souls; and in that state they are not duly prepared for any thing. But when their loins are girded, their lamps burning, their garments on, and themselves watching, and occupying their Master's talents; then the Spirit of God is also busy, carrying on his work in them, and making them ready, not only for all that can befall them in time, but also for an approaching eternity, and for their Lord's coming. Indeed, their activity is the necessary effect; and therefore the best evidence of his being presently at his work.

Much is incumbent upon you, Christian, in this respect. You must wait diligently upon those means of grace, in the use of which you are warranted to expect the "preparations of the heart." You must wrestle with God, fervently and constantly, that he may prepare your "heart, and cause *his* ear to hear." You must daily improve the *gospel of peace*, as the only mean of furnishing, or repairing your spiritual shoes; receiving the testimony that it brings you of God and his will; trusting in its promises, and in the faithfulness of him that hath promised, for every branch of preparation, and for all that you need; and relying upon the righteousness which it exhibits, as the only ground of your title both to the promise itself, and to the accomplishment of it. You must
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watch continually against all the attempts of the enemy, whether to deprive you of that preparation which you have attained, or to prevent your attaining more. All this, and much more than this, you must do, in a way of maintaining a fixed persuasion that you can do nothing; and that all that you do, in agreeableness to the will of God, as well as all that is done for you, in agreeableness to his promise, must be the work of God himself; and under a fixed resolution to give him all the glory, counting yourself no more than an *unprofitable servant*.

III. We shall now conclude with some improvement of the subject. And,

I. It affords us information, in various particulars; such as,

(1.) It shews that a man in a natural estate is ready for nothing; every sinner is a prodigal, wanting shoes, as well as other necessaries. He is therefore unprepared for all that is required of him, and for all that he meets with in the course of providence. If God calls him to any piece of work, he is otherwise engaged; he neither attends to the call, nor is at leisure to comply with it. If spiritual enemies assail him, he is so far from being prepared to repel their assaults, that he fondly mistakes them for friends, and takes part with them in promoting his own ruin. If he enjoys prosperity, it destroys him. Like a ship without ballast which is ready to be overset by a wind that would otherwise be most favourable, he is unable to bear the gale of prosperity. His "table *proves* a "snare, and his welfare *is* a trap to take him." When adversity befalls him, he is suddenly overwhelmed,

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He enjoys nothing to balance it, therefore his heart fails ; and he vents his impotent rage against God, in such murmurings as tend more to make him miserable than all the rest that he suffers. And so far is he from being ready for death or eternity, that he really knows nothing about what preparation is necessary for either.

(2.) They who are brought back to the family of God, and put, by divine grace, among his children, are never wholly unready for any thing ; no event can overtake them wholly unprepared. It is among the first things that their heavenly Father does for them, to order shoes for their feet. The truth is, there is a twofold readiness necessary, in view of whatever may take place in this world, as well as of death and another world. A *habitual readiness*, consisting in our being secured against any real injury, by any thing that may happen ; and an *actual readiness*, consisting in our present fitness to be active in fulfilling whatever is the will of God concerning us. The first of these every Christian enjoys ; for it is the immediate result of his union to Christ, and of his interest in the favour of God. And the other he likewise enjoys in some degree, though he finds it always necessary to press after more.

(3.) Even they who are brought back to the house and family of God have need to beware of apprehending that they are come to their rest ; or considering themselves as at home while, they continue in this world. Among the Jews, and other nations in that climate, it was unusual to wear shoes, unless when they were abroad, and had a journey of some kind to accomplish. Our being provided with shoes
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when we return to our Father's house, is a sure evidence that our journey is not finished; but we are still in the condition of travellers here. Think not, Christian, that because you are returned from that far country in which you was in your natural estate, you are still to enjoy rest and tranquillity for the time to come. Nay, you are still in a *foreign land*. Your inheritance, and the house where you are to dwell for ever, are in "the land that is *yet* afar off." Still you have a long journey before you; and you must lay your account with toil, and hardships, and dangers, and difficulties of various kinds. Yea, your road lies through an enemy's country. You must fight every inch of your way. Your shoes are necessary, as a piece of armour to defend your feet from the enemy's weapons, as well as to preserve them from the injuries of the way. And, if you duly attend to your situation, you will find reason to be thankful to your heavenly Father, who has provided shoes for your feet.

2. This subject likewise affords matter of trial. You have all need to examine your feet, and consider whether you have on the shoes mentioned in the text or not. For your assistance, we shall suggest a few questions, that you may ask every one at his own conscience. Are you sensible that you meet with nothing for which you do not need much preparation, beyond all that you have? Are you convinced, that you can never prepare yourself for any thing; and desirous always to look to God for the "preparations of the heart?" Are you careful, through divine grace, to observe what is a-coming in the course of providence, and to be prepared for all that you foresee?

fee? Are you sensible of your short-sightedness, convinced that it is impossible for you to be apprized beforehand of every thing, or almost of any thing that you meet with; and therefore concerned to be also ready for what you cannot foresee? Is it your main concern to be ready for the second coming of Christ, and for your solemn appearance before him to judgment; and that you may be so, is it your daily study to improve every talent, and spend every part of your time, as you would wish to be found doing when he comes: In one word, any measure of preparation that you think you have attained, has it been wrought in you by means of the *gospel of peace*? Have you felt the power of the Holy Ghost, coming along with his word of grace, transforming you gradually into his image, and so preparing you for every branch of his will? If you can answer these questions affirmatively, and upon good grounds; then you have your feet shod after the manner of God's children; and this you have as a comfortable evidence that you belong to that happy family. But if you have never had experience of any of these things, you may be assured that you continue in the far country still.

3. In this subject we might find ample matter for exhortation. We shall content ourselves with suggesting to you the following advices. (1.) Be concerned, whoever you are, to get on these spiritual shoes. You are all on a journey to an eternal world. You are sure it is a long journey, and you neither know, nor can we tell you how rough and difficult you may find it. Neither is it possible to foresee what methods enemies may take to render it still more uneasy. And how can you undertake such a
journey,

journey without shoes on your feet? Unless you are prepared in the manner you have been hearing, your way will afford no pleasure to you, but every step of it will be more painful than another. Neither will God have pleasure either in it or in you. But if your feet are covered with these shoes, they will appear beautiful in Christ's eyes; for thus he speaks to his bride and spouse: "How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter*?" God will delight greatly in the way wherein you walk. And, to yourself, the ways of wisdom will be found "pleasantness, and all her paths *will be peace.*"

(2.) Be careful always to keep them on. Indeed, if once your *feet* be truly *shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace*, you can never totally or finally lose that preparation. Your habitual preparation will always continue; because your union to Christ can never be dissolved. But your actual preparation may in a great measure be lost; so that you may be much more in readiness either for doing or suffering to-day than you will be to-morrow, or for a long time afterwards. Yea, even your union to Christ must continue, in the way of being maintained by the exercise of faith on your part, as well as by the inhabitation of the Spirit on his part. Hence is his exhortation to his disciples, "Abide in me, and I in you; as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." Having taken hold of Christ, therefore, by faith, be careful to abide in him, by a continued exercise of the same faith. And whatever you attain, serving to prepare you for any part of what is the will

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* Song vii. 1.

of God concerning you, be careful never to lose it, nor suffer yourself to be deprived of it by any means. For instance, if you are concerned about preparation, in the view of a solemn sacramental occasion ; and, by the good hand of your God upon you, attain some degree of it ; beware of thinking it useless for the time to come, and suffering it to slip. The same thing that serves to prepare you for an approach to God at his table, will also serve as a branch of preparation for every thing else that may be before you, and even for death and eternity. You should, therefore, not only continue in the same state, but you should also strive to maintain the same frame, in every part of your after life. Satisfy not yourself with retaining the habits of grace ; but, as far as possible, continue in the exercise of it. Consider always who he is that has said, “ Behold, I come quickly ; hold that fast “ which thou hast, that no man take thy crown *.”

(3.) Use every method of divine appointment to have your shoes more and more fortified. It is the excellency of the shoes mentioned in the text, that, like those of the Israelites in the wilderness, they “ wax not old upon *one's* feet ;” they can never be worn out ; but, under proper management, will every day wax stronger and stronger. Every Christian should grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Growing in grace, you will grow in readiness for every thing that you may have to meet with. And this should be one argument, by which you should be stirred up to aim daily at such a growth. How this is to be attained, we cannot now stay to inform you at large. But, in a few words, you will find it

* Rev. iii. 11.

it of use to wait diligently upon all the appointed means of grace; to think much about the reasonableness of subjection to the will of God; to be much employed in the mortification of pride, and the other corruptions of your nature; and to be much in prayer to God, from whom alone you can receive *the preparations of the heart.*

(4.) In one word, Study to be daily ready, not only for all that you have to meet with in time; but likewise for your appearance before the tribunal of Christ at his coming; and for that eternal estate, upon which you must enter as soon as you leave the present world. We spake not at large concerning the preparation that is necessary in the view of judgment and eternity; because we apprehend that the shoes in the text signify properly that preparation which is necessary during the continuance of our journey, to secure us against injury by the hardships of the way. But it is obvious, that it is as necessary to be prepared for these, as for any thing that can happen in this life; and more so, in proportion as eternity is of more importance than time. If you have all the branches of preparation already mentioned, you will be, in a great measure, ready for these also. And if you are ready for these, you will not be unready for any thing that can occur here. That you may be so, be careful to improve every talent that the Master has bestowed upon you, in the view of that account which you must give of them all when he comes. See that you have the work which he has assigned you in such forwardness, as that, when he comes, he may find it finished. And let every part of your time be spent, as you would wish to spend the last hour of it. Ne-

ver suffer yourself to be employed in a manner in which you would be ashamed to be employed, when you shall be summoned to the judgment-seat of Christ. Let your heart be always in heaven, and your conversation heavenly; so shall you be fit for a personal residence in heaven in a little. And be much employed in learning that new song, which you wish and hope to sing eternally in your Father's house. In one word, Be much in the exercise of faith. Learn more and more to depend upon God for these spiritual shoes, as well as for every thing else that you need. These, as well as all the rest, are secured to you by the promise; for what Moses said to Aher, may be considered as the word of God to every one of you: "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days are, so shall thy strength be*."

* Deut. xxxiii, 25.

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S E R M O N XIV.

The returning Prodigal's Entertainment; or, The Penitent Sinner abundantly satisfied with the Fatness of God's House.

LUKE XV. 23.

—AND BRING HITHER THE FATTED CALF, AND KILL IT; AND LET US EAT AND BE MERRY.

THESSE words contain the fourth and last branch of the orders, that the prodigal's father is represented as giving to the servants of the family in relation to his son, who was just now restored from the far country, whither he had wandered, and from that abandoned course of life which he had there pursued. He enjoins them to prepare a magnificent feast for the entertainment of the whole family, and of all the friends of the family, as well as of the returning prodigal; that he might testify his joy, for the reclaiming of his lost son; and give them all an opportunity to partake with him in that joy. More

particularly, the words contain the three things following.

1. The provision with which the returning prodigal was to be entertained, *the fatted calf*. As, among all the robes that might be supposed to be in such a man's house, the very best was ordered for his son; so, among all the calves which were in his stall, one was superior to all the rest; and was known in the family, and among the servants, by the designation of *the fatted calf*; and this was it that was to be now used. In how much esteem this kind of food was among the Hebrews, appears from various instances. Abraham had nothing better, wherewith to entertain a company of angels*. And the forceress at Endor thought it not too mean to be set before a king †. Among the Greeks, too, we are told it was considered as one of the most sumptuous and magnificent repasts.

2. What was given in charge to the servants, concerning this fatted calf, in two particulars. (1.) They were to *bring it forth*, from the place where it then was, to the very place where the master of the family met with his son: *bring hither the fatted calf*. (2.) It was to be killed in that place. The word properly signifies *to kill in sacrifice*; and so it is rendered by various interpreters. We know it was usual when a sacrifice was offered, to invite friends to feast upon the flesh of it; and, when a magnificent feast was intended, nothing was more common than first to offer the beast in sacrifice whose flesh was to be eaten. This father was not so lifted up with the restoration of his lost son, as to forget that he owed that happy event to the Providence of God. And therefore

* Gen. xviii. 7.

† 1 Sam. xxviii. 24.

fore he appointed that the fatted calf should first be offered to God as a sacrifice, in the place where he and his son met; and afterwards be fed upon by the whole family in the house.

3. The design of this preparation, intimated in the last words of the verse; *and let us eat and be merry.* The word signifies, to indulge one's self in all manner of joy; and in all those actions and gestures whereby the highest degree of joy and gladness is evidenced, which are usual at a great feast. Had he only intended to refresh the prodigal himself, and relieve him from that hunger with which he was ready to perish, such preparation had not only been needless; it had even been hurtful, by occasioning too much delay. But it was his intention that himself, his friends, his other children, and even his servants, should all *eat and be merry.*

It is agreed among all expositors, so far as I know, that this circumstance in the parable is emblematical of that *feast of fat things*, which God makes *unto all people* in a gospel-dispensation; wherein penitent sinners, together with the whole family of their heavenly Father, are entertained and feasted upon the flesh and blood of the Son of God. In the keeping of this feast, the whole company, both in heaven and on earth, are allowed and required freely to indulge themselves in holy joy and festivity. The sense of the words may accordingly be expressed in the following proposition.

The most delicious and exquisite provision being ready in the house of God, for the entertainment of returning Prodigals; the whole family of grace are warranted and invited to eat and be merry.

WE shall not detain you by searching for mysteries, where we apprehend none were intended by the great speaker of the parable. Neither shall we strain the similitude, and disgust the sober part of the audience, by pursuing the resemblance between the emblem and the thing represented by it, as far as a wanton imagination might carry us. We shall not, therefore, trouble you with any enquiry about who are the servants to whom those orders are given. The main thing intended seems to be, that God has taken effectual care, that such provision should be made, for the entertainment of returning sinners, as might fitly be represented by the fatted calf. And, as such provision is not usually made, in the house of any great man, without the intervention of servants; it was necessary, to make the parts of the parable hang together, that the servants of the family should be represented as receiving injunctions concerning it; though no created servant of God could have any considerable hand, in providing for that spiritual feast which is represented by the parable.

All that is proposed, therefore, is only to mention a few things, which I take to be imported in the words; and then to conclude with a brief improvement.

The words, I conceive, import, among others, the following things.

I. That every returning sinner finds abundance of provision in the house of God. This prodigal, when he came to himself, said, "How many hired servants, in my father's house, have bread enough, and to spare?" And, now when he returns, he not only finds plenty of bread, to satisfy those cravings of nature

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ture that could not be allayed in the famished country from which he came; he even finds a fatted calf on his table; and is much better entertained than ever he was during his riotous course of life. In like manner, when finners come so far to themselves, as to be convinced that happiness is not to be found among the perishing objects of sense; they are taught, by the gospel of the grace of God, to expect that satisfaction in God himself, which they sought for in vain among the creatures. In that hope they return to him, being assisted by his holy Spirit; and they find all that they hoped for, and incomparably more. Like the queen of Sheba, in relation to the wisdom of Solomon, they find that the one half was not told them. They met with nothing but disappointment upon disappointment, while they sought their provision in the far country; but here they find all that is requisite to gratify their most extensive desires. A disappointment, indeed, they meet with, upon their returning to God; but of a very different nature from what they formerly experienced. Now their hopes are exceeded as far as they were baulked before. They meet with such a happy disappointment as he does, who expects but the bread of a hired servant; and is feasted, among the children of the family, upon *the fatted calf*.

2. That, besides the ordinary provision of God's family, there is somewhat prepared for the reception of penitent finners that is of peculiar excellence in itself, and peculiarly adapted to their condition. This prodigal was not only permitted to share in the daily provision of the family; but the fatted calf was killed for him, and a feast was made for his reception. All the

the family of God have abundance of provision ; and would have enjoyed abundance, though no prodigal of our sinful tribe had ever returned to his house. But that which supplied the rest of the family, was not judged sufficient for the entertainment of returning prodigals. Something more noble was provided.

To speak without allegory, every rational creature, continuing in obedience to God, enjoys a fulness of happiness in him, suited to its nature and capacity. Adam, in his innocent estate, was completely happy in God. So are the angels that never sinned. But neither what was enjoyed by innocent Adam, nor what is still enjoyed by unfinning angels, was sufficient to make them happy who had once played the prodigal, and been alienated from the family. Our heavenly Father does not mean to make us only as happy as our first parents were in Paradise. A happiness is intended for those who are saved by Christ, in many respects superior to what Adam enjoyed, and even to what is enjoyed by elect angels. Some new provision was therefore to be made, that the house of God had never afforded, if there had been no prodigals to entertain. For this purpose the covenant of grace was made from all eternity ; the Son of God was incarnate in the fulness of time ; and, in our nature, fulfilled all that he undertook to the Father. Thus a foundation was laid for bringing us to happiness in a new way ; and likewise for affording us a happiness containing various new ingredients, that had never otherwise been enjoyed by creatures, nor known among them. You shall not only be restored, Christian, to the same condition from which Adam fell ; your eternal estate shall be incomparably superior

rior to what Adam, or any of his posterity would ever have enjoyed, if he had never fallen. Not only shall you eat angels food, in your Father's house; you shall feed, through eternity, upon food that angels shall not taste; upon food that angels had never seen, if you had not been restored to the family. Yea, even in this world, you have provision set before you, both in word and sacrament; that God's house would never have afforded, if it had not been prepared for such as you. The flesh and blood of the Son of God would never have been any part of the food of the family, unless he had first given it for the life of a lost world. God's *fatted calf* had never been *killed*, if there had been no returning prodigals to entertain.

3. That this noble provision is made, for the entertainment of mankind sinners, by the express warrant and command of God, the great Master of the house and family. The servants did not go of their own accord to kill the fatted calf and prepare it; but their master gave them positive orders for that purpose. When we call you to a participation of the gospel-feast, we do not, like the strange woman, invite you to *stolen waters*, or to *bread* that must be *eaten in secret*; without the knowledge of him who bears the expence. The feast of fat things, which we present unto you, is a feast of God's own making; and he has provided it for the entertainment of prodigals, so that nothing in your past life can give you reason to doubt of his making you welcome to it.

4. That the provision which God has made, for the entertainment of returning sinners, is the flesh of a slain-sacrifice. The fatted calf, you have heard, was to be sacrificed, before it was served up. And, in the
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case supposed, there was much propriety in that circumstance. The prodigal had *sinned against heaven*, as well as in his Father's sight. It was proper that his sin should be expiated, when he returned to his father's house; and it could not be expiated without a sacrifice. The calf was accordingly to be sacrificed, to make atonement for his sin, before it could be used as his feast. In all this, the figure corresponds exactly with the thing signified. The course of life in which all mankind are naturally engaged, is so egregiously sinful, *against heaven and in God's sight*; that it was impossible for any of us to be admitted back into his family, unless upon the footing of a sacrifice. The inexorable justice of God had passed a sentence of condemnation against us all. And the honour of that, and other divine perfections, was pledged, that the sentence should be fully executed. Had it been executed upon us, we could never have been restored to the family of God; but must have continued eternally under that punishment, which we could never have borne to the full. The infinite wisdom and goodness of God provided a remedy for this seemingly desperate case. The eternal Son of God condescended to substitute himself in our room and place; and to suffer the full execution of our dreadful sentence upon himself. Thus he became a sacrifice of atonement for our sin; and, in consequence hereof, his flesh and blood are served up, for our entertainment, in our Father's house. It is only by the killing of this sacrifice, that guests are furnished for the table of God, and that the table is furnished for the guests.

5. That God's fatted calf behoved to be slain in the place where he meets with returning finners. In other words, Christ behoved to offer himself a sacrifice, in the same place and in the same condition, in which the grace of God finds us, when he is about to bring us back to his house and family. The servants, we hear, were to bring the fatted calf and kill it in the place where their master now stood, and where he had met with his son. And, if we compare ver. 20. we shall see that it was at some distance from the house. In order to his being a proper sacrifice for us, it was necessary that Christ should come into our world, and take upon him our nature; that he should subject himself to the law that we had broken, and to the same curse under which we lay; that, in one word, he should become like one of us, and be in the same state in which we were, sin only excepted. All this he really submitted to. Though "he was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God; yet he took on him the form of a servant, and humbled himself to become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. *Though* he did no evil, neither was guile found in his mouth;" yet he condescended to be accounted a malefactor, and dealt with as such, both by God and men. He who was the original author of the law, was subjected to the law which he made. And he who was "God over all, blessed for ever, *was* made a curse for us. In all things, *he was* made like unto his brethren;" not only like what they are after they become his brethren; but like what they were in their natural estate; save only that he was not stained with the pollution, nor subject to the power of sin. This was
utterly

utterly incompatible with the divinity of his person ; and, had it been possible, would have rendered him altogether unfit to be a sacrifice for sin. And now, in consequence of being sacrificed for us, Christ himself is become the happy meeting-place between God and us ; for “ God is in Christ, reconciling the world “ to himself ; not imputing their trespasses unto “ them *.”

6. That the provision which God has made is the most exquisite ; possessed of all that can recommend it to every sinner, and to every saint. Two things here intimate the excellency of it ; its being compared to a *fatted calf*, and to a calf that had been offered in sacrifice.

First, Its being compared to a fatted calf, intimates to us the following things.

(1.) That it is most delicious and palatable, suited to every taste. Some persons have a liking for one sort of provision, and some for another. Some have an aversion to one kind of food, and some to another. But nothing is more universally agreeable than the flesh of a *fatted calf*. It pleases almost every palate. So is the case with this spiritual provision. The desires of every soul are boundless, and can never be satisfied with any finite good. But the desires of particular persons are extremely various, and diversified one from another. So long as we look for the gratification of them among the creatures, we must be disappointed ; because no created good can be infinite. But in Christ they may all be gratified to the utmost. That desire of riches, which, when fixed on the things of the present world, is termed covetousness,

* 2 Cor. v. 19.

ness, and justly deemed idolatry ; if turned towards Christ is laudable, and shall be fully gratified in the event ; for “ riches and honour are with *him* ; yea, “ durable riches and righteoufness.” That desire of honour, which is a vain and sinful ambition, when terminating upon those shadows that men have to bestow, if taught to centre in Christ, would be commendable, and shall be gratified with a crown of immortal glory. That desire of pleasure, which, in carnal men, degenerates into luxury, resting in the vain objects of sense, and proving the man to be dead while he liveth, if sanctified and fixed upon Christ, is abundantly consistent with spiritual life ; and shall be completely gratified, by the possession of that “fulness of joy *that is before God's face ; and those rivers of pleasures that are at his right hand for evermore.*” The Spirit of God, by his saving operations, destroys not any of those faculties or appetites, that himself, as the God of nature, has implanted in any soul. His business is to destroy that corrupt bias which sin has given them ; and bring them back to himself, in whom alone they possibly can be gratified. And whatever is suited to gratify them all, is to be found on the gospel-table.

(2.) That it is substantial, and full of nourishment. Some kinds of provisions, though they are bulky enough, and serve to fill the belly ; yet have little substance in them, and therefore afford little nourishment. But the flesh of a *fatted calf* is one of the most substantial, and nutritive kinds of food. So the flesh and blood of Christ, which are the provision here signified, afford the most copious nourishment to the souls of men. By the use of this provision, you may not only have

have your hunger and thirst allayed, and your desires satisfied for the present; you may likewise be nourished up to the day of complete redemption, so as to grow, every day, in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, till you arrive at the stature of a perfect man in him. Yea, such is the virtue and efficacy of this food, that he who eats it shall never decay, nor wax old; but, through eternity shall flourish, in the vigour of youth, and in all the bloom of spiritual health, without any fear, either of diseases or death.

(3.) It is the most harmless and wholesome provision. Some kinds of food, though sufficiently agreeable to the taste, are prejudicial to the health, and ruinous to the constitution. And some things that agree well enough with one constitution, may be very hurtful to another. But a *fatted calf* is a kind of meat that seldom disagrees with any constitution, more than with any taste. It is wholesome, as well as nourishing. So this spiritual meat, that God has provided for the entertainment of his prodigals, is the most wholesome that can be imagined. It agrees with every constitution, and is adapted, in the best manner, to persons of every age, sex, and quality. The weakest babe finds it not too hard of digestion, and the strongest man has no reason to undervalue it as too light. No man ever contracted any disease from the use of it; nor was any person's appetite or constitution impaired by using it freely. So far is it from being hurtful, that it is in the highest degree medicinal. It is an universal remedy for all the diseases of the soul. Yea, it is a sovereign antidote against death itself; for "he that eateth *of it* shall ne-

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“ver die.” Not only does it maintain life where it is, and effectually prevent the person from dying; it even cures death, where it has already prevailed, and restores the dead man to life and health. The smallest morsel of this provision put into the mouth of one that is dead in trespasses and sins, will immediately cause him to rise out of his grave, and join in that holy joy and festivity, which obtains among returning prodigals, in the house of God*.

(4.) It is the most sumptuous and magnificent provision. You have heard, that of old, before those refinements of luxury were invented that disgrace the present age, a *fatted calf* was counted an entertainment fit for the tables of the greatest princes. And surely it is proper that the provision upon God's table should excel in magnificence. When the Persian monarch made a feast to his nobles and great men, it was *according to the state of so great a king*. And, doubtless, the feast that is made by the King of heaven, must be incomparably beyond any thing of which there ever was an example among men. Every person who has ever tasted of this provision, or knows any thing of the qualities of it, the expensive rate at which it was purchased, or the distant country from which it comes, will be satisfied, that the richest provision that ever stood on the table of an earthly potentate, bears no comparison with this.

Secondly, Its being compared to a calf previously sacrificed, imports two things:

(1.) That it contains a security to all who partake in it, against the wrath of God, and against all the punishments of sin, both in this world and in the world to

* See John vi. 33, 50, 57, 58.

to come. You have heard, that Christ, when he became a sacrifice for us, subjected himself to all the punishment that was justly due to us for our sin. And now, every person who eats his flesh and drinks his blood, being thereby interested in his sacrifice, is secured in eternal exemption from punishment in his own person. As God could not be just, in suffering the sanction of his own law to fall to the ground without any execution; so neither could he be just in exacting punishment twice for the same crime. Having received a full satisfaction to all the demands of his law, from the hand of your Surety, believer; God may as soon deny himself, and violate his justice and holiness, as well as his mercy and goodness, as he may suffer the smallest degree of legal punishment to fall upon you, either in time or through eternity. Nay, his justice is as strictly engaged to preserve you from punishment, in consequence of your interest in Christ, as it is to inflict punishment upon all who are strangers to him. You may, nay you shall be subject to chastisements; and perhaps you may find them both fore and of long continuance. But no part of what you suffer shall be the effect of the curse. In all, God shall be influenced, not by vindictive wrath, but by fatherly love. Instead of being a punishment, every chastisement shall prove a blessing, though it comes in disguise. And it is but a little when you shall have a comfortable outgate from them all. You have eaten of the flesh of that sacrifice, by which sin was expiated. This is a sure evidence that God has accepted it, as an atonement for *your* sin. And herein you have the fullest assurance, that God, having *forgiven* your *iniquity*, will *remember your sin no more*. As this

this is really secured to you, by your participation of God's provision; it is visibly sealed to you, as often as you partake in it symbolically, in the *sacrament of the supper*.

(2.) That it affords a like security for the actual communication of all the benefits of God's covenant to the person, in grace here, and in glory hereafter. Even under the law, every sacrifice that was offered, according to divine appointment, contained a seal and confirmation of that covenant by which God stood related to the church. And if this was the case with those typical sacrifices, that could never make any real expiation of sin; how much more must it be so with this all-sufficient sacrifice, which is the sole antitype of the others? In offering this sacrifice, upon which you are called to feed, our Lord Jesus Christ perfected his fulfilment of the condition of the covenant of grace. By that means, he laid a sure foundation for the accomplishment of all its promises. Yea, in consequence of it, God became indispensibly bound to fulfil every promise of the covenant, to all who should have an interest in this sacrifice. By eating the flesh of the sacrifice, you become a partaker of all the virtue of it; and therefore have security, not only for deliverance from punishment, but also for the final enjoyment of all the blessings that were purchased by the shedding of Christ's blood; and promised in that covenant which was confirmed by it. Thus, every time that you eat of God's provision, you have all the promises of his covenant sealed over to you; and a renewed security is afforded you, for the gradual-accomplishment of them all; till you be "filled, *at last*, with all the fulness of God." You

may not, indeed, look for the full accomplishment of them here. In this world you are but heirs in minority; and it is enough if you have your necessary charges borne. Even this you shall not always have in the same manner, nor yet in the same measure that you may think best. While you are children, you must think and act like children; and so may be oft in danger of finding fault with the manner in which your heavenly Father dispenses to you the blessings of his covenant. But when once you come to the years of spiritual discretion, you shall be put in full and personal possession of your inheritance; and yourselves shall be witnesses, that "not one good word hath failed of all that the Lord hath spoken." Then also, your judgment being so far ripened, as to be able, in some degree, to understand the design and tendency of his past dealings with you; you shall be disposed, readily to acknowledge, to the praise of his grace, that, even in the years of your minority, "he did all things well."

7. The words of the text import, that God's design, in making such provision for prodigal sinners, is, that they may eat it, and feed upon it. The most delicious food, set upon the table before a man, will never be of any use to him, unless he put forth his hand, and take it into his mouth and eat it. The end for which the fatted calf was to be brought and killed, was that the family might eat it and be merry. All the provision that God has made for sinners of mankind would continue useless, if none were to eat of it; and never will you have any share of its usefulness, unless you take it, and eat it. By eating it, we do not mean your attending outwardly upon the dispensation

fation of the gospel. By such an attendance, indeed, you sit down at the table of God ; but this you may do without ever tasting of his supper. Neither do we barely mean an external participation of the sacrament of the *Lord's Supper*. You may eat the sacramental bread, and drink the sacramental cup, without feeding upon the body and blood of Christ, as therein exhibited. Far less do we mean any corporeal eating of Christ's flesh, either in word or sacrament. His glorious body is now in heaven ; and would to God it were as much beyond the power of antichrist and his followers, to wound, persecute, and oppress his mystical members, as it is to tear his human body with their teeth. Nay, the provision of which we speak is spiritual, it was intended for the nourishment of souls ; and it must be fed upon by the soul in a spiritual manner. The eating here required, includes the following things.

(1.) A believing appropriation of Christ, and all the blessings of his purchase, to the person in particular. While the meat stands on the table, every guest has an equal access to it. But none of them has it in actual possession, nor can any of them really feed upon it, till he put forth his hand, take it up from the table, and put it in his mouth. In like manner, as Christ is offered in the gospel, every sinner has an equal access to him, and an equal right to receive him. But, notwithstanding of this, we can have no real interest in him, nor any real advantage by him, unless we receive and appropriate him to ourselves by faith. That faith which does not include a personal appropriation, as it differs not, in the nature of it, from the faith of devils ; so it can produce no better effects upon us than theirs does upon them. They who fa-

tisfy themselves with such a faith, may *believe and tremble*. And I have no doubt but they will do so through eternity, if they live and die pleasing themselves with such a fancy. But it is utterly impossible that, in the sense of this text, they should “eat and be merry.”

(2.) An uniting with Christ, who is our provision, so as to be in him, and to have him in us. You all know, that those things which feed and nourish the body must first be taken into it, and become one with it. Yea, they must be so digested and transformed, as really to become a part of the body itself; otherwise they speedily pass into the draught, and the body receives no advantage by them. So, if you really feed upon Christ, you must so receive him as to become one with him. You must abide in him by a lively faith, and he must abide in you by his Holy Spirit; and unless this is the case, you do not feed upon him either in word or sacrament; nor have you any more advantage by him, than a man has by that food which he tastes not. “Abide in me, (says Christ,) and I in you; for without me ye can do nothing*.”

(3.) A believing improvement of Christ, and of all the benefits of his purchase, for all those ends and purposes for which they are useful to us; and particularly, for our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace. The bodies of men, you know, must be nourished, till they arrive at their full stature, by new accessions, both of strength and substance, to their several parts and members. And even after they are at their full growth, they stand in need of daily supplies,
to

* John xv. 4, 5.

to counter-balance the waste of nature, and prevent a too early, or too rapid decay. These accessions and supplies they receive from the food that they eat; which, as you heard, is changed, for that purpose, into a part of themselves. The people of God, in this world, are all children, in a spiritual sense. And unless they *grow in grace, in the knowledge of Christ*, and in conformity to his image; they can never arrive at the *stature of perfect men in him*. This growth can only be promoted, and a spiritual decay prevented, by a constant improvement of Christ and his benefits, in the daily exercise of faith. But the man who feeds upon this noble provision, draws supplies from thence to strengthen him for all the work that God has called him unto, to make up the defects of which he is daily sensible, and to enable him to make daily progress in faith, in holiness and comfort, till he arrive at the state of perfection.

(4.) It includes a believing acquiescence in Christ, as being, to the soul, instead of all those vanities which it formerly pursued; and as yielding a happiness that was sought for in vain among the objects of sense. Men eat for the allaying of hunger, as well as for the nourishment of the body. And we feel a pleasure, both in eating and after eating, proportioned to the pain that we endured by the gratings of hunger before. This prodigal is represented as having been ready to perish with hunger, before he returned to his father, and longing to "fill his belly with the husks that the swine did eat." And, doubtless, such a person would feel an exquisite pleasure, in feeding upon *the fatted calf*. His pinching hunger would be allayed, and he would no longer have any desire

after those empty husks which he coveted before. In like manner, if you really eat of this wonderful provision, that God is setting before you, it will more than supply the place of those empty and transient vanities, in which you fondly expected happiness before. You will find a satisfaction in using it, that all these could never afford you. Your hunger after them will be allayed, and you will consider the bread of your Father's house, as superseding all necessity for your seeking the food of your souls any where else.

8. The words of the text import, That, in making use of this noble provision, every returning prodigal has communion with God himself, and with his whole family. *Let us eat,* says the father of the prodigal, *and be merry;* plainly including himself, his other children, the friends of the family; and even the servants to whom he spake, as well as the young man lately returned to him. So the feast that God has provided, in consequence of the sacrifice of Christ, is intended for the entertainment of his whole family. They all sit at the same table, partake of the same provision, join in the same spiritual mirth; and, in every respect, hold such communion with one another, as fellow guests do in the celebration of a feast. Yes, Christian, whether you feed upon this provision in the gospel, or at the sacramental table, you therein have communion with the whole family of God; and with all the friends of the family, whether in heaven or on earth. God himself sits at the head of his own table; and though he cannot eat of the provision in the same sense as you do; yet there is nothing else upon which he feeds with equal satisfaction. Even typical sacri-
fices

lices are sometimes called "the bread of God*"; with how much more propriety may this all-sufficient sacrifice be so denominated? No creature is capable of taking such pleasure in the most delicious food, as may bear a comparison with that infinite satisfaction which God has in the sacrifice of Christ, and in entertaining his people with the flesh and blood of a crucified Redeemer. In feeding upon this sacrifice, therefore, you are honoured to have communion with God himself. You have communion with all the children of God on earth; for this is the only food, by which they are all nourished up to the day of complete redemption. You have communion also with the saints in glory; for there is nothing else served up, nor, indeed, would any other provision have any relish at the table in the upper house. You have communion even with the elect angels. Though they have no need of this provision, to prevent their longing for husks as you once did, nor yet to cure those spiritual diseases of which they have contracted none; yet there is no other provision upon which they feed with more satisfaction. To speak more plainly, though angels have no need of the sacrifice of Christ, as an atonement for sin, and though they can make no appropriation of him as their Redeemer; yet there is no subject which they contemplate with more pleasure, or in consideration of which they are more filled with heavenly joy, admiration, and praise, than the giving of Christ to be a sacrifice for sin, or the redemption of sinners to God by his blood; these "things the angels desire to look into †."

9. They import, that, in making use of this provision,

* See Lev. xxi. 6, 8.

† 1 Pet. i. 12.

sion, all the family of God, and especially prodigals lately returned to it, should concur in the exercise of spiritual mirth and gladness. Every *feast is made for gladness*; and it is very unseemly for a person to be dull, sullen, or melancholy on such an occasion. There never was, nor will be, any other feast, affording such cause of joy as this does. All who truly eat of it will do it with gladness; and all who are invited to it, are called both to *eat and be merry*. God himself rejoices in his Son, and over his people, at the feast. To Christ, the feast-day being "the day of his espousals," *is also* the day of the gladness of his heart. *There is joy in heaven, and before the angels of God,*" when prodigals return and feed upon this provision. And why should prodigals themselves be sad or melancholy? The feast was made for their reception. All the other guests rejoice at their happiness; and why should they, to whom all the advantage redounds, be the only persons to spoil the melody, or mar the joy of the feast? It is a shame for any of you to sit even at the gospel-table, without having your hearts filled with holy joy, and your mouths with a song of praise, on account of the glad tidings which the gospel brings, and of the rich provision with which it supplies you. Still more unseemly will it be, if any of you shall be seen at the *communion-table*, with sadness in your countenance, and nothing but complaints in your mouth. Has your heavenly Father slain the *fatted calf* for your entertainment? Has he given commandment to "bring forth the best robe and put it on you; to put a ring on *your* hand, and shoes on *your* feet?" Has he brought you, an outcast prodigal, into his house; set you down at his own table, and even *put*

you

you *among the children*? Does your Father himself, and the whole family, in heaven and in earth, rejoice at your restoration? Is the feast appointed, to give every one occasion to manifest his joy at the happy event? And shall you, who reap all the advantage, be the only person to disgrace the solemnity, by your unseasonable fears and complaints? Nay, Christian, "Eat thy bread with gladness, and drink thy wine with a merry heart;" it is the voice of thy heavenly Father, that saith, "Let us eat and be merry."

Finally, The words of the text import, That in this heavenly festivity there can be no excess. It was hinted in the entry, that the word here rendered to *be merry*, signifies to indulge one's self without restraint, in all those gratifications, and in all those signs of gladness, that are common at a magnificent feast. It is usually taken in a bad sense, to express those revellings and debaucheries that are practised by epicures and sensualists at their feasts. And it is remarkable, that words of such import are frequently used in Scripture, with relation to this spiritual feast. One instance of this we had occasion formerly to take notice of, in these words, "Drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved *." The word, as you then heard, signifies literally, *drink and be drunken*. Of a similar meaning is the word used in this text. And the design of using such a word is, to intimate, that neither in making use of this provision, nor in the spiritual mirth here recommended, is it possible to exceed. Though you should indulge yourself in it, to the same degree as the grossest sensualists do in carnal gratifications, it will be so far from offending, or degenerat-

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* Song v. 1. See page 313, of this volume.

ting into vice, that it will be no more than what is expressly warranted, and required of you, by the command of God. You may eat as much as you please at this feast; you can neither surfeit yourself nor exhaust the provision. Though you drink ever so plentifully, your senses cannot be disordered, nor yourself intoxicated. Neither can your joy rise to excess at this feast. The joy of the world soon becomes excessive, and degenerates into madness; because the cause of it is but trivial, and the degree of it is beyond the value of the object. But it is impossible for your joy ever to rise so high, as to bear any proportion to the cause, or to the object of it. In a word, You cannot stay too long in the banqueting-house, nor indulge your festivity till it become unseasonable. Not only while time remains, but even through the lasting ages of eternity, shall this feast continue to be celebrated. And no person, that has once tasted of the wonderful provision, shall ever rise from the table. Nay, Christian, you shall always continue to feed upon this bread of heaven, while you remain in the wilderness, whether you be sensible of it or not. And when you leave this world, you shall feed upon it still in the house above, where you shall be completely *satisfied* with the *fatness* of your Father's house; and shall drink eternally of *the rivers* of his pleasures.

WE are now to conclude with the following inferences from what has been said.

1. We here see what a happy change there is in the condition of every person, who, by divine grace, is enabled to return from sin unto God. The prodigal, clothed with the best robe, adorned with the family

mily ring, fortified with shoes on his weary feet, introduced into his father's house, restored to his father's favour, and feasted at his father's table upon the *fatted calf*, was a very different man from what he was a little ago; when his clothes were worn to mere tatters, his jewels forfeited to glut his appetite, his shoes worn quite off his feet, his whole stock spent up, himself enslaved to a cruel master, employed in the meanest drudgery; so much pinched for sustenance, that he longed to feed with the swine; and even that denied him, so that he felt himself ready to perish by hunger. Yet this is no more than a faint shadow of the happy change that is made, by divine grace, about everyone who is brought back to the house and family of God. As far as the soul is more valuable than the body, and eternity of more importance than time; so far is the misery of our natural estate, beyond what any earthly similitude can represent: and so far is the happiness to which we are restored, beyond any thing that is set before us by this, or can be set before us by any other sensible image. On the one hand, *the power of God's wrath* cannot be known by any finite capacity; and that is it to which we are all exposed in our natural estate. And, on the other hand, no "eye hath seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the good things which God has laid up for them that love him." And yet, in all these good things every person obtains an indefeasible interest, the moment that he returns to God as his Father.

2. We here see what is the real business about which we are assembled to-day. It is not barely to join together in the outward celebration of divine ordinances. It is not that ministers may speak, and
people

people hear, a few things about God and about eternal concerns. Nor is it that we may dispense, and you receive, the visible symbols of the broken body and shed blood of Christ. All this we may do, and yet do nothing to the purpose. Our proper business is, to join together, with spiritual mirth and gladness, in keeping a solemn feast upon God's *fatted calf* that has been *sacrificed for us*; or, in other words, to feed upon the flesh and blood of a crucified Redeemer, by an applying faith. This is not only the business of those who intend to partake at the sacramental table: it is the proper work of every one who hears the gospel. If this is not the errand upon which you came to this place, your external appearance belies you; you mock God to his face, and justly may he judge and condemn you out of your own mouth. The food that is to be served up on the sacramental table, is the same that stands before every one in this company on God's table in the gospel. The same feast is materially presented to you on both tables. All the difference lies either in the manner of exhibition, or in the persons who are welcome to each. In the gospel, the flesh and blood of Christ are exhibited immediately, to the faith of those that hear it; in the sacrament, they are exhibited to the bodily senses of communicants in a figure. They are exhibited to the eye, to the taste, and to the touch, under the symbols of bread and wine; as they have just now been to the ear, under the emblem of a fatted calf. In the gospel, this feast is made *unto all people*. God's provision is set before all indiscriminately; and every one is invited to eat of it, without waiting for any previous qualifications. But in the sacrament, it is pre-
sented

sented only to the children of God's family ; and no person is warranted to intermeddle with it, till he first return from his prodigal courses, be reconciled to God as his Father, be clothed with the robe of imputed righteousness, and brought into the house of God, so as to be secured against going any more out. Yet still it is the indispensable duty of all present, to feed upon the same provision. Since the fatted calf is killed, the marriage supper of the King's Son on the table, and an invitation tendered to every one of us ; why should we not all *eat and be merry?*

3. We see how noble and excellent this provision is, which God has ordered for our entertainment. You have heard of various excellencies which may serve to recommend it. But one half has not been told you. You heard that it is delicious and palatable, wholesome and even medicinal, substantial and nutritive, sumptuous and magnificent. You have been told that it affords security against the wrath of God, and ensures the accomplishment of all the promises of God's covenant, to every person that feeds upon it. You might likewise have been informed, that it is expensive and costly provision. All the gold and precious stones that lie hid in the bowels of the earth could not purchase a crumb of it. The whole creation of God amounts not to half its price. Even the treasures of eternity could not go higher. Though it is represented by the homely similitude of a fatted calf, it was actually purchased with the blood of the Son of God. It is mysterious and wonderful provision. Every thing about it is full of mystery, and will afford matter of eternal admiration. It is the flesh of a slain sacrifice, and yet it is *living bread*. It is bread to which all
that

that hear the gospel are invited, and yet bread that none but the children of God shall ever taste. Like the *pascchal Lamb*, one of its most lively types, it must be wholly eaten up the day we begin to feed upon it, and yet it shall last through all eternity. It must be wholly eaten by every guest at God's table; and yet it is sufficient for them all. It effectually quenches thirst, and allays hunger; so that he who feeds upon it shall never hunger nor thirst any more; and yet no person is capable either to hunger or thirst, till he eat of it. But why should I spend time in pretending to tell you what it is? All the redeemed from among men will eternally be employed in recounting its excellencies; and yet they will never be able to describe it so clearly, as to give a distant idea of it to any person who has not himself tasted it. If, therefore, you wish to know what it is, much better than I, or any such worm, or even an angel from heaven, can tell you; come, taste, "O taste and see that God " is good."

4. We may here find much assistance in the duty of self-examination, that is so necessary as a preparative for the great work of the day. None can be welcome to eat at the sacramental table, but they who have been enabled to return to God as their Father, and have previously fed upon the *fatted calf* in his house. Let every one who intends to communicate examine himself, and every one who intends not to communicate. It cannot be a loss to any of you, to know whether you live in God's family, or continue a slave to the devil; whether you are fed in the house of God, among his children, or starved in the open fields, among the devil's swine. It will be an un-
speakable

speaking advantage. That you may know it we would ask you,

(1.) Have you ever been sensible of the famine that prevails in the *far country*? Have you felt yourself longing to fill your belly with those empty husks which the devil's swine do eat, and been made sensible that such a thing was impossible? The prodigal, till he *came to himself*, still hoped to earn his bread in the stranger's service, and expected to cram his belly with the swine's provision. And every man that continues in a natural estate, though he may feel himself miserable for the present, still dreams of happiness among the creatures; and therefore continues his mad pursuit. But the man who has returned to God, has first been convinced that all earthly things are but empty husks; he despairs of finding happiness among them; he resolves to pursue it no longer, where he finds that it is not; and looks for it only in the house of his heavenly Father.

(2.) What appetite have you for the provision that stands upon God's table? All who ever tasted of it hunger vehemently, and thirst after righteousness; after the flesh and blood of Christ, as "the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die." Their earnest petition is, "Lord, evermore give us this bread." Nothing can satisfy them without Christ. They long for an interest in his sacrifice, as that which alone is sufficient to take away their sin. They look for satisfaction to their immortal souls, only in the enjoyment of thatfulness which God has lodged in his hand. And from thence they draw all their supplies, for spiritual nourishment, and growth in grace.

(3.) What

(3.) What think you of the company at God's table? You have heard, that in feeding upon Christ you have communion with God, with angels, and with saints; and is this the company that you choose, or with whom you desire to associate? He who loves to associate with the wicked, is himself a wicked man, let his pretensions be what they will. He only is returned to God's family, who, like Christ, looks upon "the saints as the excellent ones of the earth, with whom is all *his* delight." He loves them for their conformity to the image of God; and, on this account, has pleasure in communion with them; because he loves God above all things, and considers communion with him as the only happiness that is commensurate to the boundless desires of an immortal soul.

(4.) What do you know about that spiritual mirth that should ever accompany this feast. In the dwellings of the righteous is heard the melody of joy and salvation. All God's children have learned, in some degree, to rejoice in Christ Jesus, though they have no confidence in the flesh. They rejoice in God, even when deprived of all earthly comforts, and subject to the heaviest earthly miseries. They know something of a joy which may be, and is exercised even when they mourn and are in heaviness; either for sin itself, or for any of the consequences of it which they either feel or fear. And every new taste of this provision serves to increase their joy; the more they eat, the more are they disposed to be merry.

(5.) In a word, Are you willing to be God's servant, at the same time that you hope to be acknowledged

ledged by him as a son? When the prodigal first thought of returning, he resolved to apply for the place of a hired servant. And though this part of his resolution was not put in practice, nor ought to be imitated by us in every respect; it surely intimates to us this much, that every penitent sinner is weary of his former course of life, and abhors himself on account of it; *i. e.* To make provision for the flesh no longer; that he is pleased with the laws of God's house, is willing to subject himself to God's authority, and to be employed in his work; that though he looks for the privileges of a son, he resolves to employ himself as a servant, in a course of regular obedience to all God's holy commandments.

5. From this subject we may see in what frame of spirit communicants should go forward to the Lord's table. Consider, my dear brethren, the nature, the plenty, and the excellence of the provision; and see that you come forward with an appetite. *Blessed are they* who come to this feast, *hungering and thirsting after righteousness*; we dare promise, nay, the Lord himself has promised, that *they shall be filled*. Consider the solemnity of the feast; and come forward in the exercise of that reverence which is due to him who sits at the head of the table; and of that self-diffidence which must arise from a sense of your liability to miscarry. By all means see that you come forward arrayed in the best robe. Consider the occasion of the feast; and come forward, mourning deeply for that riotous course of life in which you was once engaged, resolving never more to return to it; influenced by the deepest gratitude, and the most fervent love to your heavenly Father, who gives you such a

kindly reception; and remembering with faith, love, admiration, and thankfulness, your glorious elder Brother, who made himself your sacrifice, and gives himself for your provision. Consider the happy relation in which you stand to the Master of the feast; and use all holy boldness and confidence, in taking and eating your Father's provision; nothing discouraged even by the consideration of your former prodigality. In a word, Consider the express command of your Father; and in obedience to it, come forward in the exercise of that heavenly joy and gladness which become such an occasion. Away with all your unbelieving fears, complaints, and down-castings; and "let us eat and be merry."

6. To conclude, We here see what ample encouragement prodigals of all sorts have to return to God as their Father; and to expect the most kindly reception, and the most plentiful entertainment in his house. Whatever be the riotous course that you have pursued, however far you have departed from God, however deeply you have been engaged in the devil's service, however long you have sought to fill your belly with husks, forgetting, and even despising all the bread of your Father's house; still, still you are welcome to return. God will not only meet you while you are yet afar off; he even comes to the far country to seek you back. He is ready to accept your acknowledgement, and to forgive and forget all that is past. You shall find every thing ready for you that you can stand in need of. The best robe is brought forth to be put upon you. There is a ring for your hand, and shoes for your feet. The fatted calf is sacrificed;

crificed; and behold it stands upon the table! Come then, without any further delay, and eat to the satisfying of your soul. Come, and eat so as to hunger no more. Come, and eat, without money and without price. Let *the poor, the halt, and the maimed come*; the robber that infests the *high-ways*, and the thief that lurks among the *hedges*; we have authority to *compel them all to come in*. Let every sinner, of every denomination, in this numerous assembly come; and *let us all eat and be merry*.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

ERRATA.

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