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ERSKINE'S SERMONS
AND PRACTICAL WORKS.

VOL. V.

THE SERMONS
AND OTHER
PRACTICAL WORKS

OF THE LATE
REVEREND RALPH ERSKINE, A.M.,
DUNFERMLINE.

CONSISTING OF
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AN ACCOUNT OF THE AUTHOR'S LIFE AND WRITINGS.

“By these he, being dead, yet speaketh.”—HEB. xi. 4.

A NEW EDITION.

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RALPH ERSKINE'S SERMONS.

SERMON C V. — C V I I I.

THE MAIN QUESTION OF THE GOSPEL CATECHISM, WHAT
THINK YE OF CHRIST? ¹

“What think ye of Christ?”—MATTHEW xxii. 42.

MY friends, if you have any regard to the voice of the Son of God, speaking to you in this text, then, to be sure, the application of it is begun, before ever we come to the explication of it. And, indeed, if the Lord himself would open and apply it to you, you would see more in it than we can tell you. Perhaps many here, when the minister reads his text, turn up their Bibles, and put a mark upon the place of scripture : very well : but then they think there is the minister's text, and so no more of it ; as if it were only the minister's concern, or at most, that it is only the minister's business to speak to his text, and their business to hear what he says. But, my friends, you would know that you have here more than a text, and it is my business at the time not only to read you a text, but to ask you a question ; and I cannot resume my text without proposing it, “What think ye of Christ?” And it is your business not only to hear seriously what is said, but to answer solemnly before God what is asked, namely, “What think ye of Christ?” If you take it up simply as my text, you will think yourselves little concerned with it ; but if you apprehend it as Christ's question to you, then your concern is great. It is not my question only ; but as Christ proposed it to the Pharisees here ; so, your hearing it

(1) This subject was the substance of four Sermons, preached at Portmoak, &c., on Sacramental occasions, August 22nd, 1725.

repeated to you in Christ's name, and from his word, makes it his question to you, "What think ye of Christ?"

At such solemnities as this, you have occasion to hear much of Christ; but now the question is, What think ye of Christ, of whom you hear so much? Many, the more they hear of Christ, the less they think of him; like Israel, when they had the manna so plentifully rained down about their tent doors, they thought very little of it. But woe will be to you who hear much of Christ, and yet think little or nothing of him: "If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ," says the apostle, if he hath no esteem of him, "let him be ANATHEMA MARANATHA" [*i.e.*, Accursed until our Lord come.] If you have the sacramental supper in view, you know Christ hath ordered you to search and try before-hand, saying, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat:" and now, if you would examine to purpose, I cannot see a more short and substantial question in all the Bible, to try yourselves by, than this is, "What think ye of Christ?" Solomon says, Prov. xxiii. 7, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he:" where he declares the man's state to be according as the thoughts of his heart go. Now, so it is here; truly, according as you think in your heart, especially concerning Christ, so are you, and so is your state in God's sight: according as you think highly and duly of Christ or not, so are you either a gracious or a graceless man; either a believer or unbeliever; either a man fit to go to a communion-table or not; and therefore inquire into it, "What think ye of Christ?" The trial here comes to a narrow point, wherein God only can be the witness who will be the judge. You may deceive men with your words and works, which is all we have to know you by: but here you are called to try yourselves by your thoughts, before that God that searches the heart, and sees the thought; "What think ye of Christ?"

The occasion of Christ's propounding his question was this. The Pharisees had proposed several questions to him concerning the law, by which they thought to have exposed him, while they did but expose themselves; particularly from verse 15 and downward, thinking to entangle him, "They sent forth their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, what thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?" What is lawful? or, What says the law concerning this? Christ answers the question to their astonishment and confusion. Again, from verse 23 and downward, the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection, came to him with a

question on that head; and they start a difficulty out of the law of Moses, which they thought was irreconcilable with the doctrine of the resurrection: but Christ answers that also, and puts them to silence. Again, afterwards, from verse 34 and downward, the Pharisees finding that the Saducees were silenced by him, they gather together their forces to puzzle and tempt him; and one of them, that was a lawyer, comes with another question to him, saying, "Master, what is the great commandment in the law?" Now, they having asked so many questions at him, and he having answered them all, it was time for him to ask them a question; and he does it while they are gathered together in confederacy against him: though their forces were united, and every one present to help another, yet he puzzles them; for God delights to baffle his adversaries, and conquer his enemies when they think themselves strongest, and have all the advantages they can desire. Now, Christ asked them a question which they could easily answer: it was a question in their own catechism; "What think ye of Christ?" And, "Whose son is he?" They answer truly according to the scripture, that he was the son of David. This they were taught from Psalm lxxxix. 35, and several other places, shewing that the Messiah was to be the seed of David, the rod out of the stem of Jesse. But now Christ starts a difficulty upon their answer, which they could not easily solve; nay, which silenced them, and all that sought occasion against him, ver. 43, 44, 45, "If Christ be David's son, how then is he David's Lord?" Christ did not hereby intend to ensnare them, as they did him, but to instruct them in a necessary truth which they were to believe, namely, that the expected Messiah is God as well as man; David's Lord as well as David's son; and so both the root and offspring of David, Rev. xxii. 15. Now, herein they were puzzled and put to silence.

Many are proud of their knowledge, because they can answer some questions of their catechisms as the Pharisees here did in general, but yet they have reason to be ashamed of their ignorance; for when the question is opened up, they cannot confirm the truth which they affirm, nor reconcile one truth with another, no more than the Pharisees here could: by which it was evident that though they answered, yet they did not understand this question which he proposed, 1. More generally, "What think ye of Christ," the Messiah? 2. More particularly, "Whose son is he?" It is the question, as proposed in general that I confine myself unto, yet not

excluding the other branch of it, as the subject may bring it in. When Christ proposed this question to the Pharisees, "What think ye of Christ?" no doubt they reckoned their thoughts of the Messiah were very sound and right every way, while they thought he was the Son of David; but like the damnable deluded Arian doctors of our day, they did not think so highly of him as to apprehend him to be the Son of God; they did not think so honourably of him as to own his being the supreme God, equal with the Father; for all their acquired and imagined knowledge, there was more in that question than they understood, "What think ye of Christ?"

The Pharisees had asked Christ several questions concerning the law, and the greater precept of the law; and now it was fit that Christ should ask them a question concerning the great promise of the gospel: they were so taken up with the law, they had no thought of the gospel; they thought so much of Moses, that they had no thought of Christ; therefore, says he, "What think ye of Christ?" Many are so full of the law that they forget him, who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. Here is a question to check the pride of the legalists, "What think ye of Christ?" There is a depth in every place of scripture, which, though it seems to be very plain to the carnal eye, yet the spiritual depth thereof cannot be founded without the help of the Spirit of God: there is also a great depth in this question; angels cannot sound the depth thereof, they pry into it, and cannot think enough of Christ; they can never think too much of him: and what shall men say in answer to it, "What think ye of Christ?"

To divide this text too critically, would, I suppose, be the way to confuse it, but I think every word hath an emphasis therein.

1. There is an emphasis in the interrogative particle *What*: "WHAT think ye of Christ?" What place do you give him? What value do you put upon him? What grandeur and glory do you ascribe unto him? What esteem have you of him? And so,

2. There is an emphasis in the verb *Think*: some think not of him at all, God and Christ is not in all their thoughts; some think meanly, some think basely, some think dishonourably, some think hardly of him: but what think ye? What is your judgment of Christ? What is your opinion of him? What is your sentiment of him? What is your apprehension of him? How stand you affected towards him? And what consideration have you of him?

3. There is an emphasis in the pronoun *ye*: “What think YE of Christ?” ye Pharisees and Sadducees; “What think YE of Christ?” Ye that are so busy in starting questions about the law, “What think ye of Christ, the end of the law?” Ye legalists and self-righteous persons, “What think ye of Christ?” Yea, though it was put to the Pharisees in particular, yet it concerns all in general. The trying question that is proposed for the conviction of hypocrites, and to find them out, is useful for the consolation and confirmation of believers, and for discovering their uprightness. While the daughters of Jerusalem think no more of Christ than of another beloved, saying, “What is thy beloved more than another? the spouse of Christ thinks him to be the chief among ten thousands. Therefore, it comes to you all, “What think ye of Christ,” believers and unbelievers? Surely, to them that believe he is precious.

4. There is an emphasis in the object or matter of the question, *Christ*; *What think ye of CHRIST?* What think ye of the Messiah? What think ye of the Anointed of God, the Christ of God? It is remarkable, Christ says not here, What think ye of ME? But, *What think ye of CHRIST?* that is God’s Anointed, and the Messiah promised to the fathers; and hereby it is intimate to us, that as Christ loves to magnify his office, as the Sent, and Sealed, and Anointed of God; so we cannot have right and becoming thoughts of him, unless we apprehend him in his saving offices, to which he is authorised of the Father; and so, when he says not, What think ye of ME? but, *What think ye of CHRIST?* He does not simply commend himself, but his Father also, who anointed him to that office; and himself, bearing his Father’s commission, and invested with his authority to save sinners: “What think ye of Christ?” Here is the proper object of the esteem of rational creatures, and especially mankind sinners, on whom their thoughts ought to be terminate. It is not, What think ye of God absolutely considered? For, God out of Christ is a consuming fire. It is not, What think ye of Moses? You magnify Moses and the law; but a greater than Moses is here, even he by whom the law is magnified and made honourable. It is not, what think ye of the ministers and their sermons? Oh! they are nothing but the image of death without him! but the question is, “What think ye of Christ?” The word itself is but a dead letter without Christ. It is a remarkable saying that Christ hath to the same purpose, John v. 39, 40, “Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are

they that testify of me. And ye will not come to me that ye might have life." You think you have eternal life in the scripture, but the scripture testifies of me; yet ye will not come to me, though the scripture testifies that eternal life is only to be had in me. Christ is the true God and eternal life, 1 John v. 20, "And this is the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son," ver. 11. Seeing, then that the scripture testifies of Christ, that eternal life is in him; in vain do men think to have eternal life, even in the scripture, while they will not come to Christ, that they may have life. People may think respectfully of the scripture, and yet perish in their ignorance, and die in a delusion, while they do not think respectfully of Christ, in a suitableness to the testimony that the scripture gives of him; therefore, the great question is still, "What think ye of Christ?"

OBSERV. "That the great question of the Christian Catechism, by which people are to try themselves, is this, "WHAT THINK YE OF CHRIST?"

Here you see Christ, who is the catechist, that puts the question, is also the catechism, the matter of the question. It is to this same purpose that Christ demands an answer to this question, both with respect to the people in general, what they thought of Christ, and also with respect to the disciples themselves, what they thought of him, Luke ix. 18, 19, 20, "Whom say the people that I am?" What is the sentiment and opinion of the people about Christ? It is answered for the people, that some took him for John the Baptist, some for Elias, some for one of the old prophets; they had an esteem of Christ, but not according to his worth and excellency, his grandeur and glory. Well, but says Christ to his disciples, "Whom say ye that I am?" What is your thought and judgment? Peter answers, in the name of the rest, saying, "Thou art the Christ of God." Believers only can answer this question to purpose, "What think ye of Christ?"

The method which I would here essay to prosecute, as the Lord may assist, shall be the following, *viz* :—

- I. To premise some general remarks for clearing of this doctrine.
- II. To shew what is the import of this question, in the several parts thereof.

- III. Offer some reasons of the doctrine, shewing why this is the leading and trying question in the Christian catechism.
- IV. Deduce some inferences, and so make application of the point, for informing of our minds, trying of our state, and directing of our thoughts and affections concerning Christ.

I. The first head proposed is, To offer some general remarks for clearing of the doctrine.

1. Remark, "That man is a thoughtful, or a thinking creature." God created him with a thinking faculty, capable of discursive thought and ratiocination; capable of rational cogitation concerning God, and spiritual objects, and celestial things; which beasts, that have some sort of thoughts yet are not capable of. I need not insist upon this, for some of you know, that even Pagan philosophers are acquaint with this, and that heathen poets have inferred it from the very frame and structure of the human body; as Ovid—

Pronaque cum spectant animalia cætera terram,
Os homini sublime dedit: Cælumque tueri
Jussit, et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus.¹

META. lib. i. fab. 2.

Man was endowed above beasts with a faculty capable of celestial contemplation. It is peculiar to the creatures called MEN and ANGELS, to think of God, and to think of Christ; other creatures are not capable of such thoughts; this is plainly supposed in this question, "What think ye of Christ?"

2. Remark, "That man's thoughts, together with all the faculties and powers of his soul, have got such a dash by the fall of Adam, that they were set a wavering after other objects, besides God the chief good; yea, the fall in a manner dashed out his brains; and his head being broken, God went out of his head, and the creature came in." Since that time, he could never have a right thought of God in his head; yea, God is not in all his thoughts; innumerable other things fill up the room which God should have. "He created man upright, but he hath found out many inventions," inso-much that now "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually," Gen. vi. 5. The world, and the lusts thereof, do monopolize and engross all the thoughts of the children of

¹ *i.e.*, "While other animals look downwards upon the earth, the Creator gave man a lofty face; and ordered him to look to heaven, and lift his countenance upright towards the stars."

men, and God is thrust out of them ; there is no room for God, or the Son of God. This wrong set of thoughts is also here supposed in the question, "What think ye of Christ?"

3. Remark, "That whatever confused thoughts, and dark apprehensions men may naturally have, now in their fallen state concerning God and his law, like the confused chaos, Gen. i. 2, 'Without form and void, and darkness upon the face of the deep;' yet thoughts of Christ, or of God in Christ, are what no man could ever have had in the least glimmering idea, by nature, without divine gospel-revelation." Adam fallen retained some awful and terrible thoughts of God ; but no thought could he ever have had of Christ, unless God had revealed him as the seed of the woman that was to bruise the head of the serpent. This is the mystery that was hid from ages and generations ; the great mystery of godliness, "God manifested in the flesh ;" God and Christ reconciling the world to himself, could not enter into our thoughts. Some natural impressions men have of God as a lawgiver, standing upon terms of obedience with them, according to the first covenant [namely, of works] made with the first Adam ; but God in Christ, as the end of the law for righteousness, and fulfilling the righteousness of the law in the sinner's room, is such a hidden mystery, so far above the natural thoughts of man, that even where the objective revelation of this mystery is made, without the subjective, internal, saving illumination in the knowledge thereof, men cannot have or entertain any due apprehensions of it, but remain doting upon their legal dreams and imaginations concerning God, as in the old covenant relation to them. This was evident in the Pharisees here, notwithstanding of the gospel-light they had both from the Old Testament prophecies and promises of Christ, and from the rays of the Sun of righteousness himself now risen among them ; still they were doting upon the law, and had some dark thoughts of God with relation thereto ; therefore Christ, to direct their thoughts in the only way to God, he leads them to himself. And as the disciples themselves, being but partly enlightened herein, need to be directed in their faith and spiritual thoughts of God, that they be not legal, terminating upon God absolutely, but evangelically upon Christ, or God in him, John xiv. 1, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me ;" so much more do blind Pharisees need to be directed to the right road, as here our Lord does. Ye think of God, but "What think ye of Christ?"

4. Remark, "When Christ is revealed, people may think of

him, and yet think amiss, unless their thoughts be spiritualized by a supernatural change of the mind and saving illumination of their understanding in the knowledge of Christ." Thoughts may be considered as either rational and speculative, which is just the work of the brain, and lies only in a bare theory of divine things; or, as practical and spiritually operative, which does not rest in the head, but affects the heart, and sets the affections in motion towards divine things, and raises the spiritual estimation thereof. Now whatever thoughts of Christ the natural man may have in the former sense, yet no suitable thoughts of Christ can he have in the latter sense, till a supernatural change be wrought by saving illumination. It is as impossible in the black state of nature to think upon Christ or spiritual things, in a spiritual manner, as it is for a man that was born blind to judge of colours, or to be taken up with their beauty and lustre, "The natural man receives not the things of God, they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned," 1 Cor. ii. 14. This discerning he cannot have, till he be translated out of darkness to God's marvellous light, and till the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness shine into his heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. iv. 6. People then may think of Christ, and yet think amiss, without this saving illumination. This is also supposed here in the question: for the Pharisees did not want some thoughts of Christ the Messias, and partly right thoughts too upon the matter, while they thought he was the Son of David; yet they were so far from being right thoughts of Christ as God-man, and as to the manner of thinking of him, that they had no due esteem of the true Christ; nay, "He was despised and rejected of men, as a root out of a dry ground, and as having no form or comeliness, Isa. liii. 3. And thus he is still undervalued by multitudes, who yet judge they have right enough thoughts of Christ; they think of him, but think amiss: and therefore the question is not merely concerning the act of thinking, but the quality thereof; it is not, have you *any* thoughts of Christ; do you ever think of him? but it is, *What* think ye of him?

5. Remark, "That man's thoughts are within God's jurisdiction, and under his authority." The commands of God extend not only to the outward, but the inward man of the heart, and consequently further than ever any earthly command could go; where was there ever a monarch that could give out such laws, as would

bind the heart and thoughts of men? If any mortal should make a law, that his subjects should not dare, upon their peril, to welcome a traitorous thought against his royal person, otherwise he would be revenged upon them; really such an one would deserve to be laughed at for his pride and folly, more than Caligula, who threatened the air, if it durst rain when he was at his pastime, who yet durst not look upon the air when it thundered. It were the height of madness, for any crowned head in the world, or potentate on earth, so far to forfeit their reason, as to think, that the thoughts of men's hearts were within their territories or jurisdiction; but behold, they are all under the authority of God; for his name is KARDIOGNOSTES, *the Searcher of the heart*, Acts i. 24, and the *Trier of the reigns of the children of men*. Think not that thoughts are free, any more than your words or actions before God. It is his prerogative to lay bands upon the inner man, and to judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, Rom. ii. 16, who is here the catechist, putting the question to you; and he is the fittest hand, for he knows what way your thoughts are running: he is the witness, and will be the judge of your thoughts, which are all under his jurisdiction. Therefore it is his unquestionable right, to call you to an account of your thoughts: thoughts are as visible and evident as action to him; Heb. iv. 12, 13, "The word of God, [the essential Word, the *Word that was made flesh*], is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart; neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." He knows our thoughts afar off, even before we conceive them; and thoughts are actions before him: heart-thoughts are heart-acts, and real deeds in his sight; the adulterous thought is adultery before him, and will be judged as such; the covetous thought is idolatry before him; the malicious thought is murder; and the unbelieving thought is unbelief; the contemning thought of Christ is contempt itself: he is an infinite Spirit, that sees your thoughts better than men see your actions; and therefore answer for your thoughts to him, "What think ye of Christ?"

6. Remark, "That as men may expect to be catechised, and examined of God, with respect to their thoughts as well as their actions, so especially concerning their thoughts of Christ." And as

God will judge us by the thoughts we have of Christ, so we ought to try and judge ourselves by this rule; for as our thoughts are, so are we; yea, God's thoughts of us are according to our thoughts of Christ. If we think nothing of Christ, God thinks nothing of us; if we think highly of Christ, God thinks highly of us in him: for, as God's thoughts of Christ are very high and honourable, he being the Father's darling and delight, Isa. xlii. 5; so, when our thoughts of Christ, in some measure, agree with God's thoughts of him, and we think highly and honourably of him, as God does; surely it is evident, that we have the Spirit of God; and that as God is well-pleased with Christ, so he is well-pleased with us in him. Now, if our thoughts and hearts condemn us in this matter, "God is greater than our hearts, and knows all things;" but if our hearts and thoughts condemn us not, then we have confidence towards God, 1 John iii. 20, 21. It is true, the natural conscience of men, and their thoughts, may accuse or excuse, and so condemn or justify them, according as they do good or evil, Rom. ii. 15; and to be thus condemned and justified, is no evidence of the man's state before God: for this only shews the work of the law, written in our hearts by nature, even the covenant of works, which says, That the doer of the law shall be justified, verse 13, and the breaker of the law condemned. These are some of the beams of nature's light; all men may find themselves condemned here, and they that think themselves justified here, before God, by their good deeds, they but discover their ignorance of the law, which condemns all vain and evil thoughts, as well as evil deeds; and therefore no man can have his heart and thoughts justifying him before God, nor a good conscience or confidence towards God, till once he come to think duly of Christ, from whom the law hath got full satisfaction to all its commands and demands, and by whose blood the fiery law is extinguished; the conscience being sprinkled with that blood, and so purged from dead legal works to serve the living God, the man hath confidence towards God, according to the measure of his faith, and regular thoughts of Christ. The more a man thinks upon the law, the more his thoughts condemn him, if he understood the spirituality of the law: but, the more he thinks of Christ, as the end of the law for righteousness, the more will his thoughts and conscience smile upon him, and give him confidence towards God; for, we have boldness to enter into the holiest, and to come to a holy God, by the blood of Jesus, Heb. x. 19. They that think much of themselves, and think

little or nothing of Christ, they are least in the kingdom of heaven : yea, they are not of that kingdom at all ; they despise Christ, and God despises them : but they that think little of themselves, or think nothing of themselves, but think much of Christ, and think every way highly and honourably of him, they are great in the kingdom of God ; Christ is great in their eye, and they are great in God's eye, being accepted in the Beloved : therefore, the great question is, " What think ye of Christ ?"

II. The second head proposed was, To shew the import of this question, What think ye of Christ? That people may not deceive themselves with passing thoughts they may have of Christ, I would more closely open up the meaning and import of the question ; and this being the main head upon the doctrinal part, we must explain the several branches of the question, and so shew the import of it. 1. Objectively with respect to the object, CHRIST. 2. Actively, with respect to the act of thinking. 3. Formally, with respect to the quality of the act, what sort of a thought it is ; What think ye of him ? 4. Subjectively, with respect to the persons that are the subjects, ye ; What think ye of Christ ?

1st, Then, I am to consider the import of this question with respect to the object, or matter of our thoughts, namely, CHRIST, What think ye of Christ? And here I own it is impossible for me to go through all that I thought might be said here ; there are so many things in Christ, that I found to be the matter of the question, he being all in all, and all the fulness of the Godhead being in him, that, before ever I was aware, there were more than a hundred questions occurred to me, that might be put upon this one particular ; and therefore I found a necessity of restricting myself. And though, if time allow, in the application I may, through grace, dilate upon some of these : yet at present I shall confine myself to what I judge precisely to be the scope of the text and context, and the intent of the Spirit of God in this question, " What think ye of Christ ?" That is, 1. What think ye of his righteousness? 2. What think ye of his pedigree? 3. What think ye of his person? 4. What think ye of his anointing? These four, I suppose, we will find as the special import of the question here.

[1.] What think ye of his righteousness? This I place first, because I judge, from what goes before, as the occasion of this question, that the great design of Christ therein was to lead off these self-righteous Pharisees from the righteousness of works and of the

law, concerning which all their questions were put to him, and to lead them to another righteousness, even to himself as the Lord their righteousness, the end of the law. As if he had said, You think to be justified by the deeds of the law; but how is that possible, seeing by the law is the knowledge of sin? Rom. iii. 20. If ye will stand close to these old-covenant terms with God, then let the law itself catechise you. Where is your righteousness of nature and practice, that the law requires? Where is your righteousness of thought, word, and deed, that it requires? Where is your righteousness of affection and action that it requires? Where is your perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience; your righteousness internal in heart, external in life, and eternal in duration which the law requires? for, "Cursed is every one that continues not in all things written in the book of the law to do them," Gal. iii. 10. The law will tell you, that though you keep it wholly, and yet offend in one point, you are guilty of all, James ii. 20. Now, is there no point wrong in your state, nature, heart, or thought, all your days, not to speak of your words and actions? If there be, then you are guilty of all; and seeing by the law is the knowledge thus of your sin and guilt, how can you be justified by the law? Can that holy, righteous law, pronounce you just and righteous? No, no; in vain do you think of righteousness by the law: therefore, what think ye of Christ the Messiah, who is called JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU: the Lord our righteousness, Jer. xxiii. 6. It is he that came to fulfil the righteousness of the law in his own person, really and actively, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, imputatively and passively, Rom. viii. 4. Is not this the only righteousness that magnifies the law and makes it honourable? You magnify your own righteousness, which does but disgrace and dishonour the law; but, "What think ye of Christ?" Do you magnify and honour him, as the Lord your righteousness? Ought not you to magnify that righteousness that magnifies the law, seeing it is more than an angelical righteousness? It is not the righteousness of a man only, or of David's son; but the righteousness of God, and of David's Lord. If you think no more of Christ but that he is David's son, no wonder than you be relying upon and following after the law, and a poor pitiful righteousness of your own; you have never seen the glory of Christ's righteousness: but if you think duly of Christ, you will see him to be the LORD JEHOVAH, and his righteousness to be a glorious divine righteousness, so as you will

count all things but loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of him, and to be found in him, not having your own righteousness that is after the law, but the righteousness which is of God in Christ, by faith, Phil. ii. 8, 9. Let all your questions about the law then, might Christ say, give way to this great question, What think ye of Christ, and his law-biding righteousness? Your righteousness will not abide the first fire of the law, when it comes to be discharged against you, and to exact obedience and satisfaction; but Christ's obedience and death answers the whole charge of its precept and sanction both to the full: therefore, "What think ye of Christ?" and what think ye of his righteousness? This is the first thing imported in this question, as it stands here.

[2.] What think ye of his *pedigree*? That this is imported in the question, appears from the connexion also, "Whose son is he?" What think ye of his pedigree? They thought it was easy to answer that question, by saying only, "He is David's son." They might have known it was not so easy to answer that question, if they had considered the question of the prophet Isaiah, chap. liii. 8. "Who shall declare his generation?" And the description which that prophet gives of him, Isa. ix. 6, that the name of the Messias, the child born, and the son given to us, should be, Wonderful, Counsellor, and the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace. What think ye of his pedigree as he is man? No doubt this was partly implied in the question; for Christ did not disprove their answer, though it was but the least part of the question: "He is David's son," say they; and it is right to think of him as the son of David, clothed with our nature: here was the great mystery of godliness, "God manifested in the flesh." It was no mystery for the Pharisees to think only that he was the son of David; David had other sons, and a numerous seed: and if that be all, that he was the son of David, they might thus think of Christ, and yet think nothing of him. But it is another thing to think of him as God in our nature. If we think duly of Christ as the son of David, or in human nature, then must we not think that God is come very near to us, so as there is a natural sibness betwixt him and us, he being bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh? Must we not think, that he wonderfully emptied himself of his divine glory, and humbled himself unto death? Though he thought it no robbery to be equal with God, yet he suffered himself to be denuded of his glory, clothed with rags of our flesh: God calls him the Man that is his Fellow;

yet he was made a fellow to thieves and malefactors, and a murderer preferred before him. Though he was the Prince of life, yet, as the word may be rendered, he EVACUATED or EMPTIED himself unto death; and yet, to them that know him, he is most lovely, even in his greatest abasement. What think ye of Christ as man, as the son of David, the son of man, a man of the same infirmities with us, except sinful infirmities? "He was made in all things like unto us, except sinful infirmities? He was made in all things like unto us, sin only excepted." He became a poor man, in all outward respects; a distressed man, "A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief:" a tempted man, tossed and tempted of the devil sometimes, he going through all the ages of a man, first conceived, then born, then a babe, then a youth, and at last the perfect stature of man: He became a mortal man, and accordingly was put to a painful and shameful death; yet a holy man, a wonderful man, a God-man: What think ye of the man Christ Jesus? But the main thing imported in the question here with relation to his pedigree, is, What think ye of his pedigree, as he is God? What think ye of Christ, in this respect? For to separate Christ from God, is to make him no Christ; therefore, the question is, "What think ye of Christ, whose son is he," with respect to his divine nature, as well as his human nature? That this was the import of the question, appears from his reply to their answer, "How then does David call him Lord?" He is Lord JEHOVAH, the "only begotten Son of God, John i. 18; The brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, Heb. i. 2: By whom all things were made," John i. 3. It is the Arian blasphemy, to affirm him to be no more but *Omoiusius patri*, but not *Omousius*: that is, like unto the Father, but not the same essence and substance with him. He is, according to his Godhead, arrayed with all glory. All the creatures are to him as the drop of a bucket: yea, as nothing, and less than nothing and vanity; he hath a name above every name; and all the creatures are but shadows to him, who is the substantial image of God. He is the eternal Son of God, by an ineffable generation; whatever Arians and Atheists think of Christ; yet Christ himself thought it no robbery to be equal with God, Phil. ii. 6. Therefore, "What think ye of Christ?" is he no more but the son of David? The Jews looked upon Christ, as an ignorant clown, or silly person, will look upon the sun; and, it may be, will think it no bigger than his bonnet; or at most, no larger than a mill-stone; so did the Jews. The Pharisees looked upon the Son of God, saying, "Is

not this the carpenter's son?" but their utmost was, that he was the son of David; they did not see him to be the Son of God. "What think ye of Christ?" Do ye see all the attributes of God to be in him? and all his actions, as Mediator, to be dignified with infinite virtue and value? that he was able to satisfy infinite justice? that he is able to save to the uttermost? that he is the adequate object of divine worship, and a full suitable portion for an immortal soul, because he is the Son of God, as well as the son of David? All this is imported in the question, "What think ye of Christ?"

[3.] What think ye of his person? This question is also plainly imported in that, "What think ye of Christ?" namely, as he is God-man in one person, and the second person of the glorious Trinity? It is plain, that Christ speaks of himself here as personally considered, and as having two distinct natures in one person. Now, the human nature of Christ is not a person distinct from the divine; though the natures are distinct, the person is one. But the answer of the Pharisees to this question shewed they had no distinct knowledge of this mystery; for they answer, "He is the son of David;" without knowing that he was the Son of God, as well as the son of David, in one person; which made Christ here to declare his sovereign Lordship and Godhead, as well as his manhood. The mystery of the question then, which they did not understand, was, What think ye of that wonderful person God-man, in whom the human nature is advanced to such an unspeakable dignity, as to be united to, and of the same personality with the Son of God! Here is matter of thought to an intelligent mind: What think ye of the wonderful manner, in which sinful men may come to be partakers of the divine nature, even by the holy Son of God, his being a partaker of the human nature? Here is a glorious subject for thought and contemplation. What think ye of the wonderful way that God in his infinite wisdom hath taken, to bring God and men together, even in and through him, who is both God and man, and partaking of both natures in one person, is fit for bringing both God and man into one, and to lay his hand upon both parties? What think ye of such a glorious person as finite and infinite, time and eternity, Creator and creature joined together? "The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," John i. 14.

[4.] What think ye of his unction or anointing? This, I sup-

pose, must also be the import of the question objectively considered, as it is here generally proposed: for, Christ signifies *Anointed*: in the Hebrew it is *Messias*; in the Greek it is *Christ*; and in our language it is the *Anointed*: and this being the main word, on which the weight of the general question itself lies, it is the more necessary that this be particularly opened. The question then comes to this in general, What think ye of his Father, the Anointer? John vi. 27, "For him hath God the Father sealed." How? See Psalm xlv. 7, "God, thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." How much pains is Christ at, in the gospel, to recommend his Father, as sending and authorizing him to his mediatorial work? Again, What think ye of his office, to which he is anointed? He hath not taken the honour of the mediatorial office upon him, without being called of God, and Anointed of God thereunto, Heb. v. 5. We do not think honourably enough of any of his saving offices, unless we, at the same time, apprehend his divine unction thereunto. Again, it comes to this, What think ye of his Spirit, the ointment wherewith he is anointed? Isa. lxi. 1, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, for he hath anointed me. Isa. xlii. 1, I have put my Spirit upon him, and he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." There is the meaning of the question in general, with respect to this Christ, who is the subject matter of the question: but there is much in this name CHRIST, and more than we can tell; I only name some particulars further here imported.

1. What think ye of his prophecy and teaching? For, as Christ he is anointed to be a prophet, "Who teaches like him?" says Elihu, Job. xxxvi. 22. Other prophets and teachers have no wisdom but what he gives them; but "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Other prophets may err, but he teaches infallibly; for he is truth itself, *full of grace and truth*. Other teachers may be dashed, but he teaches authoritatively; "He speaks as one having authority and not as the Scribes." Other teachers may fail in their design, and prove unsuccessful in their work; but he teaches efficaciously: men work upon a capacity, but he can give a capacity, "The entrance of his words giveth light; he gives understanding to the simple." The excellency of his teaching is singular, if we consider his ability and fidelity; the matter of his teaching is singular, if we consider it is the whole will of God for our salvation; the manner of his teaching is singular, if we

consider it is by his word and Spirit ; and even by a human voice he can convey his divine power ; the extent of his teaching is singular, if we consider it extends to all sorts of persons, Jews and Gentiles, and to all sorts of things necessary to eternal life : this anointing teaches all things, 1 John ii. 27. In a word, none have authority to teach, but by commission from him ; neither can any other teacher preach himself, " We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord ;" and, " To him gave all the prophets witness : " but it is his prerogative alone, to preach himself, saying, " Come to me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Look to me and be saved : I am the rose of Sharon ; I am the light of the world ; I am the way, the truth, and the life." O then, was there ever any prophet or teacher that could compete with him ? " The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, says Christ, for he hath anointed me to preach glad tidings to the meek." He is the Christ, the anointed prophet ; and, " What think ye of Christ ?"

2. What think ye of his priesthood ? for, as Christ he is anointed to be a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedic. All the Levitical priests were but shadows and types of him, who was the true Priest, the true Temple, the true Altar, the true Sacrifice, all in one. What high thoughts may we have of his oblation, or obedience unto death, even the death of the cross ? For here was the grand condition of the covenant of redemption, or grace, fulfilled. The covenant of grace was all grace with respect to God, who, of his grace, found out the ransom ; and, with respect to us, who are saved by grace : but, with respect to Christ, it is a covenant made upon terms and conditions, namely, his obedience, righteousness, passion, and oblation ; " Whom God hath set forth to be the propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past," Rom. iii. 25. O what a free, full, perfect, holy, sweet, and satisfying sacrifice did he offer up of himself, even a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour unto God, whereby justice was satisfied, wrath appeased, sin expiated, God atoned, death vanquished, hell quenched, heaven purchased, and the devil's kingdom destroyed ; for, " By death he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil ! " What may ye think of his intercession, grounded upon this oblation ? " For he is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him, because he ever lives to make intercession." Here is the antidote against all charges and accusations, Rom. viii. 33, 34 ; the antidote against all temptations,

Heb. ii. 17, 18, iv. 14, 15 ; an antidote against all the snares of the world, John xvii. 15 : against all sins, failings, and infirmities, 1 John ii. 1, 2 : against all fears through sense of unworthiness, to draw near to God's throne of grace, Heb. iv. 15, 16, x. 19, 22 : and against all fears of apostacy and falling away, John xvii. 11. O Sirs, his promise, his power, his prayer, give great security, and greater cannot be given ; he hath prayed for the Spirit, and the constant abiding thereof, John xiv. 16, 17, see also John iv. 14. Christ's intercession is founded on his oblation : and the Father is so well-pleased with the oblation, that he cannot refuse his intercession ; nay he hears him always. Therefore, "What think ye of Christ?"

3. What think ye of his kingdom and royalty ? The question, "What think ye of Christ?" imports this also ; for, as Christ, he is anointed to be a King : "I have set my King, [or, as it is in the Hebrew, ANOINTED my King], upon my holy hill of Zion," Ps. ii. 6. Is not all power in heaven and earth committed unto him, having on his vesture and thigh this name written, KING OF KINGS, and LORD OF LORDS ? He is the King eternal and immortal ; the government is upon his shoulders ; and of the increase of his kingdom and government there shall be no end. His delivering up the kingdom to the Father at last, is but a changing the manner of his administration, and delivering up all his members, of whom his kingdom consists, unto his Father, to be eternally crowned, and glorified ; he will reign through eternity, and the children of Zion will be joyful in their King, and sing through eternity. I might here shew what a powerful and peaceable, mild and merciful, wise and holy, just and righteous King our Lord Jesus is ; and then ask you, "What think ye of Christ?" But it is not possible to give so much as a hint at the thousandth part of his glory and royalty. His kingdom is spiritual and eternal : if you be his spiritual subjects, his kingdom is within you ; yea, though you be yet subjects to the devil, he hath power over all hearts, and can soften the hardest, and bind the stoutest, and make the people fall down under him : yea, as he is able, so he is willing : for, he is not only the God of power, but the Prince of Peace, Isa. ix. 6 ; and, therefore, as a Prophet, he preaches peace ; as a Priest, he purchases peace ; and, as a King, he proclaims peace ; yea, "Creates the fruit of the lips, peace ; peace to him that is afar off, and to him that is nigh." As a powerful Potentate, he is able ; and, as a Prince of peace, he is

ready to save to the uttermost. As he is full of power, so he is full of pity; and his power and peace both are joined together, for the encouragement of sinners to come to him; "Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me," Isa. xxvii. 5. Perhaps, by the by, some poor soul is thinking, Oh! but I have no strength to take hold of his strength. Well, it is right to think so of yourself, and of your own weakness and wickedness: but no strength comes in by that thought, while poring on yourself only; that is but the half of what you are to think, when you think right of yourselves, as weak and wicked. But, what think ye of Christ our glorious King? If you can think honourably of him, as able and willing to help you, O then you would find strength coming in with such a thought: and high thoughts of a powerful and merciful King JESUS, is one of the ways of taking hold of his strength. If you suppose that you think he is able and ready, and yet you find no strength coming in. O Sirs, suspect your own thought of him, that it is but a misbelieving and dishonourable thought: for, I assure you, right thoughts of Christ will set the heart all in motion towards him. But now, O! there would be no end in speaking of the royalties of King JESUS; his royal throne, his royal crown, his royal victories, his royal triumphs, and the royal entertainment that he gives to his subjects at his table above, and even below, when he brings them to his banquetting-house. I shall only add, that it is said of Solomon, there was no king like him; so, behold a greater than Solomon is here: there is no king like him who is the King of Zion; he hath all other kings under his check and control; and what think ye of Christ then? Other kings have their dominions, for the most part, by usurpation, by encroachment; but Christ is King constitute of his Father, "I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth," Psal. lxxxix. 27; and all this for the good of the people, "He hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be head over all things unto his church," Eph. ii. 22. This leads to another import of the question; that is,

4. What think ye of his authority and ability, commission, fulness, furniture and fitness for executing these saving offices? For all this is implied in the designation CHRIST, *the anointed*; that is, one commissioned and qualified of God, by a supereminent unction, John iii. 34. Behold his excellency here, above all that ever had the like offices. Behold he is anointed, for the concur-

rence of all these offices, whether general, as Saviour, Surety, and Redeemer; or particular, as Prophet, Priest, and King. Some have been prophets, some priests, some kings anointed; but never any was anointed to all these but Christ: "What think ye of Christ? Behold the matter of his anointing; others have been anointed with material oil, but he is anointed with holy oil, the holy Spirit. And whereas others have had the Spirit in some respects, therefore behold the measure of his anointing; others were anointed in measure, but he without measure; they may have a fullness of sufficiency, but he hath a fulness of redundancy; they a fulness like the fulness of a vessel, but his the fulness of an ocean; they a plenitude, but he a fountain. Behold and view the duration of his anointing; his saints and servants may have the Spirit sometimes working, sometimes ceasing, sometimes flowing, and sometimes ebbing; but Christ is anointed with an enduring unction, John i. 33. The Spirit that descended on him, did remain and rest upon him; see Isa. lix. 22. Hence behold also the equality of his anointing with himself: the Spirit given to others, that were invested with an office in God's house, did work with them as mere men; there was no equality betwixt them and the Spirit given to them: but as Christ is anointed with the Spirit, as he is Mediator, God-man; so, as to God, he is co-equal with the Spirit, wherewith he is anointed; yea, the same in substance, equal in power and in glory with the Father and with the Holy Ghost. And, "What think ye of Christ?" his authority, ability, and furniture for his work? In a word, behold the efficacy of his anointing; and the communicable nature thereof: "He is anointed above his fellows; yet so, as he hath fellows to whom he allows fellowship in the same anointing: he hath not only received the Spirit of all grace and gifts for himself, but he received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, Psalm lxxvii. 18. Hence, according to his pleasure, he allows the oil to drop down to the skirts of his garment; yea, like rain upon the mown grass, or showers that water the earth, Psalm lxxii. 6. It is true, ministers anointed with the Spirit are to drop, Ezek. xx. 46, "Son of man, drop thy words towards the south;" and Moses says, "my doctrine shall drop as the rain:" but as the clouds from whence the rain descends, have not their water originally in themselves, but from the sea, and moist places of the earth, exhaled and drawn up by the heat of the sun; so, no minister of Christ hath a faculty of teaching heavenly and divine things, and saving gospel-truths of himself; but it is drawn

up out of Christ, as out of a full sea and ocean of all wisdom and knowledge : and is conveyed unto them by the heat and vigour, not of their own spirit, but the Spirit of Christ, who is anointed, to anoint others. And, O for a liberal share of his anointing among us at this occasion ! In a word, the name Christ imports such an anointing as, that he is qualified with all authority and ability, all furniture and fittedness for his work of saving sinners ; with all fulness of divine perfections, and all fulness of mediatorial gifts and graces : and all this is imported in the question, "What think ye of Christ?"

5. What think ye of his aromatical savour? For this is his name, *Christ, the anointed*; his ointment casts a perfume through heaven and earth. How savoury is he to God? Why, his sacrifice was a sweet-smelling savour unto his Father, Eph. v. 2. The stinking smell of sin is extinguished thereby; and the persons and performances of believers perfumed: and hence, how savoury also to believers? Song i. 3, 5, "Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth; therefore do the virgins love thee." Were it no more but the name JESUS a SAVIOUR, may it not be so delightful to sinners, as to cause their hearts to leap within them when they hear it; as John leapt in his mother's womb for joy, at the voice of the blessed virgin's salutation? Luke i. 44. O! what think ye of the sweet name JESUS! It should even pluck your heart out of your bosom, and transplant it into the bosom of Christ. How delightful is the very naming of a temporal Saviour to them that are in misery, when they hear of his ability and readiness to deliver them? And may not your heart even exult within you for joy, when you hear us speak to you of such a Saviour, that saves from sin and wrath? O sweet-smelling name! O have you no sense of smelling! "What think ye of Christ?"

6. What think ye of his beauty and comeliness? This is also imported in his name CHRIST, and so in the question, What think ye of Christ, the Anointed? "Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart," says Solomon, Prov. xxvii. 6. Now, Christ is anointed with the oil of gladness, Psal. xlv. 7; and "A glad heart makes a cheerful countenance:" yea, "Oil makes the face to shine," Psal. civ. 15. A saint, that hath but a sprinkling of this oil, how will his face shine, and his countenance, like Hannah's, be no more sad? How did Moses' face shine when some of this oil was upon him? But, O what think ye of the shining glory and comeliness of Christ,

who is anointed from head to foot! Is he not altogether lovely? Is he not white and ruddy, the chief among ten thousands? Is he not a perfect beauty? All God's fulness is in him: all God's beauty is in him; all God's glory is to be seen in the face of Jesus, 2 Cor. iv. 9. O then, "What think ye of Christ?"

7. What think ye of his worth and preciousness? This is also imported in the name CHRIST, and so in the question, What think ye of Christ, the Anointed? For it is precious ointment, Psal. cxxxiii. 2. Ointment was reckoned of great worth and esteem among the Jews; it was among the precious presents that were sent unto kings, Isa. lvii. 9, Hos. xii. 1. O how great is the preciousness and worth of Christ! It is the delight and recreation, the study and occupation of elect angels, to pry into the preciousness of Christ, to look upon the frame and fabric of salvation to mankind sinners, by Christ, that they may therein observe the glorious attributes of God: his wisdom, power, holiness, justice, truth, mercy, all shining and glittering in it, like bright stars in the firmament. Let a profane world think what they will of Christ: let them slight him and his gospel; let them scorn him, and cast him at their heels, let them trample on his blood and passion, as their manner is, making it a common and worthless thing; let them despise his high and celestial mysteries; we need not care for their thoughts; it is enough that God the Father hath honoured and exalted him: that the holy angels do reverence and worship him; and that all the saints do magnify him: "To them that believe he is precious." O! his blood is precious blood, his promises are precious promises, his love is precious love; and every thing about him is precious: "What think ye of Christ?"

8. Again, to add no more here, What think ye of his virtue and usefulness? This, I suppose, is also imported in the name CHRIST, and in the question, objectively considered, What think ye of Christ, the Anointed? For, as ointment was, and is of manifold usefulness, so is Christ: especially oil hath a two-fold virtue (1.) A mollifying virtue, and a softening quality; such is the virtue of Christ. Were the heart never so hard, he can soften and mollify it; a drop of that oil with which he is anointed, I mean the smallest saving motion of his Spirit, can melt and dissolve the heart, though it were harder than a stone or adamant, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. (2.) It hath a medicinal virtue; hence it is said of the Samaritan, Luke x. 34, that he poured in oil into the wounds of the distressed man.

Christ is the tender-hearted Samaritan; his blood and Spirit is the ointment for curing all the wounds that we have got by the old serpent. What wounds, what plagues, what deadly diseases and desperate maladies are among you! Behold, there is no disease out of hell that surmounts the medicinal virtue that is in Christ! O then, "What think ye of Christ?" Is there none here to think highly of him? Now, these particulars that I have mentioned, are imported in the very name CHRIST: and so implied in the question, objectively considered, or with respect to the object thereof, "What think ye of Christ?"

2dly, The second thing here proposed was, to shew the import of this question actively considered; or with respect to the act of thinking? "What THINK ye of Christ?" Now, the full import of this question, thus viewed, may comprehend more than people are ready to imagine. It is not a passing thought, or fleeting imagination; we ought not to explain the words of Christ by the motions and notions of our own spirits: we need the Spirit of Christ to explain the words of Christ according to the mind of Christ, 1 Cor. ii. 17. We may be sure, as the apostle says, 2 Cor. ii. 5, that, "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, our sufficiency must be of God." And if we can think of nothing aright of ourselves, far less can we think of Christ: and as none can speak duly of Christ, nor call Jesus LORD, without the Spirit; so neither can we think duly of Christ, without the Spirit of Christ. What then is the meaning of this question relating to its act of thinking, "What THINK ye of Christ?" There are these following particulars, which, I suppose are implied therein; and which I also propose by way of query, that you may still search yourselves, and apply as we go along.

1. "What think ye of Christ?" That is, What know ye of Christ? What understand ye of Christ? Surely ye cannot have a right thought of that which ye do not know or understand. Have you got the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of Christ? Eph. i. 17. Hath the God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shined into your hearts, to give you the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ? Hath God revealed his Son in you? Gal. i. 16. Have you seen the Son? He that sees the natural sun in the firmament, hath a thought of it suitable to the sight he hath thereof; but a man that hath been born blind, and never saw the light, he cannot have a right notion or

thought of the sun, though you should speak never so much of the glory of it to him. I have heard of a man born blind, on whom a great deal of pains was taken to let him understand what a glorious creature the sun was, and what bright beams and rays it sends forth through all the world; but he was so far from having any right thoughts about it that, after all the pains taken on him that was possible, he cried out, "O now, says he, I know what it is like, it is just like the sound of a trumpet." Poor man! that was the best notion he could frame about it, for he never had eyes. So it is here, Sirs; we are all born blind, having no spiritual eyes, till God open the eyes of the understanding, and enlighten the mind in the knowledge of Christ: we may speak of his glory and excellency, but the best you make of him is, O he is like a very stately and majestic person as ever ye saw or heard tell of! and so you frame the image of a very great man, sitting on a lofty throne, compassed about with so many sparkling attendants in fine robes: and what you have heard with your natural ears of any person, or seen with your natural eyes, or can conceive with your natural understanding and reason, helps you to, or furnishes you with materials for framing such a notion of him. But what is all this? It is nothing but an image of your own brain, a carnal fantastical thought; the true Christ is the image of the invisible God, the wisdom of God, and the power of God, God-man in one person. Now, have you got a spiritual discerning; for, "The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God; they are foolishness to him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The world cannot think of Christ, far less think much of him, because they do not know him: like Æsop's cock, contenting himself with, and thinking more of a barley-corn than of a pearl because he knew not the worth of it; so the world think more of a barley-corn of temporal good things than they think of the Pearl of great price, because they know it not. Therefore the question imports, What know ye of Christ?

2. "What think ye of Christ?" That is, what *believe* ye of Christ? Knowledge and faith are like the two eyes of the soul: knowledge is the discerning and apprehending eye; faith is the applying and appropriating eye. And as saving knowledge is objective faith, and saving faith fiducial knowledge: so, without knowledge we cannot think duly of Christ, with respect to what he is in himself; and without faith we cannot think duly of Christ, with

respect to what he is to us, so as to receive the record of God, namely, "That God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his son," 1 John v. 11. Which record, "Whosoever believeth not, hath made God a liar," ver. 10. That the question concerns this believing thought of Christ is plain from the context, wherein Christ shews they had but unworthy thoughts of him if they did not see him to be David's Lord, that is, the true God, and eternal life; in and through whom, as the God-man, this life was to be conveyed from God to man. This question, then, is a trial of our faith, which faith is the evidence of things not seen. And, I suppose one of the reasons why Christ here says, "What think ye of CHRIST?" and not "What think ye of ME?" is because, though now they were speaking to him, and seeing him with their bodily eyes, yet their faith was not to terminate on what was the object of their sense. We have no more faith than an ox or a horse, if we believe no more than we see or feel: the brute beasts think they have what they find they have by seeing and feeling; but what do you, that are rational creatures, think of things that cannot be seen or felt? "Faith is the evidence of things not seen." The Pharisees here, they saw Christ, they saw his miracles; but yet, for all that, they saw not the true Christ by faith, while they saw not his invisible glory, his invisible Godhead, nor the invisible seal appended to his commission for saving sinners. Therefore it is not, What think ye of me? Your eyes see me as if I were no more but a man like yourself: but, "What think ye of CHRIST?" Do you believe no more of Christ than you see? If so, then you have no right thoughts of Christ at all, because you have no faith. My friends, the question concerns you also; it is not, What see or feel you of Christ? but, What believe ye of Christ? There is a threefold seeing or feeling, that is to be separate from believing.

(1.) The first is a corporeal seeing or feeling. Thomas thought it a better way to believe Christ to be risen by seeing and feeling him, than by running to the promises without sight of him; and we all naturally follow him: but Christ tells him that the best and most blessed way was quite contrary to that; "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed," John xx. 29. Again,

(2.) There is a rational seeing that is to be separate from believing. Though none can believe without the exercise of their rational faculties spiritualized; and though it be the highest reason to believe what God speaks; yet to make natural reason the rule or

ground of faith is not to believe at all, but the way to doubt of all that ever God said. Thomas consulted with reason, and reason consulted with death and the grave, whether they could send their guests away back, to live again in the world; and so he believed not. If Abraham had not separated the sight of reason from his faith, in the promised seed, where would his faith have been? Natural reason might say, "Hark you, Abraham; is it possible that you and Sarah can now have a son betwixt you, when you are both come to such an age that you are but dead stocks?" But, when reason began to speak, Abraham stopped his ears; "He considered not the deadness of his own body, nor of Sarah's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God, through unbelief, but was strong in the faith, giving glory to God; being fully persuaded, that he that had promised was able to perform," Rom. iv. 19, 20, 21. Perhaps reason is whispering into the ears of some here, saying, O man, woman, you are but a dead stock, a dead stone; do you ever think to be a child of Abraham, or that you will bring forth fruit unto God? But, if you believe with Abraham, you will say, Hold your peace, carnal reason, you are but a blind fool in the matters of God: cannot God, out of stones, raise up children unto Abraham? And as he is able, so he hath given me many promises in his word, which he allows me to build upon, and commands me to believe. Unbelief builds always upon sense and reason; but faith builds upon the power and promise of God. What believe you of Christ?

(3.) There is a spiritual seeing that is to be separated from faith. It is true, there is a spiritual seeing of sanctified knowledge and understanding, which I spoke of already, that is essential to faith; there can be no believing without this seeing: "He that sees the Son, and believes in him, hath everlasting life." But there is a spiritual seeing of experience, or experimental sense and feeling which is to be separate from believing; such as spiritual mourning, spiritual joy, spiritual enlargement, or such like workings of the Spirit. Where these are they should indeed be cherished with thankfulness, as being a taste of heaven, and a comfortable means of glorifying God on earth: but it is dangerous to make them the ground of faith; for they are ebbing and flowing, up and down, it may be twenty times, in the space of one sermon; and your faith that is built thereupon, will be up and down therewith. If you believe no longer than you see and feel, no wonder that you be always doubting when you are not feeling. And so you are never

living by faith ; for you are not properly believing when you are feeling ; faith is one thing and feeling another : or, if you build partly on the feeling of God's work within you, and partly on the truth of God's word without you, then you are like one that would build a house partly upon thawing ice, and partly on a firm rock ; surely that part of the house that was built on the ice will tumble down whenever the ice melts ; but, were the building of faith wholly upon the firm rock, that changes not with the changes of your sense and feeling, you would find no more cause of doubting when you have, than when you want these changeable things : you would be thankful when you have them, and yet not doubtful when you want them. Unbelief, which builds upon things seen and felt, says and thinks, in the want of these, O ! all is good, and so razeth the foundation : but faith, which is the evidence of things not seen, says, even in the want of these, All is yet well and secure, Christ is what he was, the promise is what it was, the truth of God is what it was, however I be changed. These are the different thoughts of faith and unbelief, and what think ye ? I suppose, when the meaning of the question is, What believe ye of Christ ? the most part will find that either they have no faith, or very little.

Thus Paul believed contrary to sense and feeling when he got the promise of his own life, and the life of all that were in the ship with him ; "I believe God, says he, that it shall even be as it was told me," Acts xxvii. 25. See in what circumstances he was, when he thus believed, verses 15, 18, 20 ; their light was gone, the tempest was on them, and all hope from outward appearance was gone ; yet Paul was assured and persuaded that God would do as he had said : why, might unbelief say, if the sun were shining, and a fair wind blowing ; if the Sun of Righteousness were shining on me, and the wind of heavenly influence blowing, and I were fair before the wind, then I would believe : but now, when there is nothing but darkness and tempests, how can I believe ? No, indeed, you cannot, while you make sense and feeling the ground of your faith, and not the truth and veracity of God in his word of grace and promise. Thus it is in the matter of justification before God. The believer is to look upon himself as righteous, through the righteousness of Christ ; to believe himself perfect in Christ, and fiducially to think himself righteous in Christ : no, says unbelief, I cannot think that, because I feel the contrary ; I feel my own unrighteousness, sin, and corruption : why, if there were no sense or feeling of sin, there would

be no room for faith: if you had a righteousness of your own, and a feeling thereof, then you would have no need of Christ's righteousness; but now that you have a feeling of your unrighteousness and sin, there is room for faith, according to such a word as that, 2 Cor. v. 21, "He hath made him to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." The very essence of faith here is to believe the quite contrary to what we see and feel in ourselves, saying, In myself I have no righteousness, no strength, but, "Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." Now, though I should shew no more of the import of this question, "What think ye of Christ?" but these two, namely, What know ye of Christ? and, What believe ye of Christ? Surely it is a matter of eternal consequence to answer this question, thus explained, for if you miss the answer to these two branches of this question, your doom at the great day will be dreadful; 2 Thess. i. 7, 8, "He will be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know him not, and obey not the gospel;" that is, who never had such thoughts of Christ as to know him, and believe in him as the Christ of God. Again,

3. "What think ye of Christ?" That is, What love ye of Christ, and what favour have ye for him? As they that know him will believe and put their trust in him, so they that believe in him, will love him; for "Faith works by love." It must be a loving thought that Christ here intended by this question, while in the context he sets forth himself, not only as David's son, but David's Lord; a God-man, and so a glorious object of love, *altogether lovely*. Were our affections enlarged wider than the highest heaven, there is loveliness enough in God-man to fill it; and could our hearts hold an ocean of love, there is infinite loveliness in Christ to bestow it all upon; everything in Christ is lovely, and therefore the question, "What think ye of Christ?" must be, What love ye of Christ? "If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be ANATHEMA MARANATHA," says the apostle; surely they are not believers, that are not lovers of Christ. It is true, Christ hath many pretended lovers that love him only for his bounty, but not for his beauty, and that say they love him; but it is not so, if you consider the qualities of their love.

(1.) It is an easy love; they came easily by it, without ever getting their natural enmity discovered or broken; they were never humbled for their want of love; such a love is of little value, yea, not worth a farthing. Or,

(2.) It is an idle love ; it does not lead them to his service, nor draw them to their prayers ; his commands are still grievous to them, and they have no pleasure and delight in them.

(3.) If it be not an idle, it is a legal love ; it may be the law comes to them, and says, as Pharaoh said to the Israelites, "Ye are idle, ye are idle," Exod. v. 17 ; and so they fall a doing for their life, according to the *do* and *live* of the first covenant. But it is not doing from love to Christ ; it is not a gospel love to him, as a Law-fulfiller ; but a legal love to him, as only a Law-giver, and as if he was still standing upon the old covenant terms with them. Or,

(4.) If it be not a legal love, it is a loose and licentious love they have to him ; it is a love with a latitude, allowing as much room for the devil as for Christ ; as much room for the world as for Christ ; and as much room for lusts, as for Christ ; surely they that have no other love to Christ, but such an easy, idle, legal, loose, or licentious love, they are not true lovers ; nay, they are true haters of him, and enemies to him. Let them say as they will, that they love Christ, yet in reality they think nothing of him.

But believer, "What think ye of Christ?" When the meaning of the question to you is, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" O! can you answer it with an appeal, "Thou that knowest all things, knowest that I love thee!" or, at least, can you answer it with a sigh, Woes me that I cannot love him as I ought! Surely, if you have not a love of delight, rejoicing in him, ye have a love of desire, lamenting after him. Sometimes the loving soul goes to a communion, and the secret groan is, Oh! let me find Christ at this occasion! Oh! I must have him, I must have him! Why *must* you have him? Even because he must have you: "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; these also I **MUST** bring, and they shall hear my voice," John x. 16. He hath said first, I must have you; and that hath brought you to say, I must have him. Here are two necessities meeting; his necessity, and your necessity; his necessity, indeed, is a pure necessity of love; but your first necessity was the necessity of want; but, since he from love hath a need of you, as well as you from want have a need of him, you must of necessity meet together in love. You love him, because he first loved you; you seek him, because he first sought you. Therefore henceforth, as he seeks you from love, so do you not only seek him from want, that is too selfish; but also let your way of seeking him grow up to more conformity to his way of

seeking you, namely, from love, saying, "Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? tell him that I am sick of love." O! what think ye, what love ye of Christ? Again,

4. "What think ye of Christ?" That is, What esteem ye of Christ, or what estimate and valuation have you for him? This is plainly imported in the question here. Why, might Christ say, ye Pharisees are shewing your ignorant esteem of the law, by all the questions you are proposing about it; but, "What think ye of Christ," who is the Lord of the law, as well as David's son and Lord? You have an ignorantly high opinion of Moses; but, "What think ye of Christ?" what honour and respect do you put upon him? Surely, "to them that believe, he is precious;" or, as the word imports, he is *honourable*. Where there is true knowledge of Christ, there is faith; where there is faith, there is love; and where there is love, there is a high esteem. Some things, the more they are known, the less they are esteemed; but it is not so with Christ; they that know him most, do esteem him most. God the Father knows him best, and he esteems him most highly, Isa. xlii. 1. Saints and angels in heaven know him next best, and how they esteem him you may see, Rev. v. 8, 10, 11, 12. The more that any on earth knows him, the more do they esteem him; and only these that do know him, do not esteem him, 1 Cor. i. 21-24. They that are best judges, think highly of Christ. What judge ye, what esteem have ye of him? There is a fourfold lodging or room, that the esteem of Christ hath in the souls of them that duly esteem him.

(1.) In their intellective faculty; that is, in their understanding this esteem lodges, saying, O! "I determine to know nothing but Christ." O sirs, if a man had the knowledge of all the universities of the world centered in him, and yet know not Christ, he is but a poor silly sot. Paul, brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, had a great deal of knowledge, and human literature; but whenever he came to know Christ, O, says he, "I count all but dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

(2.) In their elective faculty; that is, in their choice does this esteem lodge. O they that esteem Christ, they select and single him out for a Head and Husband, with whom they resolve to live and die, saying, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon the earth that I desire besides thee."

(3.) In their prosecutive faculty; that is, in their affections

does this esteem lodge; these do ardently and vehemently pursue after him. As nothing can satisfy a hungry man but food, so nothing satisfies such a soul but Christ; hence proceeds their industry in the use of means and ordinances.

4. In their retentive faculty; that is, in their memory will this esteem also lodge; while their esteem of him makes them remember him, and their meditation of him to be sweet: "When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches, my soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips," Psalm lxxiii. 5, 6. What we love and esteem will have lodging in our minds and thoughts. And where does the strain of our thoughts and meditations run? is, no doubt, implied in this question, "What think ye of Christ?" What room do you give him in your heart and thoughts? Now, these four particulars, namely, 1. What know ye? 2. What believe ye? 3. What love ye? 4. What esteem ye of Christ? are here implied.

3dly, The third thing here proposed was, to shew the import of this question formally considered, with respect to the quality of the act. I have shewed what may be implied in this question, with relation to the object, and also the act of thinking; now, the interrogative particle *what*, pointing at the quality of this act, may furnish us with some further thoughts concerning the import of the question formally considered. It is the *what* in the text that I am now specially upon; and besides the general, What is your opinion of Christ? What is your judgment about Christ? There is a fourfold *what* here implied.

1. What good do you think of him? You Pharisees think much good of yourselves; who but you, and your righteousness, your alms, your sacrifices, your temple, your zeal for Moses and the law? but, "What think ye of Christ?" Is he no more in your view than a mortal son of a mortal man? No wonder then, in this case, you think little good of him. Can you ascend no higher in your contemplation to apprehend him as the immortal Son of the immortal God; the eternal Son of the eternal Father; the righteousness of God, the gift of God, the true sacrifice, the true temple, the antitype of all the types, the substance of all the shadows, the fulness of all the prophecies and promises? What! do you think him good for nothing but to be despised, debased, and trampled upon? What good do you think of him?

2. What glory do you think to be in him? Do you not darken his glory, when you look upon him only to be the son of David, and not also to be the Lord of David and the Lord of glory, the root and offspring of David; not only the offspring of David, as man, but the root of David, as God? What think ye of him as the glory of God, and the God of glory, bringing in a dispensation much more glorious than that of Moses, which glory was to be done away? 2 Cor. iii. 7, 8, 9.; Christ, as the Sent of God, being anointed with the Spirit for that end. "If the ministration of death, written and engraven on stones, was glorious, how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious? If the ministration of condemnation be glorious, much more does the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory." And, what glory do you think to be in Christ, who is glory of all this glory? Do you see Christ to be thus glorious, and me to be the Christ? Though now, might he say, this glory is under a veil of flesh, a veil of exinanition and humiliation, yet this mean appearance that I am making now, as if I were no more but a frail mortal man, was clearly foretold to you by the prophets concerning Christ, even that he should be a man, and a man of sorrows; can you see nothing of my glory and excellency under this veil? Is there no glory in the sun, because there is a cloud betwixt you and it?

3. What use do you think he is of? for, if he were only the Son of David, he could be of no great usefulness to a perishing world of sinners; but, do you think and consider, that herein is the mystery of divine grace? "God so loved the world, that he sent his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life." If the brazen serpent, which was but a type of Christ, was of use to the stung Israelites, what think you of Christ? can any thing in the world be so useful to sinners as Christ? Of what use is the law, whereof you are boasting? It is but a dead letter, a killing word, a sentence of condemnation, a death-summons, a dead-warrant against you, without Christ, who is the end of the law for righteousness. Who but Christ can reconcile God to man, and ingratiate man with God? Who but he can fulfil the law, and satisfy justice for them, pay their debts, heal their diseases, justify, sanctify, and save them, vanquish sin, death, and hell for them, and at last raise the mouldered carcase from corruption to incorruption, and invest it with a state of everlasting glory in the highest heaven, with fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore

at his right hand? Is he an useless Christ to you, though he fills all in all, and alone can give abundant satisfaction to the immortal soul, whereas all things else are but dry and empty without him, and leave men destitute? Oh! dry means, dry ministers, dry ordinances, dry sacraments, dry sermons, and dry prayers, if Christ be away! Oh! dry breasts, if he be not the milk; dry branches, if he be not the sap; dry clouds, dry wells, if he be not the water! O what use think ye he is for? what work and service have ye for him?

4. What worth do you think he is of? Your thoughts are employed, might Christ say, how to tempt me with questions about the law, undervaluing that Lord God that gave the law, and that now is come in the person of the Messias to fulfil the law? and is he unworthy to have a room in your thoughts? or what worth do you think him of? If you judge rightly and think duly of him, you will find he hath more real worth than all the world beside; for, put all the creatures in heaven and earth in one scale, and Christ in another, you will find them all to be lighter than vanity. This is plain, if you consider that when all the world of men, and angels, and creatures, were weighed in the balance with divine justice, they were found too light to counterpoise it, or give satisfaction to it; all they together could not make up the full sum or value that should satisfy that justice; it cost more to redeem a soul, than all that they were worth: "The redemption of the soul is precious, and ceases for ever," says the Psalmist. But Christ, having unsearchable riches, is a mass of treasure big enough for the purpose; and therefore, when he was laid in the balance with infinite justice, he was found of sufficient weight to poise it, without any creature's help to hold down the scale; nay, "He looked, and there was none to help, none to uphold; therefore his own arm brought salvation." And, "He trode the wine-press alone, and of the people there were none with him," Isa. lxiii. 3, 5. Who, among the creatures, could go through conquering and to conquer, as Christ did, when he had heaven, earth, and hell to grapple with? What think ye of Christ then? What worth do you think he is of?

Upon the whole, before I leave this point, let me ask these two questions, to bring home this one, concerning what worth do you think Christ is of?

The first question is, What price would you buy him at, if you were to buy him? Surely, if you had a due thought of Christ, and

a discovery of the pearl, you would, for joy, sell your *all* to buy it, Matt. xiii. 44, 45, 46. And when all is done, you would see your *all* to be nothing at all, and the pearl to be *all in all*. Indeed this treasure is so great, this pearl is so precious, that it cannot be bought at any price; and therefore the price of it is, *no money, no price*; altogether free; Isa. lv. 1, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk without money and without price." To buy here, is to beg, and take freely; yet, if the question be, What would you give for him, if he were to be bought? Surely, if you knew your own need, and his infinite fulness and suitableness for you, the question will suggest some great thought of Christ. O a thousand worlds, if I had them, would I give for him! Yea, but there are some that hold him at a very low price; they would not give a groat or sixpence for Christ or his interest; they would not part with a shilling, or crown, for Christ or his cause, Christ or his gospel; nay, they will not part with a beastly lust for him; their idols and the world are of greater price to them. But there are others that know his worth better, and are willing to forsake all for him: "We have forsaken all, and followed thee," Matt. xix. 27. The holy martyrs thought not their lives and their heart's blood too dear for Christ; Rev. xii. 11, "They loved not their lives unto the death;" that is, they despised their lives in comparison of Christ; they exposed their bodies to horrible and painful deaths, their temporal estates to the spoil, taking joyfully the spoiling of their goods, and exposing their persons to all manner of shame and contempt for the cause of Christ. O but a soul that by faith apprehends the worth of Christ, will cheerfully and willingly give all for him; and having got Christ, will go away rejoicing, and think his bargain to be very good, very great!

The second question is, What *rate* would you sell him at, if ye were to sell him! Judas sold him, and the high priests bought him for thirty pieces of silver: "A goodly price that I was prized at of them," Zech. xi. 13. It is ironically spoken, A bonny price for a God-man; "Cast it to the potter," says the Lord. Men of darkened understandings, corrupt minds, and depraved affections, will sell Christ and his cause, Christ and a good conscience, for a trifle; yea, many betray his cause for some poor worldly consideration. O for such a spirit as I read of in the forty martyrs, that suffered under Lucinius, anno 300, that when Agricolaus his deputy, one of the

devil's agents, set upon them several ways to draw them to deny Christ, and at last tempted them with an offer of money and preferment, they all cried out with one consent, O AIDIOTES, CHREMATA DIDES TA APOMENONTA: *Gr.* "O eternity, eternity! give us money that will last to eternity, and gold that will abide for ever, such as Christ can give us." They slighted that pitiful wealth which was current only in this beggarly world, when coming in competition with Christ and his durable riches; they would not sell Christ for a world, nay, not for a world of worlds. Oh! at what rate would you sell Christ? Surely, if you think duly and highly of him, you will buy him at any rate, but sell him at no rate. It is easy, indeed, to frame a passing thought, Oh! who would put Christ in the balance with anything? But stay till a day of trial come, and the question be brought close home, "Now, will you quit Christ and his cause, or will you quit with father and mother, and wife and children, and estate and fortune, houses and yards, and life and all;" I imagine that would be a hard question; "Skin for skin, all that a man hath will he give for his life." He will quit all, before he quit with his life. Surely, if Christ be your life, you would quit all other lives for him; a natural life, a temporal life, a life of pleasure, a life of honour, a life of ease and worldly accommodations; and if you think much of him, there is some life you have quit for him already, at least in part, and in desire and endeavour, namely, a life of sin, a life of self, a life of legal righteousness, that the life you live may be a life of faith on the Son of God. Now, I suppose all these *whats* are imported in the question: 1. What *good* do you think of him? 2. What *glory* do you think to be in him? 3. What *use* do you think he is for? 4. What *worth* do you think he is of, when he is to be bought or sold? This question bears all these in its bosom, "What think ye of Christ?"

4thly, The fourth and last thing proposed upon the explication of the import of the question, was, to shew the import of it subjectively considered; or with respect to the persons that are the subjects thereof; or to whom the question is put in the pronoun *YE*, What think *YE* of Christ? And under this consideration, we may take a fourfold view of the question.

1. View it as it was put to the Jews in general, for so were these to whom Christ is here speaking: ye that are Jews, "What think ye of Christ? Ye that are the people of whom, concerning the flesh, Christ came, for (as ye own concerning Christ) he is the

son of David, and ye are the people to whom he and his gospel behoved first to come; for salvation is of the Jews," John iv. 22. Ye are his own people: and, "What think ye of Christ?" Alas! He came to his own, and his own received him not; they thought nothing of him when he came; and therefore, as Paul says, Acts xxviii. 28, the salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles; and he adds, "They will hear it." Now, of consequence, Christ and the gospel, and this question with it, comes to you, Gentiles, saying, "What think ye of Christ?" O! will ye think nothing of him? Or will ye make Paul a liar, who said ye should hear it? Or rather, will ye give the lie to the Spirit of God? Nay, whatever the most part do, yet as many as were ordained to eternal life, will be brought to think highly of Christ, by getting the saving knowledge, faith, love, and esteem of him.

2. View the question as it was put to the Pharisees, a set of hypocrites and self-righteous persons: ye that are Pharisees, "What think ye of Christ?" Ye are strict observers of the letter of the law, and think much of your long prayers, your giving alms of all that you possess, your fasting twice a-week, your being no open drunkards, whoremongers, extortioners, nor like this or that publican; but while you think so much of yourselves and your own righteousness, and think nothing of Christ, publicans and harlots go into the kingdom before you; therefore, What think ye of Christ the Son of David, the Lord of David, the Lord of the law, by whom alone everlasting righteousness is brought in, answering the spirit, and not the letter of the law only? The question then comes to be proposed to all of the same kidney with these Pharisees: Ye that are hypocrites and self-justifying persons, "What think ye of Christ?" Ye that are thinking, O you are an honest man, you have always been a good neighbour, just in your dealing, civil in your carriage, and so you fancy yourself to be touching the law blameless: What, man! are you content to be judged by the law? Then to Cæsar let us go; to the law let us go: but, only look the law broad in the face; look not only to the outside of the law, like a man looking only to the back and outside of a looking-glass, or to the frame and edge of it, where he does not see himself; but look to the inside of the looking-glass of the law, to the spirituality of it; set your face to the face of the glass, and you will see what a deformed, filthy creature you are, so you will find it cursing you to your face, and cursing you to hell for every wicked thought, as well

as action, saying, "Cursed is every one that continues not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." Therefore, you have need to think again, and think better than ever you did, about a law justifying righteousness; and to think there is need of this question, "What think ye of Christ?"

3. View the question as it was put to the Sadducees; for it seems they were combined with the Pharisees here against Christ, if you compare ver. 23 and 34. Now, these Sadducees were a sect of people that denied the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body, the existence of spirits and angels, Acts xxiii. 8: in a word, they were half atheists, if not wholly so; like the graceless wits of our day, that call themselves free-thinkers: Well, says Christ, "What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he?" If you could view him as not only David's Son, but David's Lord and God; and as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, not the God of the dead, but of the living; would you persist in these atheistical tenets, concerning the resurrection of the body, the being of souls? No, no. The question, then, is applicable to all that sort of people: ye that are atheists, deists, and damnable erroneous free-thinkers, O! "What think ye of Christ?" No doubt, with Herod and his men of war, you set him at nought! But, O! will you think again, and recal your thoughts? Let them fix upon Christ a while, and you shall find all the truths of the Bible cleared and vindicated, by him who is the truth itself; and that this eternal Son of God is sent from the Father, of purpose to confirm them by his doctrine, life, death, and resurrection. Again,

4. View the question with respect to its general design, which is (together with all other scriptures) the profit of all to whom it comes; for their reproof, correction, or instruction in righteousness, 2 Tim. iii. 16: and for convincing of sinners, or confirming of saints: and so it comes to all and every one of us, ministers or people, high and low, rich and poor; "What think ye of Christ?" And here I have occasion to look round about me, and ask the question at all and every one that hears me; and indeed we may begin first at ourselves.

O we that are MINISTERS, what think we of Christ? Is he the Son and Lord of David, the eternal Son of God? Surely we cannot think, or speak, or preach too much of Christ. It is our honour, if we can say, "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord:" and that to us, who are the least of all saints (may some of us say)

should this grace be given, to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. But, while we speak of Christ to others, what do we think of Christ ourselves? To be sure, if we do not think of Christ as we ought, we will not speak of Christ as we should. Christ in the heart, and Christ in the mouth, make right preaching. If any preach Christ out of envy, as the apostle says, it is well that Christ is preached; but it must be but bungling work to such; so they would do well to consider that the question is not, *What preach ye of Christ?* but, "*What think ye of Christ?*"—Again, O ye that are the PEOPLE, "*What think ye of Christ?*" whatever be your state or condition, sex or quality, the question comes to you; and let none of you dare to neglect the pondering on it, when Christ himself is posing you with it, "*What think ye of Christ?*"—Ye that are MAGISTRATES, or in places of power, trust, and authority, "*What think ye of Christ?*" Are you employing your power for Christ, and his cause and interest?—Ye that are MASTERS or MISTRESSES of families, "*What think ye of Christ?*" Is it the language of your soul, "*As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord?*" Are you desiring with Abraham, to command your children and your household after you, to keep the ways of the Lord; and praying for them, and instructing them in the knowledge of Christ? Again, ye that are CHILDREN under your parents, O! "*What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he?*" Do you know him to be the Son of David, and the Son of God too? And would it not be your great happiness to be the sons and children of God in him? Your father and mother may die and leave you, therefore it is your best to seek an interest in him to be your everlasting Father.—Ye that are SERVANTS, "*What think ye of Christ?*" Would you have him for your Master and Lord? Is it not your greatest honour to be his servants, who is David's Lord? He that was David's Son was David's Master; and as David in spirit called him Lord, so should not all that is within you call him Lord? Serve your masters honestly; but let him who is the Lord of lords be a Master above all masters to you.—Ye that are TRADESMEN, "*What think ye of Christ?*" Have you no trading with heaven? Does your civil trade in a world take up all your thoughts? Surely, it is either an unlawful trade, or unlawfully used, that cannot consist with this Christian trade of giving the chief of your thoughts to him, that is the Chief among ten thousand, Song v. 10.—Ye that are HUSBANDMEN, "*What think ye of Christ?*" Do you think more of your ploughs and oxen, or corn and cattle, and barns and

goods, than of glorious Christ? Do you not know, whether you be tenants, feuars, or freeholders, that you are tenants to him, and hold your all of him? Are you more taken up in thinking of a great crop, or a good harvest, than of him who is the Lord of the harvest, both in a natural and spiritual sense, and Lord of all that you have?—Ye that are mean COTTARS, “What think ye of Christ?” Woes me, does your cot-house, and your cow, and your small yard, lie nearer your heart than precious Christ? O! if you were acquainted with communion with him, you would find a mean cottage with Christ better than a princely palace without him.—Ye that are poor BEGGARS, “What think ye of Christ?” To the poor the gospel is preached; to you is Christ and his unsearchable riches offered: but I fear there are some of you who think more of a half-penny than you think of Christ: everlasting poverty and misery will be your portion if your thoughts be not changed and renewed. You come to communion occasions only to beg alms, not knowing that then you are at the beautiful gate of the temple, where you might get an alms that might enrich you for ever. You have the art of begging from men, and from door to door, but perhaps you never think of begging at Christ’s door: O! will you begin to think, and to think of Christ, before the door of mercy be shut!—Again, ye that are rich and wealthy in the world, “What think ye of Christ?” Hath he given you riches, think you, to steal away your hearts from him, or rather to improve them for and consecrate them to his honour, and for the good of others, especially of the household of faith? Men may court your favour, but you are to be pitied, as poor miserable wretches, if you have your portion only in this life; though you had all the gold of Ophir, without Christ you have nothing but a shadow; you are destitute of the true substance.—You that are wise, mighty, or noble, “What think ye of Christ?” May it not startle you a little, that he hath said, “Not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called; but God hath chosen the foolish, weak, base, and despicable things of the world.” You have no reason to despair, for he hath not said, not any of them; but yet you have reason to think where you are, for he hath said not many of them: and indeed, as an evidence of this, look to the great men of our day, you will see that the generality of the nobility and gentry of Scotland and England, they think very little of Christ.—You that are scholars and students, “What think ye of Christ?” What will all the wisdom and literature, liberal arts and sciences, and best accomplishments in the world avail you, without

Christ? They will qualify you to be more eminent servants to the devil, and his interest, if you learn not Christ together with them. You may be students of Latin and Greek, and Hebrew: students of philosophy, astronomy, astrology, geography, and mathematics; yea, and students of divinity too; and yet lose all your pains, if you do not study Christ. Ye that are ignorant and illiterate persons, "What think ye of Christ?" It may be you cannot read the Bible; you was never at a school; your parents died when you were young, or else were poor, and could not; or graceless, and would not set you to the school; or if you can read, that is all: you know not so much as the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, and can hardly tell whose son he is. If you could be brought this day to think highly of Christ, then should you know, and follow on to know the Lord. Oh! neglect not henceforth the means of the knowledge of Christ! if you learn of him, he will make you wiser than the rest of the world, for as far behind as you are; even wise unto salvation. Ye that are old men and women, "What think ye of Christ?" How many thousands and millions of thoughts have you bestowed upon the devil, the world, your lusts and idols in your time, which would have been better bestowed upon Christ, and the concerns of your eternal salvation? And now, that death, judgment, and eternity, are hard at hand; Ah! how can you think of going down to the grave, and into an everlasting state, without being in case to answer this question to purpose, "What think ye of Christ?" Ye that are young men and women, "What think ye of Christ?" Ye are now in the flower of your age: Oh! shall not Christ have the flower of your thoughts, that according to the Father's promise to him, he may have the *dew of his youth*, by your dedicating to him the dew of your youth, and fleeing all youthful lusts? Ye that are children and little ones, lads and lasses, boys and girls, capable to think, O! "What think ye of Christ?" Alas! my dear children (to say a word to you) you may see what ill hearts you have, that make you think more of little plays and trifles, nignays and butterflies, than you think of Christ: you mind anything sooner than your Creator or Redeemer, whom God calls you to remember in the days of your youth. Therefore, after this, when you are playing, will you think more of praying? for God says, "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me." And think more of reading the Bible, like young Timothy, who, from a child, knew the holy scriptures.

In a word, if there be any persons here, who think I have not touched at their case, let them know, that the question is to all and every one of you, "What think ye of Christ?" Oh graceless world! How unworthily do you think of Christ? The covetous man thinks more of a small piece of money than of Christ, like Demas. Ambitious men think more of a hat than of Christ; like Haman, or as Saul, who said to Samuel, "Honour me before the people." The voluptuous man thinks more of a base lust, than of Christ. The drunkard thinks more of a hearty cup than of Christ. The glutton thinks more of a hearty meal, than of Christ. The proud man thinks more of himself, than of Christ. Pride of righteousness thinks more of prayers, and attendance on ordinances, than of Christ. Pride of grace thinks more of a good frame, than of Christ. Pride of wisdom thinks more of a witticism, or of a fine discourse, than of Christ. Pride of beauty thinks more of a skin-deep complexion than of Christ. Pride of bravery thinks more of a fine suit of clothes, than of Christ, though the silly sheep wore it on its back before them. Behold how Christ is vilified and undervalued in the world!

But, O BELIEVER! "What think ye of Christ?" Surely, if you be a gracious person, Christ will be to you a precious person; and you will wonder at the folly and madness of the world, that sets every thing above Christ, in their thoughts and esteem. Why, they are ignorant of Christ, and ignorant of themselves; if they were convinced of their sin and misery, they would think much of a Saviour and Redeemer; if they knew their disease, they would think much of such a Physician to heal them; if they knew their nakedness, they would think much of such a garment to clothe them; if they knew their pollution, they would think much of such a fountain to wash them; if they knew their deep arrears to divine justice, and bankrupt state, they would think much of such a Surety to pay their debt. Surely, if they knew, they would not thus despise the Lord of glory. However, be it known to all and every one of you, that this question is put to you: and you ought to put it to yourselves, before God, by discovering what you are, and where you stand. And now, having opened the import of the question, in the several branches of it, I proceed next to,

III. The Third General Head proposed, namely, to offer some reasons of the doctrine, why this is the great leading question to the Christian catechism, by which people are to try themselves; or why

this question is put as a touchstone, for discovering what metal we are of, "What think ye of Christ?" Why,

1. This question, "What think ye of Christ?" is put, because without right thoughts of Christ, there is no right thoughts of God; and without the knowledge of Christ, there is no true knowledge of God. God is an invisible God, and Christ only is the image of the invisible God, Col. i. 15. There are three ways to know, see, and comprehend God; one is, by the creatures he hath made; "The invisible things of God are clearly seen from the creation of the world, even his eternal power and Godhead," Rom. i. 20. Another is by the scriptures, for they make God known: but the third and only saving way of knowing and apprehending God is by Christ. Now, the knowledge of God, that we have by the creatures, is like the knowledge we have of a man by his workmanship, which he hath wrought: if the workmanship be rare and excellent, such as hath required great art and strength, then we conceive the man that hath done it, hath been a wise man, a strong man, and the like, according to the nature of the workmanship: so, when we know God by the creatures, we conceive that the God that hath made them must be a great God, a wise God, a powerful God. But next, the knowledge that we have of God by the scriptures; I mean, the literal knowledge, is like that knowledge that one gets of a famous learned man, by reading what he writes; if in his writing he hath discovered much learning, vast sense, and solid judgment, accordingly we conceive him to be a sensible, judicious man: so, by reading the word we conceive of God's excellency, as we do of a man by his writing; but the knowledge of God that we get by Christ, is like that knowledge which one gets of a king, by having seen his image, or rather his son, who is as like him as he can look. Now, Christ is like the Father, and so truly and really his image, that though blind Arians cannot see the essential glory of the Father in him, yet he says to Philip, John xiv. 6, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Now, in the book of the creature we may see the being of God; in the book of the scripture, the will of God: but above all these, we have another book, written, as it were, with the rays of the sun, even CHRIST, whom we may call a book, for he is still O LOGOS TOU THEOU, *the Word of God*, Rev. xix. 13; but he is not made with ink and paper, he is a living book, a living picture and representative of the Father; the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, Heb. i. 3. The saving know-

ledge of God is by Christ, John i. 18, and in Christ, 2 Cor. iv. 6. And again, hence,

2. This question, "What think ye of Christ?" is put, because, without right thoughts of Christ, there can be no religion, and consequently no salvation. There is no coming to God, but in Christ; "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father, but by me," John xiv. 6. Without believing thoughts of Christ, then, we cannot worship God aright, or acceptably: for, "Without faith it is impossible to please God," Heb. xi. 6. And I have shewn you already, that right thinking is believing; and without believing in him, there is not salvation; "He that believes not shall be damned; for there is no other name given under heaven whereby we must be saved; neither is there salvation in any other," Acts iv. 12. A man that cannot think of Christ as he should, cannot perform a religious action as he ought: as the evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil things; so a good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, brings forth good things, Matt. xii. 35. Now Christ in the heart, by his Spirit, is indeed a good treasure: and as natural thoughts produce natural actions, carnal thoughts, carnal actions; so spiritual thoughts bring forth spiritual actions, and Christian thoughts Christian actions. True religion begins and advances with the right thoughts of God. I defy a man that knows the Lord, to pray and worship God comfortably, without some due apprehension of Christ: for, as in Christ alone God is well-pleased; so it is in the view of Christ, or of God in him, that the soul is well-pleased.

4. This question, "What think ye of Christ?" is put because it is the best rule of self-examination, seeing, as men's thoughts of Christ are, so is their state; as men think in their heart, so are they, Prov. xxii. 9. If a man be risen with Christ, then his thoughts and affections are set on things above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God, Col. iii. 1, 2. If you be Christians indeed, then you have Christ in you, the hope of glory, Col. i. 27; and if Christ be in you, he will have a high room in your thought and esteem: and therefore it is laid down as the best rule of examination, 2 Cor. xiii. 5, "Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith; prove yourselves; know ye not your own selves, how that Christ Jesus is in you, except you be reprobates, *ADOKIMI, unapproved, or rejected?* If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his, Rom. viii. 9. Now, they that have the Spirit, do

mind the things of the Spirit, the things of God, and particularly the CHRIST of God.

4. This question, "What think ye of Christ?" is put, because this question comprehends all other questions in religion. After the Pharisees had done with asking their difficult questions about the law, Christ proposes a question, which swallows up all their questions, and comprehends all that is necessary to be known; and if we could answer this question to purpose, we would be in case to answer all the questions that concerns both the law and the gospel; for, Christ is the end of the law, and the sum of the gospel. They that know Christ, they know where to find all the righteousness that the law requires, and all the grace that the gospel promises: and so this question is the compend of the Christian catechism, and that not only with respect to knowledge, but also with respect to practice and experience. Christ is the sum of practical godliness; for, "Without him you can do nothing;" and by him strengthening you, you can do all things. And Christ is the sum of experimental religion also: that experience is not worth much, that hath not Christ for the sum-total of it; for, it is out of his fulness we receive grace for grace: and when a man can say, "beholding his glory, I have been changed into the same image," it is a rich experience. In a word, all questions that relate to Christian experience, may be reduced to this one, "What think ye of Christ?" If the question be, what know ye of conviction? what know ye of conversion? what know ye of illumination? what know ye of regeneration? what know ye of justification? what know ye of sanctification? what interest have ye in Christ? what part and portion have ye in the Son of Jesse? what share have ye of his grace? and what hope of his glory? All such questions may be answered with the answer of this, "What think ye of Christ?"

5. This question, "What think ye of Christ?" is put, because he would, by this, put a stop, and give a check to all unnecessary curious questions. They were but curious questions at best, that the Sadducees and Pharisees had asked of Christ; but here Christ gives a check to them, by a question of everlasting moment. Some that are but senseless professors, shew a deal of curiosity in some of their questions, such as, Who was Melchizedeck's father? and the like; but, O here is a more necessary question, Who was Christ's Father? "What think ye of Christ? and whose Son is he?" Here is an ocean of wisdom, that you may profitably dive into, and

yet never get to the bottom of it; for, who can answer that question about Christ's Father, "What is his name, and what is his Son's name, if thou canst tell?" Prov. xxx. 4.

6. This question, "What think ye of Christ?" is put, because our thoughts are but lost, if they be not bestowed upon him. Till we be brought to think of Christ duly, all our thoughts are but lost thoughts, and vain thoughts, "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, how long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee?" The Lord sees the thoughts of men to be but vanity: our thoughts are like birds flying from mountain to mountain, and skipping from place to place: and like the children running after butterflies, or such like trifles, their pains are lost, and so are our thoughts lost, while they are not terminate upon Christ.

7. This question is put, "What think ye of Christ?" because there are so many mistaken thoughts of Christ in the world: "He is despised and rejected of men;" the world is filled with prejudice against him, saying, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Therefore we ought to come and see, and consider what he is, and whose Son he is, that we may not run into the same common mistake with the rest of the world, and that we may not take him for a root out of a dry ground, having no form or comeliness, Isaiah liii. 2.

8. This question is put to us, "What think ye of Christ?" because we have mistaken thoughts of other things, while we have not right thoughts of Christ. The Pharisees had mistaken thoughts of God and his law, because they had not right thoughts of Christ; therefore Christ proposes the question. And indeed, sirs, we mistake God, we mistake the law, we mistake the gospel, we mistake ourselves, we mistake our duty, we mistake every thing, as long as we have wrong notions of Christ. A man may mistake so far, as to think that he is about his duty to God, and yet may be fighting against God, while Christ is not known or thought upon; Acts xxvi. 9, "I verily thought, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth," says Paul; and accordingly he was persecuting Christ in his members: yet he thought he was doing God service, till Christ discovered himself, and cried to him, saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Then he began to think of Christ, saying, "Who art thou Lord?" Why, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." Whenever he began to think duly of Christ, then he saw he had been in a mistake. People may think,

verily they ought to do this and that against some of God's children; but, if they had other thoughts of Christ, they would have other thoughts of their duty, and would see that verily they ought not to do so. Again, Paul thought his own righteousness gain, before he knew Christ; but then he thought it loss, "What things were gain to me, these I counted loss for Christ."

9. This question, "What think ye of Christ?" is put, because thus you may come to understand what are his thoughts of you. It is true, "His thoughts are not our thoughts, nor his ways our ways; for, as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his thoughts higher than our thoughts:" and hence he may have thoughts of mercy towards a poor soul, that thinks there is nothing but wrath in his heart against it. But this I say, that as to your knowing and understanding of his thoughts towards you; as, on the one hand, a man, in a natural state, cannot have high, believing, and becoming thoughts of Christ, and so cannot conclude that Christ hath any favourable thoughts of him, while he remains thus in unbelief and despising of Christ; nay, he may know and understand, if he remain in that state, thoughtless of Christ, and disregarding him, that Christ will come in flaming fire, and take vengeance on him, 2 Thes. i. 7, 8; So, on the other hand, the man that hath got such discoveries of Christ, as to create high, spiritual, and elevated thoughts of Christ, he may, from thence understand, that Christ thinks well of him, and that his thoughts towards him are thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give him an expected end. It is true, Christ's thoughts of the believer are not of a fleeting nature, up and down, high and low, as the believer's thoughts of him are; nay, Christ's thoughts are unchangeably the same; but, when the believer's thoughts of Christ are raised, then he is in the best case to know and understand Christ's loving thoughts towards him. Why, even as a fountain may be known by the streams, so it is here; our knowledge, faith, love, and esteem of Christ, are but streams that flow from Christ's kind heart towards us: "We love him, because he first loved us;" we think of him, because he first thinks of us. And, therefore, by what we think of Christ, we may know what he thinks of us; if you think honourably of him, you may thence know he thinks favourably of you; if you think much of him, you may know he thinks much of you. O! may a believer say, I have reason to think much good of him: for, he is fairer than the sons of men, the spotless Lamb of God; but he hath reason to think much

ill of me ; for, I am all black and deformed, like hell and the devil. But I will tell you, believer, that all his thoughts of you make you to be in him, what he thinks you to be in him, however deformed you are in yourselves, and see yourselves to be ; yet, I say, as his thoughts make things to be, (for he but thought there should be a world, and there was a world : whenever it was his mind that it should be, then it was ; and whatever he thought it to be, that it was, according to his thought) ; and as his thoughts of you make you to be in him, what you are in him : so, if you think him fair, and altogether lovely, he is not behind with you, for he thinks you fair too ; hence he says to the spouse, who was admiring his beauty : “Thou art all fair, my love : there is no spot in thee,” Song iv. 7. And he doth not say anything, but what he thinks, his words express his thoughts ; for, “He cannot lie, who is the strength of Israel.” Now, believer, if you cannot think, or believe, that you are altogether fair in him, because you see yourself altogether filthy in yourself ; know, that if you saw yourself to be altogether fair in yourself, there would be no need of, or room for believing that you are all fair in him. Hence he hath left deformities about you, that there may be room for faith ; therefore, let the feeling of your deformity make you humble ; but let it not hinder your faith, which must not stand upon feeling, but must act contrary to it upon Christ’s word : for, if you ground your faith upon what you feel in yourself, you will never believe what Christ says concerning your being all fair, and your being made the righteousness of God in him, 2 Cor. v. 21. If your faith then can act so as to raise your thoughts of Christ as altogether lovely, fair, and spotless, you have ground to conclude, by the same act of faith, that he hath high thoughts of you, as being all fair and spotless in him, whatever deformity you feel in yourself. Christ is infinitely more to you, believer, than you believe him to be ; but, whatever you believe him to be, you may be sure he is that to you ; for faith’s seeing, and having, is all one, even as believing is explained by receiving, and receiving by believing, “As many as received him, to them gave he power [or PRIVILEGE] to become the sons of God, even to them who believe on his name,” John i. 12. What you believe then, you receive ; and what you receive, you have ; and what you have in him, you are in him ; having beauty, and riches, and righteousness in him : you are beautiful, rich, and righteous : and consequently, when you believingly think he is all fair and glorious, you may

know he thinks you are all fair and glorious in him ; and he thinks no more of you than what you really are in him. The question then is put, because you may know, by what you think of Christ, what Christ thinks of you.

10. This question, "What think ye of Christ?" is put, because we can never think too much of him, who is the God-man, David's Son, and David's Lord ; being God as well as man. O what a glorious object of our contemplation is here ! you may think too much of yourselves, and your own righteousness ; but you cannot think too much of Christ, and his righteousness : yea, when you think any thing of yourself, and your righteousness, you think too much of it ; but when you think as much as you can of Christ and his righteousness, you think too little of him. You may think too much of creatures, but you cannot think too much of Christ. Yea, you may think too much of angels, as the apostle John did, when he fell down to worship towards the feet of the angel, Rev. xxii. 8. To think of the nature of angels with that inward reverence and adoration which we are to have when we think of Christ, would be idolatory ; and to think of Christ, with the same frame of heart as we do of angels, would be profaneness. Thus we may think too highly and reverently of angels ; but we cannot think of Christ too highly, too reverently ; nor can we think too much of him, who is the Lord of angels, and whom we are to honour even as we honour the Father. These are the reasons of the question.

IV. The fourth general head proposed was, To make Application of the whole. And it may be applied for the following uses :—
1. For Information. 2. For Conviction. 3. For Trial. 4. For Lamentation. 5. For exhortation. And, 6. For Direction.

First, It may be applied for Information, in these and the like lessons following.

—1. Hence we may learn, seeing the great question in the Christian catechism is, "What think ye of Christ?" then the sum of Christian knowledge lies in this one word, viz., CHRIST. It is not in Christ absolutely considered, by what he is in himself ; but in God relatively considered, by what he is to us, namely in Christ ; therefore, I observe, the question is not, What think ye of God ? but, "What think ye of CHRIST?" For, as God out of Christ stands in no relation to us sinners, but that of an enemy, and a consuming fire ; so the nature, essence, and immensity of God, and what he is in himself, is not the great Christian question ; but rather

what he is to us, and so what he is in Christ. All the saving manifestations of God to his people in scripture were still, not of God, absolutely and essentially, in what he was in himself, and in his nature; but relatively, in what he was to them; and so it was always in Christ. Thus, when he came to Abraham, he said, "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward," Gen. xv. 1. "I am thy God, and the God of thy seed; which Seed was Christ," Gal. iii. 16, in whom that covenant and promise was established to Abraham and his offspring. And when God manifested himself to the patriarchs that came of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, his ordinary way was to make himself known upon that ground of the new covenant, established in Christ, Abraham's Seed; hence, when he came to them, he used to say to them, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob;" that is, he manifested himself to them, not absolutely, by what he was in his nature; but relatively, by what he was to them in Christ, the promised Seed.

If we begin to dive into that question, What think ye of God? we may soon loose ourselves, and come to the philosopher's demand of a day to answer that question, and then a week, and then a month, and then tell it is impossible to answer it: nay, we ought not to be curious in searching into the nature of God, lest we get a dash; for, human philosophy cannot reach it; yea, I doubt if angelical wisdom can. It is the only pleasant saving, and profitable inquiry, to study this question, "What think ye of Christ?" Here we find what God is to us. To inquire what God is in himself, absolutely and essentially, is no saving or profitable inquiry. What profit is it for a man, who lives under the north-pole, and sees not the sun for one half of the year, though he should count the course of the sun all that time that he sees it? Or, what profit were it for a man to go and count what rent the king of Morroco or emperor of China draws every year, and he gets none of it? As foolish is it for us to begin and study what God is absolutely in himself, and not what he is relatively to us; therefore the question is not, What think ye of God? but, "What think ye of CHRIST?" And this, by the bye, shews the difference that there is between learned fools and wise Christians; why, the learned fools seek to know and comprehend what God is; what is this mystery of the Trinity, and the like; and there he loses himself: he seeks to know what God is himself, and not what he is to him. But the poor Christian is herein wiser than that learned clerk, for all his wit; for the Christian studies Christ, and so knows what God is to him, better than all

the learned Rabbies with their curious speculations : though yet the poor soul may otherwise be very ignorant and illiterate, yet it is wise unto salvation, because he knows Christ, and Christ is made of God to him wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption : and when he knows Christ, he is upon the surest and safest way to know God ; for he sees God in Christ, and God related to him in Christ ; for Christ is our relation as God-man, Mediator. And indeed, sirs, to believe in Christ is to believe God's relation to us, and God reconciled to us : for, when we look to Christ, we see God in him, and when we see God in him, we see that he is reconciled in him to us, and well-pleased in him with us ; 2 Cor. v. 19, " God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself." Matt. iii. 17, " This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." I own, indeed, a man may be a believer, and yet apprehend God to be his enemy ; but then he is not believing, he is not thinking of Christ by faith : it is an unbelieving thought he hath then of God ; for a believing thought of Christ would give him another thought of God, even as a Friend and Father in him. This then, I hope, is an useful inference, That the sum of Christian knowledge is Christ.

2. Hence see what is the best matter for meditation and the best rule for self-examination. Here is the most noble subject of meditation, namely, to think of Christ ; and here is the most excellent rule for examination, namely, to ask our souls that question, " What think we of Christ ?" Meditation and self-examination are duties much neglected among us ; they are spiritual exercises, directly cross and opposite to our vain, wandering, idle, and unfixed hearts. A man will rather go betwixt the stilts of a plough from morning to evening, than travel betwixt these two duties for one half hour, though yet they are like the stilts of that plough by which the fallow-ground of the heart must be ploughed up ; but when the thoughts begin to come in betwixt these two stilts of meditation and self-examination, behold on a sudden (to speak it in broad Scots) they quit the plough, and run away with the harrows. No doubt, you will know this from sad experience, that your thoughts are in this matter like wild vicious horses, running mad here and there through the fields, without keeping any road, or observing any rule ; but here is the best matter and rule, both for regulating our thoughts in meditation and self-examination. As for meditation, the best way is to think of Christ : why, you may think upon a promise, but

out of Christ you will find no comfort in it ; for, " All the promises are Yea and Amen in him ;" and so you will not find it your own, but by looking to Christ : yea, you may think upon God, but out of Christ you will find no comfort in him ; " I remembered God, and was troubled, Psal. lxxvii. 3: but the antidote against that trouble is believing thoughts of Christ ; therefore says Christ to his disciples, " Let not your hearts be troubled ; ye believe in God, believe also in me," John xiv. 1. If you think upon the law, you will find there you are drowned in debt, both to the command and curse, till once ye look to Christ, the end of the law for righteousness. If you think upon your duties that God calls you to, you will find them a heavy task, till once you look to Christ, and then you will find his yoke is easy, and his commands are not grievous. Again, as to self-examination, the best rule here is, to say to your souls, " What think ye of Christ?" They are but proud, self-conceited persons, that do not think highly of Christ, and God approves them not ; 2 Cor. x. 17, 18, " He that glories," says the apostle, " let him glory in the Lord : for not he that commends himself is approved, but whom the Lord commends ;" intimating that they that glory only in the Lord, they discommend themselves, and are commended and approved of God ; but they that do not glory in the Lord, nor think highly of him, they commend themselves, but are discommended and disapproved of God ; yea, they deceive themselves ; " If any man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself," Gal. vi. 3. Self-conceit is self-deceit ; and as they are self-deceivers who are self-exalters ; they think not much of Christ, who think much of themselves ; and so, to inquire what you think of Christ, is the best way to find yourself out, what you are in state or frame. You may, by this rule, know how to judge of your own thoughts ; you may think of a thousand good things ; you may think of sermons, you may think of death, judgment, and eternity ; but though you may think seriously on these subjects, yet the rule whereby to judge of the rectitude of your thoughts about them is here ; do they lead you to high thoughts of Christ, in whom alone we can think of death, without horror ; judgment, without terror ; and eternity, without fear or dread ?

3. Hence we may see, that Christ himself is the best judge of men's state ; for he can look into the heart and thoughts of men, and say, " What think ye of Christ?" All judgment is committed to the Son of God, and he will cast many whom the world

approves ; because, whatever men think of them, yet he knows that they think little of him and his Father. Also, he will approve of some whom the world casts ; because, however the world thinks little of them, yet he knows that they think much of him and his Father ; for they know him, and whose Son he is. Christ's question shews, that he knows our thoughts ; for, to whom shall we give an account of our answer to this question ? None in all the world knows what we think, but God himself, and Christ is God. Christ discovers the ignorance of Pharisees here also, and shews that he knew their thoughts were amiss : " If he be David's son," says he, " how does David in Spirit call him Lord ?" Here they were confounded, and might have been convicted that their thoughts were naught. Indeed, this was one of these things that old Simeon declared concerning Christ, " That he should be a sign that should be spoken against, that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed," Luke ii. 35. Thus, when Christ met with the woman of Samaria, he revealed many thoughts of her heart to her, and gave her a view of all her lewd tricks : " Come and see a man," says she, " that told me all things that ever I did ; is not this the Christ ?" As Satan presented to our Lord Jesus, the whole body of the world at a glance, so Christ can let us see a black sight of all our sins at once, so as to force us to acknowledge that he is the Christ, that knows our hearts and thoughts. But,

4. Hence we may see what is the great end and design of a gospel ministry, namely, to discover Christ, and remove the prejudices of people's minds against him ; to rectify their mistakes about him ; and to fill them with a high opinion of him. The sum of a gospel minister's business is to commend his Master, saying, " What think ye of Christ ?" and that both in his preaching, and praying, and catechising, and visiting. The whole of their doctrine and practice is, as it were, a voice preaching Christ. If they preach the law, and its curses and threatenings against Christless and impenitent sinners, it is to lead them to Christ, and to drive them to the city of refuge. If they preach faith, they make Christ the author and finisher, as well as the object of it. If they preach repentance, they make Christ, as exalted by the right hand of God, to be a Prince and Saviour, to give repentance, the fountain of it ; and Christ crucified, viewed by faith, to be the immediate root of it. If they preach duties and new obedience, they make Christ the ALPHA and OMEGA of it. Ministers may indeed speak much of Christ in

their sermons, and yet not preach Christ. As, for example, If one should preach of Christ mainly as a Law-giver, to be obeyed, and little or nothing of Christ as a Law-fulfiller, to be believed in, and served from love, because of his having saved us from the yoke of the law ; for a covenant of life and death, upon doing or not doing, may be preached, and called the gospel of Christ, in a mistake, while it is only the law that is preached, and not Christ, the end of the law for righteousness ; and you may know it by this among other things, the tendency of such old covenant doctrine is to lead men to this question, not, "What think ye of Christ?" but, What think ye of yourselves? and, What are you doing, that you may have eternal life? Why, the man begins to think, God is standing upon some doing terms yet with him ; and therefore, in order to life, he must do so and so ; thus he is led to himself, and not to Christ. But gospel-doctrine tends to lead a man wholly out of himself, and wholly in to Christ ; for, whatever be the text, the strain of the gospel-doctrine is, "What think ye of Christ?" It is not the design of gospel-ministers to commend themselves, but Christ. There is a set of ministers, say some, that set up themselves above others, and study only to commend themselves, to the disparagement of all others, as if none but they were gospel-ministers ; but, my friends, if any man's concern for Christ's cause and interest, or for his Maker's glory, shall commend him, he needs not think strange though the world of Pharisees envy him, as they did Christ himself, when his doctrine and life commended him. I will tell you what commendation a gospel-minister hunts most after ; it is that of Paul, 2 Cor. iii. 1, 2, 3, to have an epistle commendatory in the hearts of hearers, by the power of the Spirit of God accompanying the word, and leaving an impression there, that it is indeed the word of God, and not of men, and that God is in it of a truth ; he would desire, with the same apostle, 2 Cor. iv. 2, to commend himself, by the manifestation of the truth, to every man's conscience in the sight of God. Let truth be nick-named and reproached, as it will, the evidence of truth will commend itself to the consciences of all the lovers thereof. Meantime, it is possible that a man may commend Christ, in order to commend himself as an evangelical preacher, for such a good work he is indeed commendable, but for such a bad end, it is to God only that he is accountable. But it is possible also to know if a man intend not himself by preaching Christ ; for sometimes there is such a power and virtue attending the word, and

such a smell and savour of heaven with the preacher, as carries a secret demonstration of his spirituality and purity of intention into the heart even of the carnal by-standers, let be these whom he hath enlightened with the spirit of discerning, to know the voice of Christ from a stranger. However, sirs, think of ministers what ye will, the great question is, "What think ye of Christ?" Wo to us, if our only design be to bring people to say, What think ye of such a minister; and what think ye of such a sermon? If we make Christ a covert for raising our own applause, he can instantly command an angel to smite us, as he did Herod, and order us to be eaten up of worms, for not giving God the glory. Oh! what should ye think of us? though we magnify our office as ambassadors of Christ, yet, in ourselves, some of us are as frail, feeble, sinful pieces of dust as any of you; we are among the chief of sinners, as well as you; we need the blood and Spirit of Christ to justify and sanctify us, as well as you; let us decrease, but let Christ increase. If any of us be made instruments of good to your souls, let it engage you to think the more of Christ, that could work such a work by such weak and unlikely instruments. He puts the treasure in earthen vessels. that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. Whatever honour God calls you to put upon them for their work's sake, yet if your esteem centre upon the minister, or his work, saying, O, I think much of such a minister, and I think much of such a sermon, you need to begin to think better; for the grand question is, "What think ye of Christ?" It is indeed the best sermon that works the highest thoughts of Christ.

Secondly, The second Use is for conviction and reproof to all those that are filled with unworthy and unbecoming thoughts of Christ, with ignorant and erroneous thoughts of him. Some have no thoughts of Christ at all; some that think of him, yet think nothing of him; some think little of him; some think hardly and harshly of him; some think meanly and basely of him: to speak of all the base and mean thoughts of Christ that the world is filled with, would be impossible. Oh! how basely do the Arians think of Christ, and his supreme Godhead! If I had not found it necessary to confine myself to the first branch of Christ's question here, "What think ye of Christ?" The other branch, namely, *Whose Son is he?* might have led me particularly to have treated the doctrine of Christ's Sonship, and eternal Godhead, and co-equality with the Father, in opposition to the damnable heresy, which some tell

us is creeping into Scotland, as well as it is raging in England and Ireland! I shall only say, that the question concerns them, as well as the Pharisees of old, "What think ye of Christ?" and, "Whose Son is he?" Oh! can they say no more than with the Pharisees, that he is "the Son of David?" Then, "How does David in Spirit call him Lord?" And, if he be David's Lord and God, how can he be so, and yet not co-equal with the Father? For we have not two Lords, or two Gods, "The Lord our God is one Lord;" therefore Christ, being Lord, must be One with the Father essentially; Christ is the true God, and eternal life. But I cannot now enlarge on this subject. Oh! may Arian doctors begin to read over the Christian catechism again, and learn to answer this question, "What think ye of Christ?" Again, as Arians think nothing of his Godhead, but as if it were, an inferior deity; so some, that pretend a greater respect to him, yet think but basely of him. Papists think nothing of the imputation of his righteousness; Socinians think nothing of the sacrifice of his death; Arminians think nothing of the power of his grace: Quakers think nothing of his word: Atheists think nothing of his Spirit; Deists think nothing of his revelations. If we look out to the world, the Pagans have no thoughts of him at all; the Mahometans think him nothing but a great Prophet at best, and inferior to Mahomet; the Jews think him nothing but an imposter, and that he is not the Christ, but only the carpenter's son; or it may be, a blasphemer, that had a devil. And, again, if we look into the church, even the purest churches in this world, among which, I would fain hope, the poor Church of Scotland hath not yet lost the vogue; yet, Oh! how many dark and confused notions, yea, unwarrantable and unworthy thoughts of Christ may be there discovered, even among these churches that are supposed to be pure, Christian, Protestant, and reformed churches! It were endless, to speak of doctrinal and practical errors that swarm in the churches, whereby contempt is poured upon Christ and his doctrine, his truth, his gospel, and his yoke; his loving yoke of gospel-obedience. What low thoughts of Christ appear in the strain of doctrine, that tends to confound the old and new covenant, law and gospel, faith and works, without riding marches duly betwixt Christ and all his rivals and competitors, that seek to share with him in the glory of salvation-work! What low thoughts of Christ appear in that sort of practice, that consists either in a life of legal righteousness, or a life of open wickedness!

What low thoughts of Christ, as our righteousness, appear from every thing that tends to lead sinners back to the law as a covenant of works! And what low thoughts of Christ, as our sanctification, appear from every thing that tends to lead sinners off from the law, as a rule of holiness! How is Christ, and his merit and righteousness disesteemed, to the encouragement of self and self-righteousness! And how is Christ and his Spirit and grace disesteemed, to the encouragement of sin and licentiousness! It is not my business to expose the nakedness of any; they are singular persons, that are helped to guard against all right-hand and left-hand extremes, so as to think no less of Christ as a Lord than Christ as a Saviour; and to esteem a whole Christ, without setting up one part of Christ against another; but my work especially is to strike at the root of all that disesteem of Christ, that takes place in the world, especially in the visible church. Whence is it that the world thinks so little of Christ, and so naughtily of him? Why,

1. Ignorance is a cause of it, *Ignoti nulla cupido*; as it is impossible for them to undervalue Christ, who have the saving knowledge of him; so it is not possible that any can prize him, whom they do not know. Many are like Festus, Acts xxv. 19, who told Agrippa, that Paul's enemies had questions against him, concerning one JESUS; Christ is to them a certain man, one Jesus, but for their part they know little of him, and are indifferent about him; as a blind man, what he does not see he cares not for, though he be told of it as never so fair and beautiful; so natural men are blind, 2 Cor. iv. 4; they can see no beauty or comeliness in Christ, for which they should desire him. Therefore, though they may hear of his glory and comeliness, and be a little moved therewith, yet they care not so much for him as to give him the highest room in their thoughts and esteem.

2. Unbelief is another cause why people think little of Christ; if they would believe, they would see the glory of God in him, and see him a glorious and lovely object; but, through unbelief, Christ is loathsome instead of lovely; hence his doctrine is loathsome, his righteousness, his holiness, his cross. Unbelief makes people think Christ is a cheat, and God is a liar, and that he says what he hath no mind to do; it makes them think that he is not able to save, or that he is not willing to save. Oh! how basely does unbelief think of Christ! Unbelief also will make a man think God like unto himself, and an approver of his sin; Psal. l. 21, "Thou thoughtest

that I was altogether such an one as thyself;" and so it makes them to think of Christ but very basely.

3. Pride and self-righteousness is another cause why people think little of Christ, Rom. x. 3. While people think much of themselves and their doing, they cannot think much of Christ and his righteousness. This is that legal righteousness that makes men to do with the garment of Christ's righteousness, as the Ammonites did with the garments of David's messengers: they clipped them so short, that they were not able to hide their shame; but if it was a terror and smiting to David's heart to cut off but a little of the lap of Saul's garment, ought it not to be a terror to us to cut off a lap of Christ's garment, or to clip it so short as to think that it cannot cover us completely, without some of our own rotten righteousness sewed to it? Again, it is this legal principle that makes believers themselves think it cannot be that they are accepted as righteous, perfectly righteous in the sight of God, through the righteousness of Christ imputed; why, because they want a feeling of that righteousness in themselves, which the legal heart is ready to make the foundation of pardon and acceptance; but, as Luther said, "We must not feel, but believe that we are thus righteous;" yea, it is this hidden principle of self-righteousness that will make a minister preach Christ alone for righteousness, as if he were as much for exalting Christ, as any that ever preached; and yet, before ever you know well where you are, you will find him bringing in some legal duty or qualification in order to your being justified, that will spoil all; just like an untoward milch-cow, that will let down a good deal of milk very well, but then, with an unhappy kick of her foot, she will tumble all down to the ground when she hath done; even so, the sincere milk of the word of life, and justification through Christ's righteousness alone, may be let down abundantly, that you would think the man as evangelical as Paul himself, or anybody that ever preached the gospel; but, behold, of a sudden the legal foot gives it a kick, and spills all when he hath done, or else the law sets her foot among the midst of the milk; I mean, mixes some dirty righteousness and qualification of our own, with the fair and clean milk of Christ's righteousness, so as the poor soul loaths to take a drink of it. Why, I thought this milk was for me, and this righteousness of Christ was for me; but there came in a qualification, that, before ever I could be justified, I behoved to do so and so, and be so and so humbled, and penitent; and sure I am I want

such a qualification, and therefore all is lost to me. But, poor soul, whatever come in this way, tending to make you look into yourself, and stand off from Christ, you may know it is but a switch of the law of works; slight it and set it off, if it hinder you from thinking of Christ as your ALL, and from buying and drinking his wine and milk, without money and without price.

4. Carnal reason is another cause why people think little of Christ; for, "The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, they are foolishness to him," 1 Cor. ii. 14. There is a natural reason, which is so much cried up at this day, when man goes about to measure God's truths, and spiritual mysteries, with his short line of human reason; and finding that reason agrees with these mysteries no more than the sound of ram-horns, in the view of carnal reason, was like to bring down the walls of Jericho; behold, no fault must be found with lady Reason, but Christ's gospel, and the mysteries thereof, must bear the blame, namely, That they are foolish and absurd; and therefore not to be received or esteemed by such wise heads as they are, who little remember the apostle's admonition, 1 Cor. iii. 18, "If any man will be wise, let him become a fool, that he may be wise." Hence Luther gave it as an infallible mark that the gospel was not truly preached, and was not the gospel indeed, namely, "If it was so brewed, fitted, and adapted unto reason, that all approved of it, and yielded to it peaceably; for, how then should Christ be a sign that should be spoken against, Luke ii. 34, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence?" This leads me to a

5. Cause why people think so little of Christ, namely, the calumny cast upon the gospel of Christ, and the dispensers of it. Is it possible for the wisdom of the world to hold her peace from speaking against that which she judges to be foolishness? How then shall Christ be not only for the rising but the falling of many in Israel? "Mark," says Luther, "where this fall is, even in Israel, in that people that seemed to be Christ's only people, and upon Christ's side." It is even in Israel that many fall, and in Israel that Christ is spoken against. Thus, when he came to be a minister of the old and ancient truths of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, Rom. xv. 8, when he began to preach the same, the greatest part of the multitude cried out, *What new doctrine is this?* Mark i. 27. Whence we may see, that when a church hath gone off from any ancient truth, or old way of express-

ing it, no sooner are these old truths revived, or set in their ancient frame, than presently it is called a *new scheme of doctrine*. However, by this means, Satan gets much of his will; for it tends to make people think little of Christ and his gospel.

6. Division is another cause why people think so little of Christ. There is a twofold division that I mean; there is not only an outward church-division, but an inward heart-division. No doubt the former hath a great hand in making many to slight Christ; for, when a church is divided, the generality of people are apt to be stumbled. Why, say they, we know not whom to believe, and what side to turn to; every party says they are for Christ, and therefore the indifferent sort of people think, we will even let Christ and them both alone. But it is especially inward heart-division that I mean: when the heart is divided betwixt Christ and the world, betwixt Christ and idols or lusts: the world and the lusts thereof, will be sure to carry away the heart, that it cannot think highly of Christ, while it thinks so much of other things. A man may as soon with one eye observe the stars, and with the other measure the earth at the same time, as he can think highly of Christ and his idols too; therefore, when Satan, like the pretended mother, says, "Let it be neither thine nor mine, but divide it;" God, who is the Lord of the heart, says, Let the devil rather have all; for God will either have all or none. Now, when men have any approved idol in the heart, Christ is despised, his rival gets all; the divided heart, then, is a heart separate, and joined to idols; and this division causes disesteem of Christ, so as the man cannot think of Christ, he must, of necessity, think of some other thing. See how they that were invited to the great supper, the gospel banquet, put it off with excuses; Luke xiv. 18, "I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it," says one; mark the phrase, *I must needs go*; he pleads necessity, and necessity hath no law. When the heart is not wholly for Christ, of necessity it will be for the world, and the lusts thereof; and he that is not for Christ Satan will constantly find him enough of business to take up his thoughts, and which the man will reckon so necessary, that he will have no leisure to think of Christ. Now, when this question is proposed, "What think ye of Christ?" or when Christ is offered, there are two sort of persons that shew very little esteem of him; yea, that shew they do nothing but despise him in their heart: the apostle compares them to dogs and swine, 2 Pet. ii. 22.

(1.) There are some like swine, namely, the profane worldly people; for, as swine think more of the mire than any thing else; so, if one go to drive him away from the mire, he only gives a grunt, and away he goes to the mire again, or else rooting his snout in the earth: so profane and worldly people love to wallow in the mire of sin, and to be rooting and rotting in the earth; and if any go about to drive them from sin, and to pull their noses out of the earth, they go away grunting and grumbling in their heart, that they cannot be allowed their necessary pleasure and profit; and they return to the wallowing in the mire, and rooting in the earth as eagerly as ever. All the answer they give to the question, "What think ye of Christ?" is a grunt; they are a little disturbed about it, and moved a little to mutter some words, according as they are affected; but away they go grunting, with their mouth towards the dust: it is not Christ they are thinking of.

(2.) There are others like dogs, namely, legalists and self-justiciaries, that are worse enemies to the gospel of Christ than the worldling, or openly profane; for as a dog thinks more of a stinking carcase than anything else, so if you go about to drive the dog from his vomit, or stinking carrion, he will be ready either to bark or bite, or flee in your face; even so, legalists and self-justiciaries think more of the stinking carcase of their own righteousness, and legal duties, than anything else; and when any goes about to draw them away from the high esteem of the filthy rags of their own righteousness, shewing the loathsomeness and vileness thereof, the absolute necessity of being wholly denied thereto, and adorned with nothing but Christ's perfect righteousness for justification before God; if we show them how God justifies the ungodly, and how the righteousness of God, without the works of the law, is manifested in the gospel; why, then they go away from ordinances, barking and biting, slandering, and calumniating the gospel, which they do not understand or esteem, as if it were a doctrine of licentiousness, and an encouragement of sin: and they return to their vomit, their stinking carrion, neglecting the heavenly carcase, to which the believing eagles gather together, that they may live by faith upon the Son of God. Now, both these sorts of persons, however differently affected, yet agree in their slighting of Christ, upon different grounds. What do they think of Christ? Nothing at all. The Lord convince and awaken such!

Thirdly, The Third Use may be for Examination and Trial. Let this great question of the Christian Catechism be a touchstone, to try what metal you are of, and to understand what is your state now, and what will be your lot for ever : it is, and will be, according as you answer this question, "What think ye of Christ?" For helping you into this inquiry, I would direct you to try it, 1. By the quality of your thoughts. 2. By the object thereof.

1st, Try yourselves upon this question by the quality of your thoughts ; for it is not a simple thought, like a flying vapour, that is here intended, but a qualified thought, that you are to try yourselves by : for example,

1. Right and becoming thoughts of Christ are preferring and superlative thoughts : Christ is beyond comparison to the man ; the language of such a thought of Christ is this, O what can he be compared unto ! If you compare him to a rose, he is the Rose of Sharon ; if you compare him to a lily, he is the Lily of the valley ; if you compare him to a sun, he is the Sun of Righteousness ; if you compare him to a star, he is the bright and the morning Star ; if you compare him to a chief and honourable worthy, he is the chief among ten thousand ; if you compare him to a head, he is the Head of principalities and powers ; if you compare him to a flower, he is the Flower of the stem of Jesse ; if you compare him to a branch, he is the Branch of righteousness ; if you compare him to an advocate, he is an Advocate with the Father ; if you compare him to a counsellor, he is the Wonderful Counsellor ; if you compare him to a king, he is the King of kings and Lord of lords ; if you compare him to a prince, he is the Prince of peace, the Prince of the kings of the earth ; if you compare him with men, he is fairer than the sons of men ; if you compare him with angels, he is the Lord of angels ; "Let all the angels of God worship him." The man doth in his thoughts prefer Christ to all things in heaven and earth : "Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon the earth whom I desire besides thee," Psalm lxxiii. 25. In all things he gives him the pre-eminence, Col. i. 18. Again,

2. Right and becoming thoughts of Christ are admiring and adoring thoughts, exalting and extolling thoughts ; if you have due thoughts of him in your heart, you will find in your heart to bless him, saying, as Psalm. cxviii. 26,

Blessed is he, in God's great name,
 That cometh us to save :
 We, from the house which to the Lord
 Pertains, you blessed have.

And, "O magnify the Lord with me:" you would wish that all the world would fall a blessing, and praising, and extolling him. They are glorifying and glorifying thoughts: the man's heart glories in the Lord, and glorifies the Lord; and would desire his glory might be advanced above the heavens. Why, because,

3. Right and becoming thoughts of Christ are spiritual and sublimating thoughts: natural thoughts can rise no higher than nature, 1 Cor. ii. 14; but spiritual thoughts, being managed by the conduct and influence of the Spirit of God; "The Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God." Indeed, the Spirit of God is the all in all of these thoughts; for he comes, according to the promise, and glorifies Christ by receiving the things of Christ, and shewing them unto the soul, John xvi. 14, "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit," Rom. viii. 5. Indeed, the things of Christ and the things of the Spirit are the same; no human natural wisdom can reach to them; wise naturalists may indeed dream of them, and speak of them like a man speaking in his dream of the light of the sun, while yet it is dark night with him, and he was never awakened, convinced, and savingly illuminated.

4. Right and becoming thoughts of Christ are applying and appropriating thoughts; insomuch that the man takes Christ into his soul as he takes meat and drink into his body; "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life," John vi. 54. This is that believing thought, without which a man receives no benefit, any more than a man that wants meat can have benefit by thinking upon meat, without eating thereof. The man takes in Christ to himself for his own good. To think of Christ without applying him, is like a man thinking of meat and drink without taking it; which does no good.

QUEST. But can there be no right thinking of Christ without applying? Indeed, man, the thought is but a vain thought, an unbelieving thought, an unprofitable thought, if it be not either an applying thought of Christ, or a thought of Christ in order to application; like a sick man receiving a cordial out of his physician's

hand, he takes it from him, not to hold it in his hand, and no more, but in order to make it his own, by drinking it down for his refreshment, healing, and strengthening. The man's taking the cordial in his hand is not properly the taking that the physician means, but his taking it into himself, or down into his stomach, is the proper taking of it; yet the former taking of it in his hand is right, in so far as it is in order to the other: so here, a bare thinking of Christ is of no avail, unless it be an applying thought, or a thought in order to application: and though the thoughts of Christ, in order to application, be not application itself properly, yet it is good, in so far as it is a taking Christ into your hand, in order to take him into your heart, and that for your own soul's refreshment, life, health, and everlasting salvation.

5. Right thoughts of Christ are sinking and serious thoughts, in opposition to swimming, roving, and indifferent thoughts. Some have a wild thought about Christ, that if he be good for anything, they shall have a share of him, as well as others: but what he is, and how they shall come by him, they never deeply pondered, for they were never touched with a sense of their sin, misery, and undone state without him. A swimming thought of Christ is like that of some ignorant creatures crying out in a surprise, "Christ have mercy on us;" but the thought that sinks deep is like that of the publican smiting on his breast, and crying, "Lord have mercy on me a sinner." But there are learned fools in the world as well as ignorant ones, that have nothing but swimming thoughts, roving speculations; and yet, it may be, they can speak of Christ to better purpose, you would think, than one that is exercised to godliness: but yet these two sorts differ as far as the pleading of an orator differs from the pleading of a malefactor; the one vents his great wit, but the other his heart concern. Again,

6. Right thoughts of Christ are trading and trafficking thoughts; the man hath it for his constant trade to think highly of Christ, and give him the chief room in his heart and esteem. In this respect his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. "The desire of our soul is to thy name," says the church, and to the remembrance of thee. "With my soul have I desired thee in the night, and with my spirit within me will I seek thee early," Isa. xxvi. 8, 9. There was a trading with heaven late at night, and early in the morning. Yea, David makes it morning, and evening, and mid-time of the day; yea, more, seven times a day; and yet most of all, when he

says, "My soul breaks for the longing it hath to thy righteous judgments at all times." It is a constant trading. True, indeed, there are innumerable intermissions in the believer's Christian thoughts and desires: but as we say, it is such a man's trade to buy and sell, while he follows that employment, though it is not every moment he is thus occupied: but though there be several intermissions in the exercise of his employment, yet the bent of his mind goes that way: so here, we may call this the believer's constant trade; because, whatever intermissions there are in this his mental trading with heaven, yet the bent of his soul is towards Christ: yea, it is not only his business, but his pleasure: and that makes him go on. If a man thrive at his trade, he takes pleasure in it; and if not, he is in danger of giving it over. We go sometimes upon business to these we never saw, nor care for seeing again, and whom we take little pleasure to converse with; they that never go to Christ but merely upon business, and never find any pleasure in conversing with him, surely they are too great strangers to him. Certainly, believer, there is too much strangeness betwixt Christ and you, if your business you have ado with Christ be seldom your pleasure, or if it be merely business that takes you to him, saying, "I want a pardon, I want a promise, I want this and that." But is there never a love-visit you make to him, saying, "Lord, I have got a pardon, and I am come to bless thee for it; I have got a promise, and I am come to praise thee for it; thy company is sweet, and I am come to get thee in my arms, that I may have more of thy embraces?" O sweet trading; "My meditation of him shall be sweet." Indeed, these thoughts of Christ that are right, are glad, joyful, satisfying thoughts.

7. Right thoughts of Christ are humbling thoughts, and yet emboldening thoughts. O but these that think highly of Christ cannot but think meanly of themselves, saying with Job, "Now, mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." The believer that thinks duly of Christ hath both the highest and lowest thoughts in the world; the highest thoughts of Christ, and the lowest thoughts of himself: and yet this humility doth not hinder his boldness, for he hath boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, Heb. x. 19. The more he thinks of Christ, the more humble thoughts he has of himself; and yet, the more he thinks of Christ, the more bold he is towards God. It is a bold humility, and a humble boldness; hence, when he is wor-

shipping God in the Spirit, two other things concur, namely, a rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and a having no confidence in the flesh, Phil. iii. 3. O! says the soul, I have no ground of confidence in myself, but I have all ground of confidence in Christ! Unworthy wretch am I as ever was out of hell; but, behold there is the worthy blood, the worthy righteousness of Christ, "the Lord our righteousness;" therefore, unworthy as I am, I am warranted to be bold in claiming all through Christ. I see the holy of holies is open to me through this blood of Christ.

8. Right thoughts of Christ are assimilating thoughts, sanctifying and transforming thoughts; 2 Cor. iii. 18, "But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." They that see Christ cannot but love him, and desire to be like him, for there is a smiting favour in his face. They that are in heaven are like him, because they see him as he is: the beautiful vision brings in full conformity to him. Now, a spiritual thought, and a believing thought, is a mental sight; a fiducial vision of him; and the more of this, the more conformity to him in holiness. The thought that endears Christ embitters sin: a man cannot think duly of the loveliness of Christ, without thinking of the loathsomeness of sin. O! when the Sun of righteousness ariseth, there is a heat that accompanies the light, and warms the heart. And, indeed, high thoughts of Christ do warm the heart, and make it burn within him: and heart-warming thoughts tend to burn up corruption; for, as Christ comes into the heart, sin must go out, according to the measure and degree of his coming. As a talent of gold, or some weighty metal, falling into a vessel of water, dashes out all that is in the vessel to make room for itself; so Christ coming into the heart, dashes out sin to make room for himself. And, indeed, they that have honourable thoughts of Christ in their hearts, cannot have favourable thoughts of sin; because, whenever Christ comes into the thoughts, if he do not wash out the life, yet he dashes out the love of sin. What, man! will you say that Christ is in you, and that you have faith, and yet the love of sin as great as ever, and you can indulge yourself in whoredom, and drunkenness, and lying and swearing, and Sabbath-breaking, or any other piece of wickedness and profanity. You will never make a good man believe that Christ is in you, or that you have faith, even though you should swear by your faith, as some do, who even

thereby testify to the world, that they have no faith at all; being so prodigal of it, as to swear away the faith which they say or think they have. So far as Christ comes in, sin goes out. It is possible, indeed, that a believer that hath Christ in him may think that he hath more sin than ever, and that sin is on the growing hand, instead of the decaying; but he is mistaken; it is in this case as it is with a cup of water; put silver and gold in a cup, and the water swells up, and the more you put in, the more will the water swell and run over, that you would think there is still more water than before, the more gold is put in: Christ is the tried gold; and the more the vessel of the believer's heart is filled with it, the more may sin appear to rise and swell, and run over all its banks: this frightens and terrifies the poor soul, because now he sees that which it may be, was hid in the vessel of his heart before, and out of his sight. But it is not that there is more sin, more water than before, but more gold cast in; only every dash perhaps makes the water flee about, that he thinks he was never so full of sin and corruption as now: yet still it holds good, Christ's coming in makes sin flee out; and the more it seems to rise and swell, the more does the soul's indignation rise and swell against it. All right thoughts of Christ are sanctifying thoughts.

9. High thoughts of Christ are new thoughts; they that suppose they have thought well enough of Christ all their days, and have no better thoughts, no higher thoughts, no weightier thoughts, no clearer thoughts of him than ever they had, surely they are strangers to this esteem of Christ that we are inquiring into: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are done away, and all things are become new," and new thoughts among the rest. Where grace comes, there the wicked man forsakes his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; his carnal thoughts, his legal thoughts, they are changed into spiritual thoughts, evangelical thoughts, such as he never had before. And,

10. New thoughts of Christ will bring in new words and new actions; the words follow the thoughts. You may then turn the question, "What think ye of Christ?" to another, What speak ye of him? for, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." If you think it ill breeding, or ungenteel manners, as many do, to speak of Christ and spiritual things, and cannot drop a word for him from Sabbath to Sabbath, who can believe that you think highly of Christ? Nay, that which is most in the heart and thoughts

will be most in your lips. The actions also follow the thoughts; can you think highly of Christ, and yet do nothing for him? Nay, new and precious thoughts of Christ will bring in new gospel-obedience from a principle of love to him. Thus you may try yourselves now on this question, "What think ye of Christ?" by the quality of your thoughts. Examination is the very design of the question, namely, to discover what our thoughts of Christ are, and therefore I insist mainly upon this. But having tried yourselves by the quality of your thoughts,

2ndly, Try yourselves by the object thereof, namely, CHRIST; "What think ye of CHRIST?" And here such a large field presents itself that it is impossible I can go through it all. Besides what was said on the doctrinal part, I would ask some further questions concerning Christ, not only for examination, but for raising your esteem of him.

1. What think ye of the eminent station he is in, as Mediator betwixt God and you, and his relation to God and you; his relation to God by nature, as his eternal Son: and by office, as his righteous Servant? God calls you to wonder at him in this station: Isaiah xlii. 1, "Behold my Servant, whom I uphold; mine Elect, in whom my soul delighteth." His Father called him forth to serve him and you, and to serve him for your sake; to serve him as a Redeemer, to ransom you; to serve him as a Surety, to pay your debt; to serve him as a Physician, to heal your souls; to serve him in all the offices that your need requires: and what think ye of him?

2. What think ye of his travels, in order to accomplish the work that belongs to that station and relation, wherein he stands to God and you? The travail of his eternal mind before time, when his delights were with the sons of men; the travail of his soul, and the travail of his body in time; his travail from heaven to earth, and from earth to heaven again: in all his mediatory actings; his incarnation, birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession! O but the Lord can give a glance of his glory in the very naming of these things! How did he travail as in birth, when he went about his Father's business! Luke ii. 49.

3. What think ye of his treasures; his unsearchable riches that are stored up in him for the benefit of poor sinners, having received these gifts for men? All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in him; all, and infinitely more than we lost in the first Adam is treasured up in the second Adam. O what may a

poor, ignorant, witless sinner think of a treasure of wisdom for his illumination ! What may a guilty sinner think of a treasure of righteousness, for his justification ! What may a filthy sinner think of a treasure of grace, for his sanctification ! And what may a miserable sinner think of a treasure of mercy, for his complete redemption ! Yet all these treasures, and infinitely more than we can name, are in Christ : “ Who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption,” 1 Cor. i. 30. O the fulness of grace that is in him, that out of his fulness we may receive grace for grace ! He is the storehouse of all God’s treasures ; for all is treasured up in him, that we may be complete in him, who will by faith make use of him. And what think ye of him ?

4. What think ye of his thoughts ? Psal. cxxxix. 17, “ How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God ! how great is the sum of them ! If I count them,” says he, “ they are more in number than the sand : When I awake, I am still with thee.” O his thoughts ! dwell with wonder and admiration upon God’s thoughts. Is it nothing to you that ever he had thoughts of love towards the like of you ; thoughts of pardon, thoughts of peace : “ Thoughts of good and not of evil, to give you an expected end !” O believer, his thoughts are not precious to the rest of the world ; but what are they to you ? Think you nothing that his thought and care should have been about you from eternity, and now manifested in time ? Having loved you with an everlasting love, how is he drawing you with loving-kindness ? Besides all his providential care in bringing things about for your good, and that in a way beyond your contrivance and foresight, yea, in such a manner as never entered into your thoughts. You little thought what was his design in ordering your lot in such a part of the world, and such a spot of his vineyard, and bringing you to such a sermon, or under such a ministry. O how innumerable are his precious thoughts ? And what think ye of him ?

5. What think ye of his words, as well as his thoughts ? Surely, if you think duly, you will think them sweet words : “ How sweet are thy words unto my taste ! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth,” Psal. cxix. 103. Does the Spirit never take some of his words, and put a spiritual majesty thereupon ? Though many times, like Samuel, you mistake the Lord’s voice, believer, and think it is Eli that speaks, and cannot discern the voice of Christ from the voice of Moses ; the voice of grace from the voice of the

law; yet, when the Spirit comes, and whispers in a word from Christ sometimes, what think ye of it? "It is the voice of my Beloved, behold he cometh, skipping upon the mountains, and leaping upon the hills!" What think ye of his inviting words, saying, "Come to me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden?" What think ye of his expostulating words, saying, "Why will ye die, O house of Israel?"—What think ye of his entreating words, and his promising words, his *I wills*, and *ye shalls*? "I will be your God, and ye shall be my people. Do you think so much of them, that your hearts say *Amen* to them? What think ye of his *may be's*? Believers will think right much of a may-be from him sometimes. "It may be he will be gracious. It may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger." What think ye of his *shall be's*? There are shall be's for the church in general: "Upon all the glory there shall be a defence: In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen." What think ye of these? There are shall be's for yourself in particular. There is a *shall be* for your protection: "A man shall be a hiding-place from the storm. This man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land." There is a *shall be* for your provision: "Bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure." There is a *shall be* for your instruction: "They shall be all taught of God." There is a *shall be* for your justification: "His name shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." There is a *shall be* for your salvation from sin and wrath: "His name shall be called Jesus, because, he saves his people from their sins; even Jesus, which delivers from the wrath to come." There is a *shall be* for a happy death: "Death shall be swallowed up in victory." There is a *shall be* for a happy welcome at the day of judgment: "They shall be mine, in the day that I make up my jewels." There is a *shall be* for a happy eternity: "And so we shall be ever with the Lord." What think ye of all these words and shall be's? Is there any faith here, saying, AMEN; *so let it be; so shall it be?*—What think ye of his Verilys? We cannot go through these, to tell you how oft he hath confirmed his word with a *Verily, verily, I say unto you*. Many a wrathful *verily* against his enemies, that think nothing of him; many a loving *verily* towards his people that think much of him. O sirs, do you esteem them all to be the truth, and that verily it is and shall be as he hath said?—What think ye of his dying words, as when he said upon the cross, "It is finished?" What think ye of his living words: "I am he that was dead, and

am alive ; and behold I live for evermore?" O! what think ye of his words? Cannot your heart say, "Lord, to whom shall I go? Thou hast the words of eternal life?" O what think ye of him?

6. What think ye of his works? Even his works of creation; what think ye of these? For, "By him all things were made that were made; and without him was nothing made," John i. 3. O when you behold the heavens, the works of his hands; the moon and the stars, which he hath ordained, may you not say, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" What think ye of his works of providence? For, "He upholds all things by the word of his power," Heb. i. 3. If you wonder how he can raise your dead bodies at the great day, and sever your dust from other dust; may you not as well wonder, how he every day raises up in your view innumerable stalks of corn out of the dust, and gives to every pickle of seed his own body? as the apostle argues, 1 Cor. xv. 35, and downward. How will he raise the believer's vile body, out of the filthy dust where it rots, and make it like unto his own glorious body? O fools that we are, and slow of heart to believe, how does he raise the beautiful lilies out of the dung? Solomon, in all his glory, is not comparable to one of these; and all the world cannot make one of them to rise, without his powerful providence. These miracles of providence are common every day in your view, and so we think nothing of them; but we might see the power of Christ in them. If you wonder how it was possible for Christ to turn the water into wine, or multiply a few loaves and a few fishes, so as to feed so many thousands, we needed not wonder so much, if we but thought how his providence is doing that every year: the water falls from the clouds, and the vine, by his order, turns it unto wine; and by the span of such fishes, and the grain of such loaves, he is feeding millions every day. Woe is us, that we cannot think of him and his works as we ought! Above all, what think ye of his works of grace, and redeeming love? All his other works are as the drop of a bucket, in comparison of this ocean; for herein we may see him appear in his own, and his Father's pomp and splendour, manifesting all the glorious perfections of God; even his infinite power, and wisdom, holiness, justice, mercy, truth, faithfulness, and all God's attributes. I might here mention his works of grace for us, and his works of grace in us; but it were endless to speak of the thousandth part.—His work of grace for us lies in his bringing in everlasting righteousness; especi-

ally if we speak of his good works ; surely it is a good work that can fulfil the holy precepts of that good law, which we have broken, and can answer the threatening of the just law, which we have incurred. Well, here is the doing and dying of the Son of God, for both these ends, that divine holiness may be vindicated, and justice satisfied, in the way and manner of our salvation through him. The law of God is a perfect law, and exceeding broad ; but here is a righteousness as broad as it can be, so as to magnify the law and make it honourable. O ! what think ye of that good work ?—His work of grace in us is also much to be thought of ; and that lies mainly, I think, in imputing his perfect righteousness to us for our justification (which is indeed properly an act of grace upon us, Rom. iii. 22), and implanting another righteousness beside it for our sanctification, which he carries on to perfection. This internal work of grace may be begun with sighs and groans, advanced in battles and conflicts ; but it will be completed in victory and glory. Well, then, in this short glance of his works, what think ye of them ? May ye not say, as Psalm cxi. 3, “ His work is honourable and glorious, and his righteousness endures for ever ? ” And when you notice his works, what think you of himself ?

7. What think ye of his gospel, and the terms of it ? That gospel, which we preach in his name, wherein his righteousness is revealed from faith to faith ? If you think highly of him, you will think highly of it, as the best news and most glad tidings that ever you heard : “ How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those that preach the gospel of peace, that bring glad tidings of good things, that publish salvation ! ” Isa. lv. 7 ; Rom. x. 15. Some are ready to think the gospel of grace and salvation through Christ, is too good news to be true with respect to them, as if it were not to be supposed that God will bestow so great salvation so freely upon so great sinners ; not considering, that God in the gospel aims not at our glory chiefly, but at the declaration of his own glory, and the magnifying of his own free grace ; and that therefore we ought to take freely what he gives freely. It is a manifestation of free grace, sovereign grace, which is neither hindered by our evil, nor furthered by our good, Rom. iii. 24 ; and regards neither our worthiness to deserve it, nor our unworthiness to impede it, Rom. ix. 15. Hence Luther alleged, that “ men’s minds were so occupied with fantastical imaginations of their own works, that the glad tidings of the gospel will seem strange matters to them.” Men will be astonished at the

greatness of his grace, as it is, Jer. xxxiii. 9. Many think of the gospel, as if it were a new law, wherein God stands upon some easier terms with us than in the covenant of works; thus confounding law and gospel, and making a hotch-potch of both. Indeed, if we speak of law-terms, upon which our salvation stands, they are no easier than ever they were: a perfect righteousness is the only condition of salvation; and we not having that in ourselves, the gospel offers it in Christ, and there is the ground of our eternal salvation: but if we speak of the gospel-terms, we need not say, you must come up to them; but rather, "Come down, Zaccheus; for this day is salvation come to thy house:" Salvation is come to you, and offered freely to you, without money and without price; come down and take it. And indeed faith, which belongs to the order and method of God's applying the gospel, is a coming down from all our legal hopes of salvation for something to be done by us, in order to our being obliged to another, even to Christ for all, Isa. lv. 1, 2, Rev. xxii. 17. Come down from the sycamore-tree of your vain hopes, and get all freely: that is the gospel. What think ye of it? This is indeed a hard saying to proud flesh and blood, which thinks rather they should go up, and do more for their justification and salvation, than come down, and be obliged to another to pay all their law-debt completely. He will do all for you, or nothing: and, O man, what think ye of him and his gospel? But then,

8. What think ye of his service, and his wages? When a man is once brought in to the gospel-terms, and understands them, then, and not till then, does he come up to the gospel-rule; for, "Faith works by love;" and, "Love is the fulfilling of the law," as a rule, from thankfulness to him that hath delivered from the law as a covenant. If you think his service hard and uneasy, it seems you are not thinking much of Christ, but rather of the law, which is a heavy yoke, that neither we nor our fathers were able to bear; but Christ's yoke is easy, and his burden is light, Matt. xi. 29, 30, because in this service the man hath no law-debt to pay, for Christ hath done that to his hand, but only a love-debt; "If you love me, keep my commandments:" and thus, "His commandments are not grievous." Here grace is *all and all*, both of the service and wages. Grace says, "Up and be doing, man, in my strength; for the greatest work is done to your hand; and now my grace shall be sufficient for thee." Grace says also, "Behold a crown of glory,

a reward of grace awaiting you, after you have fought the good fight of faith ; therefore have an eye to this recompense of reward." Death is the proper wages of sin, and it is a just debt ; but grace's wages is free ; "The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord : " that is, there is here no promise of life upon our doing, but a promise of grace to do, and of glory to crown our doing, and of both grace and glory as the reward of Christ's doing all ; and therefore, what think ye of him and his service ?

9. What think ye of his livery ? If you would answer this question. "What think ye of Christ ? I would ask, What wear ye of Christ ? The raiment of his righteousness, and the garment of his grace, so as to be all glorious within and without, like the king's daughter, will be precious to you. If you be clothed with the scarlet robe of his blood and righteousness, by which you are perfectly righteous before God, then, to be sure, you will think it very indecent for you to be clothed with nasty apparel before men. If a poor maid be married to a rich king, and yet go abroad like a beggar in filthy rags, would not everybody cry, It is a shame for her, that, having such a husband, she should discredit him and herself ? If you be married to Christ, and think much of your husband and his righteousness, surely you will think it becoming to wear his livery, and not go abroad with unclean mouths and filthy hands, like the rest of the world, to the dishonour of your Lord.

10. What think ye of his love, and the reasons of it ? Who can understand the height, and breadth, and depth, and length of his love ? It is without all dimension. And why does he love any of the lost posterity of Adam ? He tells us the reason, Deut. vii. 7, 8, "He loved you, because he loved you." Do you think he loves you for your beauty, O black and ugly sinner ! Nay, he prefers his love and kindness upon you in the gospel freely, not for your own beauty's sake, but for his own name's sake : and his grace, love, and good-will, as revealed in the gospel, is to be believed with application to yourself, for no other reason but because it is his will and pleasure. His love must make you beautiful, but cannot find you so. And if you cannot believe his grace and good-will to you, because you have no beauty, you are but rejecting the reason of his love, despising the freedom of his grace, and standing upon the terms of the old covenant of works, slighting the grace of the new covenant. This is such a disease to mankind, that even believers in Christ, when they are helped to perform duty, with any

lively frame, they are ready to say, with Leah, Jacob's wife, when she brought forth several children to him, "Now my husband will love me, because of my fruitfulness:" so says the believer, when he is helped to bring forth fruit unto God, and finds his spirit revived in duty, his soul strengthened, his heart enlarged, and a great deal of comfort there; "O now, says he, my Husband will love me, because of my fruitfulness." But what comes of it? The person having such a legal set, the Lord, to correct it, takes away all fruitfulness out of his view, in a manner, and leaves him barren; "O, says the believer, then, where is my former sweet hearing, and sweet praying and praising, and sweet meditation?" Why, the Lord has cut off these that he may cut off your legal pride of being loved for your beauty and fruitfulness, and that you may return to your first husband, for then it was better with you than now. You must begin, believer, where you began at first, and think of his loving you merely because he loves you. They that build their conjugal comfort only, or mainly, upon their righteousness of sanctification, and so secretly incline to follow after the law, will find their souls very unsettled, even up and down with their changeable frame. But again,

11. I may ask, What think ye of his loveliness? O! is he white and ruddy in your view? O! see how the spouse describes him, Song v. 10, and downward, in the beauty of his head, his locks, his eyes, and all and every part of him; his belly, or bowels of mercy; "His mouth is most sweet," says she. O the words, the smiles, the kisses of his mouth, his kindly embraces. I have read of one Agatho, that was a man so holy, that with a kiss he cured one of his leprosy; whether that be true or false, yet what I intend by telling it is true, that such is the virtue of Christ, that a kiss of his mouth, a smile of his countenance, will cure the soul of spiritual leprosy; yea, a word of his mouth will do it: "Now are you clean through the word that I have spoken," John xv. 3. Again,

12. What think ye of his favour and his blessing? Surely if you esteem him duly, you will think his favour is life, and his loving-kindness better than life; and that his blessing only makes rich. Especially, what think ye of his blessings and benefits, that cannot be enjoyed by feeling, but by faith; nor by the sight of sense, but by the sight of faith! "We walk by faith, and not by sight," says the apostle. But it is the fault even of believers, that they can hardly believe they have any more than they feel: and hence, when

they are in darkness of desertion, they think they have nothing; they have lost his favour, because they do not feel it; they have lost his righteousness, because they do not feel it; but remember, that when Asaph said, "Hath the Lord forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" he added, "This was my infirmity." You know, in a house where it is dark, all things are there that were before, though you see them not; so it is with you, believer, though you be in darkness, all things are as they were before: do you think all is gone, because you cannot see it? Well, you never walk by faith, but by feeling; nay, "He that walks in darkness, and hath no light, let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself upon his God." The name of the Lord is to the fore; his God is to the fore; the object of his faith is to the fore; as much as ever; and, "The just shall live by faith." Will you not believe the sun is in the firmament where it was, because a cloud hath come and intercepted the light of its beams? "Why, says one, but my misery is, when I am in the dark night, I fear it was all but delusion that ever I met with, and that there was nothing real or saving in it." This is a common thought among serious souls; but all that I shall say to it is by enlarging the similitude; ask a man when it is dark night, how do you know that ever you saw the natural sun. It may be you was but dreaming and deluding yourself; it was nothing but a strong imagination. Why, says the man, I am sure I saw it, because my eyes were dazzled with the light of it, and I was warmed with the heat of it, and I saw to work by it; and by the light of it I saw every thing about me. So may you say, believer; when a dark night of desertion or temptation comes on, the tempter suggests, It may be all but a delusion. Why, man, were not your eyes enlightened? Was not your heart warmed? Did you not see to work, and went on in your work joyfully, the joy of the Lord being your strength? And did you not see every thing about you? You saw God in his glory; you saw sin in its vileness; you saw holiness in its beauty; you saw the world in its vanity; you saw the creature in its emptiness; Christ in his fulness; you saw yourself in your loathsomeness: but now, when the light is withdrawn, "What think ye of Christ?" Is there no sun, because it is set to your view? Do you think it never shone upon you, because it is not now shining? What think ye of an absent Christ? Do you think nothing of him because he is absent? Surely, believer, that is not thought like a believer; sense is

many times denied you, that you may learn to believe more than you do.

“ But, say you, when he is not present with me, I cannot believe.” I shall tell you my mind here. There is a powerful presence necessary to believing; but there is a sensible presence that is not necessary to it, but rather usually comes upon the back of faith. Now, that powerful presence of God, that is necessary to believing, does open up the object of faith, namely, Christ’s righteousness, God’s promise, the truth of God, the blood of Christ; power is sometimes insensibly exerted, not by an outward open violence upon the man, but by an inward, secret, and sweet enchantment, as it were: ere he is aware, and before ever he knows that it is divine power that is doing the work, he finds the object of faith, that he is thinking upon, making room for itself, in his heart, and drawing out his soul, as it were, insensibly to it; and thereupon comes in sensible presence upon the back of that; “ After ye believed, ye were sealed,” Eph. i. 13. Now, if you say, you cannot believe without his powerful presence, that is true; divine power must be exerted to every act of faith, but then this power does ordinarily put forth itself insensibly and unawares, while we are thinking on, or viewing the object of faith, “ While I was musing, the fire burned,” Psal. xxxix. 3. The Spirit of God clears the object of faith, that being viewed and applied, the heart is set on fire with it; there is his powerful presence ushering in the sensible presence. But if you say, You cannot believe till you have his sensible presence; that is to make sense the foundation of your faith, and not the word of God, or the Christ of God; therefore, in order to believe, let not your question be first, What find you in yourself? but rather, “ What think ye of Christ?” You will find none of the sweet effects of faith, till you think on Christ the object of it. Again,

13. What think ye of his invisible glories? *Faith is the evidence of things not seen.* Faith sees not the things that are seen and felt; sensible enjoyments, for example, are not the object of faith, but sense; but faith sees the things that can neither be seen nor felt; it believes contrary to sense; yea, things impossible to nature, and incredible to carnal reason, considering only the power of God, that speaks in the word, as you see in the faith of Abraham. The greatest glory of Christ is invisible and incredible to nature; therefore we do not think much of him, if our faith does not terminate on things not seen. Again,

✓ 14. What think ye of his tabernacles and ordinances? Surely, if you think much of Christ, his tabernacles will be amiable to you. The slighter of his ordinances, is a slighter of Christ; a slighter of prayer, is a slighter of Christ; a slighter of the word, is a slighter of Christ, "He that despises you, despises me; and he that despises me, despises him that sent me." Again,

15. What think ye of his cause and interest, such as the much forgotten Reformation-work in Scotland, which our forefathers established by solemn National Covenants? If, the more it is forgotten among ministers and people, the more nearly it lies to your heart, and the more you long for its reviving, it were an evidence you think something of Christ, when others think little of him. But, alas! How little is this thought of in the age we live in! If the generation thought more of Christ, there would be more zeal for his interest, honour, and public Reformation-work. And, perhaps, the confusions of our day, the heavy bondage we are complaining of through the land, will never cease to grow to a height of terrible wrath, till we be brought to a sense of our defection, and a humble confession and reformation. Further,

✓ 16. What think ye of his cross and crown? Is his cross your crown? Surely they think much of Christ, that can say with Paul, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Moses thought his cross better than a crown, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. They that think much of Christ, must resolve upon it, that the world will not think much of them, but that they will be crossed, reproached, and nicknamed; but if Christ was nicknamed for us, and endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, we may well bear a reproach for him, especially when he hath said, "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth on you; on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified;" his cross makes way for his crown, and, in the meantime, his sweetness swallows up all the bitterness thereof.

17. What think ye of his friends? If you think highly of him, surely his friends and followers will be esteemed as the excellent ones of the earth, in whom is all your delight; and consequently his foes will be dis-esteemed by you: and therefore,

18. What think ye of his enemies? Though they were appearing in never so much worldly pomp, you will think very little

of them, if you know them to be his enemies, "O my soul, come not thou into their secret; to their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united." What think ye of his enemies within you? When you find these like thorns in the flesh, like splinters run into the flesh, does it not make you, with Paul, to beseech the Lord thrice; yea, to pray thrice, and thrice, and a hundred times thrice, with sighs and groans, to be freed from them? What think ye of his enemies about you? I mean, the world, and the lusts thereof; the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life. I have read a pretty story, which I reckon useful no other way than for the moral of it; how an angel and an hermit should have been travelling together; when first they went by a dead carcase, the hermit stopt his nose, and the angel smiled; and, after that, they went by a wanton strumpet proudly dressed, at which the hermit smiled, and the angel stopt his nose. The moral shews us, that in the sight of God and angels, no carrion is so noisome as pride is. But the more highly that any think of Christ, surely, the more humble they are: and pride will accordingly be hid from their eyes. Again,

19. What think ye of the world's thoughts of Christ? If you think highly of him yourself, you will be mightily surprised, and look upon it as a great wonder why the world think so little of him. O strange! that all the world are not taken up with him!

20. What think ye of your own thoughts of him? Surely, if you think duly of him, you will think you have but very poor, mean, low, contemptible, and unworthy thoughts of him; you will think that you cannot think enough of him; who is fairer than the sons of men: the Prince of the kings of the earth, altogether lovely. These are some probationary questions, by which you may take your own hearts to task before the Lord.

But I cannot stand to enlarge on these things; and I must own, the thousandth part is not said, that might be spoken from this text; for, as the whole scripture does testify of Christ, either directly or indirectly; so I might go through all the scriptures, and ask what ye think of Christ, in a suitableness to what is said of him, in this or that place of scripture.

Fourthly, This doctrine might again be applied by way of lamentation over all Christ despisers, who either stand upon a legal bottom, trusting in themselves, and their own righteousness; or who slight Christ and his ordinances, not loving the place where his honour dwells; who delay and postpone their closing with him,

giving away the prime and virginity of their affection to the world, prostituting their precious souls to their lusts and the ignoble things of time; who sit down satisfied and content without Christ, never miss him, nor feel a want of him, nor seek after union and communion with him. Oh! whence is it that you despise Christ at this rate! Alas! it is through ignorance and unbelief that you see no form nor comeliness in Christ, why he should be desired; and the god of this world hath blinded your minds who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into them. Do you consider what a miserable case you are in, while you despise and think so little of Christ. You are in imminent danger of temporal judgments; for God, in his holy providence, may resent the injuries done to his Son; he may leave your house desolate. You are exposed to spiritual judgments, such as that, Isa. vi. 10, of having your heart made fat, your ears heavy, and your eyes shut; and to eternal wrath, even everlasting destruction from his presence; "He that believes not, shall be damned." Now,

Fifthly, Let me offer a word of exhortation. O sirs, seek that the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ may be sent, that, beholding his glory, your thoughts concerning Christ may be changed; and you may be brought to esteem him, and to go home with the Rose of Sharon in your bosom; Christ in your heart. O sinner, will you tell me, do you think it worth your while to take Christ, and embrace him before you go? If you say you cannot believe, you cannot repent, you cannot mourn for sin, you cannot pray, you cannot obey; and so, because you have no grace, no strength to do any thing, you are discouraged; I must tell you, sinner, when you conceive religion to be some great difficulty above your power, and thereupon are discouraged and damped, you do not think of Christ as you ought, but of yourself, forsooth, as if you were the fountain from whence these good things should flow. The law may and does discourage sinners; yea, curses every Christless sinner unto hell; but the gospel offers no discouragement to sinners, but all encouragement. Perhaps you will find us that are ministers, sometimes going off from our most gospel-texts that we can choose; and when we explain faith, we will tell you how many things it includes; such as, the forsaking of all sin, and the performing of all duty, and studying universal holiness: but whatever be the fruits of faith, which the Lord makes to grow out of it, yet faith itself is a

great mystery ; and whatever you hear us say, that leads you off from this question, "What think ye of Christ?" suspect it. I will tell you, In the Lord's name, that to believe imports no more than to take Christ for all ; it is to think you have nothing, and can do nothing ; but that he hath all, and can do all ; and therefore you will take him for all. You think you cannot believe ; well said, but, "What think ye of Christ?" If you think to bring faith out of your own bowels, you think unworthily of Christ, who is the author of faith ; and of his Father, who is the giver of it. You think you cannot repent ; true, but, "What think ye of Christ?" If you think to bring repentance out of yourselves, you think unworthily of him, who is exalted by the right hand of God, to give repentance. You think you cannot do this or that duty you are called to ; but, "What think ye of Christ?" If you sit poring on yourself, and your own abilities, never a good turn will you do : nay, you think unworthily of Christ, who hath said, "Without me ye can do nothing," but by me strengthening you, ye can do all things. You are discouraged, because you think you have not this thing in yourself, or that thing in yourself : but that is unbelief, man : for faith lies in thinking, What am I in Christ ? Isa. xlv. 24, "Surely shall one say," (and they shall not only say it with their mouth verbally, but think it in their heart believably), "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." And because, by the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word is confirmed, there are three *In the Lord's* in that one chapter, ver. 17, "Israel shall be saved *In the Lord*, with an everlasting salvation ; ver. 25, *In the Lord* shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory ;" and in this 24th verse : "*In the Lord* have I righteousness and strength." And if you be once brought to this believing thought, "In the Lord have I righteousness ; in the Lord have I strength ;" in the Lord I have salvation ; in the Lord I have all ; then you will find your work easy and all going right.

Now, you that cannot be brought to think much of Christ, O pray God, if perhaps the thoughts of your heart may be forgiven you ! and whereas you think nothing of him now, O consider what you will think of him in a day of challenges, when conscience awakens ! in a day of desolation, Isa. x. In the day of death, in the day of judgment ! What will you think of him, when you see him mounting the tribunal, and when pronouncing the fearful sentence, "Depart from me ye cursed?" Surely you must have

dreadful thoughts of him then, if you cannot be brought to think highly of him now; now, when he is not come to destroy men's lives but to save. But you, believer, that now think highly of him, whatever great thoughts you have of Christ now, yet what will you think of him in that day, when he who is your life shall appear, and ye shall appear with him in glory? O believer, what will ye think of him, when he pronounces the sentence of absolution, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you?" O! what will ye think of his palace, his attendants, his throne, crown, and glory?

Sixthly, I would offer an advice to you that think much of Christ, and have a high esteem of him.

1st, That you would evidence your hearty esteem of him; and that,

1. By the degrees of it; so as to esteem him above all things else, above all your relations; "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me," Matt. x. 37. Our love to them must be hatred, when it comes to compete with Christ; "If any man come after me, and hate not father and mother, he is not worthy of me." Above all worldly advantages; yea, above life: Rev. xxi. 11, "They loved not their lives to the death;" their pangs of love were stronger than the pangs of death.

2. By the effects of it; such as,

(1.) Desire of converse; if you think much of Christ, you will desire his company in all ordinances; you will seek him in the temple, you will seek him in the closet! in every ordinance, public or private, you will earnestly seek and desire him.

(2.) Entertaining no rival that comes in competition with him, but saying, "What have I to do any more with idols?" giving cheerfully up with all other lords and lovers.

(3.) Sympathy; grieving at these things that are grievous to him.

(4.) Preserving his memory, living upon him; like the woman that drank the powder of her dead husband's body, mingled with her daily drink; so should ye, by faith, daily eat the flesh, and drink the blood of the Son of God.

2dly, A second advice is, that you would do all that you can, to make others think as much of him as you do: and that,

1. By commending him, and telling others of his beauty, that they may admire him. See the practice of the spouse for this,

Song v. ; and what influence it had upon the daughters of Jerusalem, their beginning to think much of him, and seek after him also, Song vi. 1. O then, commend him to your families, your children, and your neighbours.

2. By adorning the gospel, and walking worthy of him, and wearing his livery. It is a master's honour and credit to have a good servant, and well arrayed ; they think much of the master that hath such a servant. And how does it proclaim the praises of Christ, when they that profess him are eminent for piety ? 1 Pet. ii. 9.

3. In a word, " Let your light so shine before men, that others, seeing your good works, may glorify God," and think much of Christ. O let your hearts be still thinking of him, your life praising, and your tongue speaking of him ! Here is a fountain for spiritual discourse ; if you have an opportunity of conversing with any, concerning the great solemnity you have been witnesses to here ; or if any ask you, Where was such or such a minister's text ? here is a fair occasion for spiritual converse ; for, you cannot, in a manner, tell them this text, without asking them a question, " What think ye of Christ ?"

SERMON CIX.—CXV.

THE PREGNANT PROMISE, WITH HER ISSUE ; OR, THE CHILDREN OF PROMISE BROUGHT FORTH, AND DESCRIBED.¹

" Now, we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise."—GAL. iv. 28.

THIS text presents a subject that concerns all here present, and particularly believing communicants. The sacrament of the Lord's supper is a seal of the covenant of grace ; the covenant of grace is a covenant of promise ; the promise of the covenant is the prolific

(1) This subject was discussed in seven sermons, mostly preached on sacramental occasions. The first two were delivered at the sacrament of the Lord's Supper at Torphichen, on the Sabbath evening, and Monday, June 19th and 20th. The third at the sacrament at Portmoak, on Monday, July 17th. The fourth probably at Dunfermline, July 23d. The three last at the sacramental solemnity of Glendovan, July 31st, all in the year 1726.

womb that bears and brings forth all God's children, and so the children of God are the children of promise. As it concerns us all therefore to inquire to what family we belong, and whose children we are ; so believers in particular, or believing communicants, upon this subject may, in order to the increase of their faith, love, and holy evangelical obedience, find themselves distinguished from the rest of the world, by that sovereign grace that is manifested in the covenant of promise. And upon the back of such a great solemnity, it may not be unsuitable to point them out with a *now*, or give them their proper name and character in the words of our text: " Now, we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise."

As the law and the gospel differ, especially in this, as well as in other things, that whereas in short the law is a word of precept, the gospel is a word of promise ; so the covenant of works and of grace differ in this, that whereas in the covenant of works, all the benefits thereof depend upon man's fulfilling of a precept ; in the covenant of grace, all depend upon God's fulfilling of a promise in Christ. Hence the covenant of works is called the law, and the covenant of grace the promise, particularly in this epistle, chap. iii. 18. Hence also, in opposition to all these that are under the covenant of works, believers in Christ, who are brought within the bond of the covenant of grace, are called the children of promise: " Now, we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise." Concerning these two covenants of works and grace, the apostle elegantly discourses in the preceding verses, particularly from ver. 21, and downward ; where having upbraided the Galatians for desiring to be under the law, and so for discovering their folly and weakness, in suffering themselves to be drawn away from the gospel-doctrine of justification, and to be deprived of their freedom from the bondage of the law, he asks them a question, " Do you not hear the law ?" *q. d.* How ignorantly do you hold yourselves bound to fulfil the law, and look for eternal life thereby ; while, though you hear, you do not understand the law, but mistake the end and design of it, not considering Christ to be the end of the law, but supposing that the very observance of it, even since the fall of Adam, does give life, and justify ? This ignorance was, to the Jews, as a vail before their eyes in the reading of the law, 2 Cor. iii. 14 ; yea, this ignorance is the vail by which thousands, that are called Christians, are blinded. Now, from ver. 22, the apostle shews how their liberty from the law, was prefigured in the family of Abraham ; where

notice the narration, the explication, the confirmation, and the application.

1. The narration of the history, ver. 22, 23. Here Ishmael is said to be born after the flesh; that is by the strength of nature, and according to the fleshly counsel of Sarah, when she substitute Hagar into her own room: but Isaac was by promise; that is, though according to the order of nature, yet not by the strength of nature, but by virtue of the promise of God.

2. The explication of this history, ver. 24—27, “Which things are an allegory, says the apostle, for these are the two covenants;” that is, not merely the two different dispensations of the covenant of grace, the old legal, and the new evangelical dispensation; but the two covenants themselves, namely, that of works made with the first Adam, and all his seed in him, promising life upon condition of man’s own perfect obedience to the will of God, Gen. ii. 17, and that of grace, made with the second Adam, and with his seed in him, promising eternal life, and all spiritual blessings, upon condition and consideration of his undergoing the curse, and yielding perfect obedience to the law in their room, Isa. liii. 10, 11, Rom. v. 6, 21. Hence the apostle expressly calls them two covenants. Though Israel, even at Sinai, was under a dispensation of the covenant of grace, however dark, as is evident from the preface to the ten commands, and many other arguments; yet, that there was also an addition, repetition, and promulgation of the covenant of works at Sinai, is not only plain from the concurring testimony of many orthodox writers, but from manifold scriptural accounts thereof. The apostle here tells us, Gal. iii. 18, 19, that the law, or covenant of works, was added because of transgression, till the seed should come, to whom the promise was made; it was added to be subservient to the other, and for furthering the ends thereof. This is plain also from the context here, where the apostle is shewing that the children of the Sinai covenant are excluded from the eternal inheritance, as Ishmael was from Canaan, the type of it, ver. 30, “Cast out the bond-woman and her son; for the son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman.” But this could never be said of the children of the covenant of grace, whether under the old or new dispensation thereof; whereas the children of the legal covenant, or covenant of works, whereof there was a repetition at Sinai, have been always under a sentence of exclusion ever since Adam fell, and under bondage to death and the curse; therefore it is the

two covenants, that of works and of grace, that the apostle is here setting in opposition to one another; the one is prefigured by Hagar, and the other by Sarah. The covenant of works is here compared to Ishmael, that was born after the flesh; the covenant of grace to Isaac, who was a child of promise, produced by the Spirit of God working mightily in Abraham and Sarah, and breathing in the promise. Here is an allegory, a great mystery, that the people think not of, when they read of Ishmael and Isaac. Now Hagar, which is the law, or covenant of works, is said to gender unto bondage; because it makes them bond-men, that look to be saved and justified thereby; and so it is called the ministration of death, 2 Cor. iii. 6: whereas the gospel, and the new covenant, is a dispensation of life and liberty, being the channel in which the Spirit of life does run, chap. iii. 2. And while Jerusalem that now is, is said to be in bondage with her children; it shews the misery of the Jewish church, by refusing Christ, and establishing their own righteousness, seeking to be saved by the deeds of the law, and so being in bondage, and depriving herself of the heavenly inheritance. As Hagar then signifies the law, so does Ishmael all legalists, and self-justiciaries, who look to be saved by the law: they that have not fled to Christ for refuge and righteousness, but remain under the law, they are Ishmalites, and in spiritual bondage to sin, and legal bondage unto death and wrath, according to the tenor of the law they are under. But now, "Jerusalem, which is above, says the apostle, is free, which is the mother of us all," ver. 26. Here Paul shews what was figured by Sarah, namely, the new Jerusalem; that is, the catholic church, Heb. xii. 22, 23, and Rev. xxi. 2. By the new Jerusalem, then, understand all the invisible church, whereof Jerusalem was a type in many respects; hence said to be ABOVE; because all that are within the bond of the new covenant are from above; their election, redemption, effectual vocation, justification, sanctification, and all is from above; and they dwell above in heaven by faith, according to the measure of the Spirit of faith. This Jerusalem that is above is *free*, says the apostle, in opposition to the bondage that the Ishmalites and unbelievers are under; they are freed from the bondage of sin, death, and the curse of the law. Now, this Jerusalem, or the church, is said to be the mother of us all; because the ministry of the word, which is committed to the church's keeping, and which is compared to seed and milk, 1 Pet. i. 23, and ii. 2, is that by which children are brought forth to God in her:

hence of Zion it is said, "This man and that man was born there," Psal. lxxxvii. 4, 5, 6.

3. The confirmation is next, by the apostle's adducing the testimony of the prophets; "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate, than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord," Isa. liv. 1. The Christian church is called barren; because by the virtue and strength of nature, it bears no children to God, no more than Sarah did to Abraham: but when the Spirit of Christ comes to impregnate the word and ordinances with almighty efficacy, then a numerous seed is brought forth to the Lord Jesus, by virtue of the new-covenant promise. And so,

4. The application of it follows in the words of the text; where the apostle shews, that as Sarah was a figure of the church catholic, so Isaac was a figure of all true believers, and children of God; "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise."

In which words you may notice the transition, the compellation, and the description.

1. A transition in the particle *now*, or *therefore*, importing, the apostle's proceeding next to make an application of what he had been saying to the case in hand, and adapting of it to their present circumstances. *Now, q. d.*, After what hath been said, let it be considered, that this is a matter that concerns you and me, therefore let us bring it home to ourselves.

2. A compellation, BRETHREN; intimating, that there is a spiritual fraternity and brotherhood betwixt all true believers: they are all brethren by the Father's side: for they have all one father, even the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. They are also all brethren by the mother's side; for, they all lie in the same womb of the church. And they are all brethren by Christ's side; for they have all the self-same elder brother, Jesus Christ; begotten with the same incorruptible seed of the word; and fed at the same table, with the same spiritual food. This spiritual brotherhood far exceeds the natural, even as far as God's Fatherhood towards us, exceeds the natural fatherhood among men.

3. A description, particularly of believers, in a suitableness to the former doctrine; "We, as Isaac was, are the children of promise." Here they are described in relation to the promise, and in allusion unto Isaac.

(1.) In relation to the promise ; “ We are the children of promise.” By the promise here you may understand the covenant of grace, called the covenant of promise ; and so you may take it either for the promise made to Christ, such as that, “ He shall see his seed ;” or the promise made to Abraham, “ I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed :” or the promise made to the church, that “ being barren, she should bear many children,” as it is in the preceding verse. Now believers are called the children of promise, not only because they believe the promise, but because they are made the children of God by virtue of God’s promise.

(2.) In allusion to Isaac ; or they are described to be the children of the promise, in the manner that Isaac was, in that he was born to Abraham, not by the strength of nature, but by the virtue of God’s promise : as Isaac was not born by natural power, but by the mere promise and power of God ; so believers are children of the promise, being born, as Isaac, not by the power of flesh and blood, but by the power of God putting virtue in the promise. The further explication I refer to the prosecution of the following doctrine :—

OBSERV. That all the children of God, or true believers, are, like Isaac, the children of promise.

I shall not enlarge the proof of so clear a point. You may read what our apostle says, to this same purpose, Rom. ix. 7, 8, where the children of the promise, such as Isaac was, are opposed to the children of the flesh. The promise is the believer’s parent, by which he is begotten to a lively hope, and made a partaker of the divine nature, 2 Pet. i. 4. When a poor soul is converted, it is the promise that does the business ; the power and efficacy of the promise, in its performance, does change and renew the heart ; James i. 18, “ Of his own will begat he us, by the word of truth ;” that is by the word of promise.

The method we lay down, for illustrating this doctrinal observation, through divine assistance, shall be the following :—

- I. I would open up the promise, whereof believers are the children.
- II. Open up this character of their being the children of promise ; and inquire how they are so.
- III. I would state the comparison, or run the parallel betwixt

them and Isaac ; and so show, that as Isaac was, so they are the children of promise.

IV. I would offer some grounds of the doctrine, both with reference to the prolific virtue of the promise for begetting children to God, and also with reference to the blest will and pleasure of the Promiser, why he will have all his children to be the children of promise.

V. Deduce inferences for application.

I. The First Head proposed is, To open up the promise whereof believers are the children. Before I proceed to this, there are two things I would mention, which this doctrine doth presuppose.

1. In that some are the children of promise by grace, it supposes that all are the children of wrath by nature, Eph. ii. 3. Because of the breach and violation of the law of works in Adam, we forfeited the promise of life, and incurred the threatening of death, according to the tenor of the covenant, "Do and live," and if thou do not, thou shalt die : and being children of disobedience, we are children of the curse, and not of the promise ; for, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things, written in the book of the law to do them," Gal. iii. 10. There is the sad state wherein all Adam's natural offspring are since the fall : we are Ishmaelites ; children of the bond-woman ; born after the flesh ; under the curse ; and in bondage to sin, Satan, death, and hell ; aliens to the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise, Eph. ii. 12. It is true, there was a promise of life in the covenant of works, under which we are by nature ; but it being upon condition of our perfect and personal obedience, now impossible, it can give no relief to the awakened conscience, but leaves all, whose eyes are open, to everlasting despair, if they get not a view of the covenant, and better promise. Therefore,

2. In that some are the children of promise, it supposes that surely there is another promise, according to which God proposes to deal with some of the children of men ; a promise, not built upon the silly foundation of any mere man's personal obedience, but a promise established on a better foundation, and standing fast in another head ; and it is called a promise of life in Christ Jesus, 2 Tim. i. 1. And that, "not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began," ver. 9, compared with Tit. i. 2. Not

according to the tenor of the covenant of works, for, while sinners look to that covenant, nothing is to be seen there but consuming fire, nothing to be heard but thunder and threatenings, nothing to be expected but death and vengeance; therefore man is under no dispensation but that of a terrible threatening till the promise in Christ appear. There is a fourfold capacity wherein man hath had to do with God.

(1.) As a commanding God; men, even as creatures, being obliged to yield obedience to the great Creator's law and commandment, which was engraven on their hearts, in the original make and constitution of our first parents, when they dropt out of his creating hand.

(2.) As a covenanting God; I mean in the covenant of works, which God entered into with man, as a covenant of life and death, upon his doing or not doing what God commanded.

(3.) As a threatening God, upon the violation of that covenant: and this is the capacity wherein all mankind have to do with God; they that see God out of Christ with their eyes open, while they are in a natural state, can see him no other ways than arrayed with threatenings and wrath, until he please to discover himself.

(4.) As a promising God, upon a better foundation than the first covenant, even his promise in Jesus Christ, before the world began. Now, there is no dealing with God for eternal life and salvation, unless he shew himself to be God in a promise.

Having premised these things, I come now to speak a little concerning the promise, whereof believers are the children. And, in general, the promise is the same with the covenant of grace, in opposition to the covenant of works: or, the promise is the same with the gospel, in opposition to the law; hence the promise and the gospel are made one and the same thing in this epistle, Gal. iii. 8; "and hence the promise and the law are set in opposition to one another, verse 18. But, more particularly for opening up the promise, whereof believers are children; we may consider, concerning the promise, 1. The Subject, or Author of it. 2. The matter of it. 3. The nature of it. 4. The object of it.

1st, The Subject of this promise, or whose promise it is. And,

1. It is the promise of God, even God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; therefore called the promise of God, Gal. iii. 21. Indeed all the divine perfections are engaged for the accomplishment thereof that our faith and hope might be in God. God the Father is the

great author, the grand contriver, and original fountain of the covenant; "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began," Titus i. 2. And the great promise of the covenant is called the promise of the Father, Acts i. 4. And hence the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is said to bless us with all spiritual blessings, Eph. i. 3.

2. It is the promise of Christ; he also is the promiser; and therefore, when he left his people, and went out of this world, he opened his mouth to them in manifold promises, John xv., xvi., xvii., chapters. And hence also he invites sinners to himself, by the encouragement of a promise; "Come to me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Matt. xi. 28.

3. It is the promise of the Spirit; hence he is called the Spirit of promise, Eph. i. 13, both because he is promised, and because he is the promiser: and what are all the promises of the new covenant but the language of the Holy Ghost, the voice of the Spirit, the Spirit of the Father, and of the Son, whose voice we are called to hear? And hence, in the epilogue of all the epistles to the seven churches of Asia, Rev. ii. and iii. chapters, the conclusory promises are all backed with this advertisement, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches." And again,

4. It is the promise of God in Christ, by the Holy Ghost. That it is the promise of God in Christ, is plain from Gal. iii. 17, where it is called the covenant confirmed of God in Christ; and 2 Tim. i. 1, "The promise of life, which is Christ Jesus;" and given us in Christ, verse 9; yea, 2 Cor. i. 20, "All the promises of God are in him Amen," they have all their establishment and ratification in his blood: hence that joyful sound and glad tidings, 2 Cor. v. 19, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and not imputing their trespasses to them; and hath committed to us the word of reconciliation, bearing that he hath made him to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Again, that is the promise of God in Christ, by the Holy Ghost, is plain, not only from his being the third person existing in the Godhead, and proceeding from the Father and the Son, but also from his office in the work of redemption, which is to make the powerful application thereof, as the great Teacher and remembraucer, for bringing home the promise to the hearts of his people appointed unto life; "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name; he shall teach you all things, and

bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you," John xiv. 26. Again, "He shall convince the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment: He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shew it unto you," John xvi. 8, 14. So much for the subject, the Author of the promise, or whose promise it is.

2ndly, Let us consider a little the matter of the promise, whereof believers are the children; what is the good contained in God's promise. And,

1. God himself is the great matter of the promise, as well as the author of it; as he is the promiser, so he is the thing promised, Ezek. xxxvi. 28, compared with Jer. xxxi. 33, and Heb. viii. 10, "I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: I will be your God, and you shall be my people." It is the greatest promise in all the Bible, and contains the most inestimable and invaluable treasure in heaven and earth. O what a great matter is here! God himself giving over himself, and a true property in himself, to every soul that will receive him, and say Amen, by a faith of divine operation: even as the husband gives himself up to his wife in marriage, so does God to the believer; "I will betrothe thee to me for ever, in truth, in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness." Wherever the covenant of grace, the covenant of promise is repeated in scripture, that is always the burden of the song, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people." O what excellent matter is here! Eternity diving into this deep, will never reach the bottom of it. Again,

2. Christ himself is the great matter of the promise: as God promises himself, so he promises his Son; Christ is the great promise, the great sum, centre, and substance of the covenant; yea, the all, the sum total of it: "I will give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation to the end of the earth," Isa. xlii. 6, and xlix. 9. It is he that is made of God to us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, 1 Cor. i. 30. He is called "the mercy promised," Luke i. 72. The gospel promises are nothing else but that opening up of the unsearchable riches of Christ, where there is more precious treasure than ever can be told by all the arithmetic of men and angels to eternity. The first promise that ever was made after the fall, was a promise of Christ, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent;" and all the rest of the pro-

mises of the new covenant are streams flowing from that spring. God never designed to save any man by a covenant of works, but he designed to take occasion by man's fall to glorify his grace; therefore, no sooner does sin come, and a curse with it, than grace comes in, and a promise with it; so soon as Adam is arraigned before God for sin, the womb of the promise is open, and it is a promise of Christ, which, in all the after-promises, is made always gradually more and more clear; and ever since God drew up the sluice of the promise, it hath been running to this day; and it is flowing to this day, while the promise of Christ, as the Lord our righteousness and strength, is set before us as the ground of our faith and hope.

3. The SPIRIT himself is also the great matter of the promise, or the good things promised: "I will put my Spirit within you," says God, Ezek. xxxvi. 27. "I will send the comforter," says Christ, John xvi. 7. So that as God promises himself, and promises his Christ, so God and Christ promise the Spirit; the Spirit in his mission and motion is here promised in his influences and operations, graces and fruits; the Spirit of faith, the Spirit of love, the Spirit of repentance, the Spirit of grace and supplication, the Spirit of glory and sanctification, the Spirit of conviction and consolation, the Spirit of light, the Spirit of life, the Spirit of liberty, the Spirit of power and a sound mind; whatever be the hopeless and helpless, the dead, drooping, and desperate-like case that the soul can be in, there is a promise of the Spirit suitable thereto, if I might enlarge. And, indeed, the promise of the Spirit is the first promise that is accomplished in begetting children to God; all the children of promise are made so by the promise of the Spirit taking effect upon them, as a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, testifying of Christ, and giving the soul Paul's experiences, "He revealed his Son in me." It is not the promised blessing of the Spirit that quickens dead souls and begets children unto God: "The wind blows where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it comes, nor whither it goes; so is every one that is born of the Spirit, John iii. 8. Awake, O north wind; come thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out," Song iv. 16. It is the promised flowing of the Spirit that alone can make happy communion-days. O for that flood promised! "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; even my Spirit upon thy seed, and

my blessing on thine offspring," Isa. xlv. 3. Yea, he is promised, not only as an overflowing flood, but as an overflowing spring: "The water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up to everlasting life," John iv. 14.

4. All things else, in and with these three, are matter of the promise: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things," Rom. viii. 32. And, indeed, where there is a promise of God, a promise of Christ, a promise of the Spirit, there must be a promise of all things: "All things are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." She that hath the husband, hath all things that are the husband's; and seeing Christ is the heir of all things, his bride cannot but inherit all things, Rev. xxi. 7. I have read of an ancient deed of gift made by one of the first kings of England, giving all that is from heaven to the centre of the earth; so that if there be minerals in the bowels of the earth, they are comprehended in the gift; so God in promising and giving himself, and his Son and his Spirit, does in and with him give all that he hath, and all that he is worth; all the mines in the bowels of God, all the mines in the bowels of Christ, and all the mines of the bowels of the Spirit, are promised; and, O consider with yourself, what unsearchable riches, what unfathomable treasures of grace and glory, are in these mines! and what sweet and blessed fruits grow upon this tree of the new-covenant promise! and what a blessed thing it is to be the children of promise! And here the matter of the promise might be enlarged into innumerable particulars. Why, they are the children of that promise, "A new heart will I give you, and a new Spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." They are the children of that promise, "They shall be all taught of God." They are the children of these promises, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. Children of that promise, "I will be merciful to your unrighteousness, your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more. I will subdue your iniquities; and, Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace. I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God. When thou passest through the fire, I will be with thee, that the flames kindle not upon thee; and when thou passest through the waters, I

will be with thee, that the floods do not overflow thee.”—There is a promise of peace with God, they are children of: “This Man shall be the Peace.” There is a promise of pardon, they are the children of: “I, even I, am he that blotteth out thine iniquity, for mine own name’s sake, and will remember thy sins no more.” There is a promise of protection, they are children of: “A man shall be a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the storm; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.” There is a promise of provision, they are children of: “Bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be made sure.” There is a promise of healing, they are children of: “I will heal your backslidings, and love you freely.” There is a promise of knowledge and illumination, they are children of: “They shall all know me, from the least to the greatest.” There is a promise of faith, they are the children of: “I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord,” Zeph. iii. 12. There is a promise of love, they are children of: “I will circumcise their heart to love.” There is a promise of repentance, they are children of: “They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn.” There is a promise of holiness: “Sanctify them through thy truth, thy Word is truth.” It is true, that it is a part of Christ’s prayer to his Father, John xvii. 17; but his prayer is as good as any promise in all the Bible. There is a promise of perseverance that they are the children of: “I will make an everlasting covenant with thee; I will not depart from thee to do thee good; yea, I will put my fear in thy heart, and thou shalt not depart from me.” In a word, there is the promise of victory over death: “Death shall be swallowed up in victory. Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” There is a promise of everlasting enjoyment of him: “So shall we be ever with the Lord.”—It were endless to tell of all the promises they are the children of; not that all and every one of the promises are in the same manner clearly applied to every believer; but if they be the children of one new-covenant promise, they are the children of all; even as all the curses of the law are linked together like an iron chain, insomuch that when a man is under one curse, he is under all the curses of the Bible; so all the promises of the gospel are linked together like a golden chain, insomuch that he that gets one promise, gets all; though perhaps it is but one link of the chain that he finds his heart fastened to, or one promise that is applied,

yet the application of that infers an interest in all the rest. Thus you see what is the matter of the promise, and surely you may see much matter here for faith to feed and work upon.

3dly, Let us consider the nature and quality of the promise. And,

1. It is a great and precious promise : "Whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature," 2 Pet. i. 4. And, indeed, the matter of the promise, as already described, declares that it is exceeding great and precious ; and the effect of it, as here described, making the believer a partaker of the divine nature, O how does it discover the greatness and preciousness thereof ! And the relation of the promise to God as the author, to Christ as the purchaser, and to the Spirit as the applier thereof ; the relation of it, I say, to this great God, shews what a great promise it is ; besides that, it is the price of precious blood, and the object of precious faith, and the channel of the communication of great and precious blessings. But of these, perhaps, more afterwards.

2. It is a new promise ; hence so frequently called the New covenant, as Heb. viii. 8. It is a new promise, in opposition to the old promise of life to man's perfect personal obedience in the covenant of works. The old promise was a promise of life, upon condition of perfect obedience of our own ; but there was no promise of grace to do ; but the new promise is a promise upon the perfect obedience of another, and of grace to do also ; not to obtain life and salvation again by our doing, but to glorify the God of our life, by whom we have obtained salvation, 1 Thess. v. 9. The old promise of life stood upon the changeable righteousness of man, and so was forfeited ; the new promise stands upon the unchangeable righteousness of a God-man, and so cannot be forfeited by these that, through grace, take hold of it ; or rather on whom it takes hold. Therefore,

3. It is a sure promise, sure to all the seed : "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed," Rom. iv. 16. Hence it is called, "The sure mercies of David," Isa. lv. 3. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot nor title of God's word, nor of God's promise. See Isa. lv. 18, "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath

mercy on thee." "It is an everlasting covenant, well ordered in all things and sure," 2 Sam. xxxiii. 5. Indeed, the better ordered it is, the more sure and unchangeable it is; and so well is it ordered of infinite wisdom, that there is nothing in it that should be out; and nothing out of it, that should be in; nothing wanting for God's glory and the sinner's welfare. What can be wanting therein, when he who is All in all, is in it? And so well is it ordered, that both the first grace, the last grace, and all grace, is promised therein; beginning grace, advancing grace, and crowning grace, is promised in it; therefore it must be sure. O may faith be set a-work, when we are speaking of these things!

4. It was a dear bought and conditional promise to Christ; to Christ, I say, the Mediator of the covenant, it was a dear-bought and conditional promise; it was upon the condition of his obedience unto death; and here is the great ground and foundation of the promise, next to the sovereign grace and good-will of God to poor miserable sinners; it is Christ coming under the law, to redeem them that were under it, Gal. iv. 4, 5. Hence the covenant of promise is called, the new testament in his blood; his blood is called, the blood of the covenant: this is what makes all sure, that Christ's obedience and satisfaction was the condition of the promise; and the condition is fulfilled by his bringing in everlasting righteousness, and giving his life a ransom for many. All the promises here are dipt in his blood; and the great condition of all the promises of the gospel is, Christ fulfilling, in our room and stead, the condition of the violated covenant of works; that is, perfect obedience to the precept of it, which we had broken; and complete satisfaction to the penalty, threatening, and curse of it, which we had incurred, Though Christ, indeed, hath not believed, repented, and performed the law for us, as a law simply, or a rule of holiness and righteousness, as if these were not duties incumbent upon us, no doubt they are our duty, as well as there are promises of them in the gospel to bring them forth. I know none that can assert any such Antinomian positions, as thus dissolve the obligation of the moral law; yet I assert, that Christ hath even freed us from these, as the proper pleadable condition for justification and eternal life before God; and that his sanctification, righteousness, and merit is the only proper pleadable condition, and ground of all that grace and salvation that lies in the promise, and upon which it is made sure and fast to his people the children of promise: "My covenant shall stand fast

with him," Psal. lxxxix. 23. This is that foundation of faith laid in Zion, as sufficient for all the hearers of the gospel to build their hope and confidence upon for salvation, Isa. xxviii. 16; Rom. ix, 32; 1 Peter ii. 6; 1 Cor. 11, "Other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Hence, as Christ is promised for a covenant of the people, so the promises are said to be made to him, Gal. iii. 16: and to be all yea and amen in him, 2 Cor. i. 20; and the whole covenant of grace is called a promise of grace in Christ, 2 Tim. i. 1, and thus given to us. Hence, of consequence,

5. It is a free and absolute promise to us, and unconditional; it is freely given: "Whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious promises," 2 Pet. i. 4. All the great things of the promise are freely given, and these are, Christ, and all things with him freely, Rom. viii. 32. Though the use of means is required both of sinners and saints, and though we be under a command and obligation to faith, repentance, and all other duties and graces; yet the covenant of grace is such a free, absolute, and unconditional promise, wherein the Spirit of grace is promised so freely, that no act or deed of ours is the condition thereof. There is a condition of order and connection betwixt one covenant-blessing and another, they being like so many links of a chain closed within each other; and hence many promises are expressed, as it were, in a conditional way, in the dispensation of the gospel; whereupon many mistake this matter, while they distinguish not betwixt the dispensation of the covenant and the tenor of the covenant itself, wherein grace and glory, and all, is promised freely. The covenant of promise cannot be properly conditional to us; otherwise, woe would be to us, whose condition is nothing but sin and misery by nature; this covenant stands upon absolute foundations: such as the electing grace of the Father, the redeeming grace of the Son, and the applying grace of the Holy Ghost. They are all absolutely free and unconditional; there is no spiritual act of ours previous to the application of the covenant of promise. The Spirit coming to work faith, by his creating power, is promised absolutely in the covenant: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power: They shall look to him whom they have pierced;" faith is cast out of the womb of the absolute promise, and begotten by it.—And, indeed, there is not a conditional promise in all the Bible, but what is reductively absolute; because both the thing promised, and the condition of it, is contained in the

womb of the absolute promise. Some worthy divines make faith the condition of the covenant; but their sound explication of what they mean, shews they dare not make it the proper condition. If any that pretend to soundness do so, they but expose their darkness, and discover their mistake concerning the covenant of grace, which is a free promise in Christ Jesus; faith itself, and all the blessings that attend and follow it, being free and absolutely promised. Indeed, conditions on our part, properly so called, would destroy the nature of the gospel, which is a free promise. Where is the freedom of grace, if conditional? It would turn the gospel to the law, and the free covenant of grace to the conditional covenant of works; yea, it would thus destroy the peace of the poor humbled sinner; for when he thinks there is such and such a condition that must be fulfilled by him before he hath a right to meddle with the promise, then he stands a-back, he dares not believe, because he supposes he wants this and that condition and qualification; and so his legal dream hardens his heart against the gospel, and fosters his unbelief, to the dishonour of God, and to his own ruin.—But if he could see the promise free and absolute, “Without money and without price,” and there is no condition in this covenant, but Christ’s obedience unto death, which is performed to God’s satisfaction, then a door is opened to him to plead for all upon this ground, saying, Lord, give me faith, for Christ’s sake; give me repentance, for Christ’s sake; give me grace, for Christ’s sake; who hath performed the condition of all the grace of the new covenant, and through whom all the promises run out freely. He that clogs the gospel-offer with so many terms and conditions, is like a man, as I noticed on a former occasion, offering a cup of wine to a friend, but he makes it scalding hot upon the fire, that his friend dare not touch it with his lip, lest he be burnt. It is the special property of the promise, that it is free, and absolute, and unconditional to us; and if it were not so, none would believe at all; for, if faith itself were a proper condition, then the grand objection is, Oh! but I cannot believe; why, if faith be not absolutely promised, there is no relief in that strait, the gospel could not be a joyful sound to sinners that are humbled to see their want of faith, but only to them that are believers, and have faith already; and so it were needless to preach the gospel to any but believers; but faith, as well as other blessings, being freely promised, unbelievers may put in for a share of this free grace: “Whosoever will, let him come, and take of the

water of life freely." And it is this free offer and promise that uses to create faith ; faith comes by hearing of it. Therefore,

6. It is a powerful and prolific promise ; hence the gospel, which is the promise of Christ, as the Lord our righteousness, is called the power of God to salvation ; because therein is revealed the righteousness of God, from faith to faith, Rom. i. 16, 17. It is the gospel-promise that is the ministration of the Spirit, and so the organ of almighty power and sovereign efficacy for converting souls, and so for saving of sinners. When God comes, he comes in the promise. But here it may be asked, May not the Lord convey himself in a command, as well as a promise ? To which we reply, As the Lord can convey himself graciously to us, in a threatening to the devil, such as that was, Gen. iii. 15 ; yet there was a sweet promise to our first parents wrapt up in it, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent." So the Lord can, and many times does convey himself powerfully into the soul by a command ; such as that, "Look to me and be saved ;" or such as that, "Fear not, for I am with thee ;" but still it is such a command as hath the gospel mixed with it, and a promise wrapt up in the bosom of it, and wherein the Lord undertakes to work what he commands, according to his promise in Christ ; and no command without a relation to the gospel, or the promise, is the channel of saving power ; for there is no salvation to a sinner but in the virtue thereof ; so that still it is the promise that is powerful and efficacious for begetting children unto God, who are therefore called, "The children of promise." But more of this afterwards.—In a word, it is an extensive promise ; and this leads me to the last thing proposed upon this first general head, and that was,

4thly, To consider the object of the promise, or to whom it belongs. And here three things belong to this purpose concerning the promise. 1. For whom it is designed. 2. By whom it is possessed. 3. To whom it is presented.

I. Who are the object of the promise, for whom it is designed ; I mean, for whom it is appointed of God from eternity, so as they shall reap the saving benefit and obtain all the good that is in it ? I answer, "The election shall obtain, though the rest be blinded," Rom. ix. 7 ; Eph. i. 11. And hence all the elect and chosen of God, such of them, I mean, as are subjects capable of actual believing, they, and they only, are brought, by the power of divine grace, to believe the promise to the saving of their souls ; "As many as

were ordained to eternal life believed," Acts xiii. 48; and, "All that the Father hath given me shall come to me," John vi. 37. If any think, O! how can this doctrine of particular election agree with the universal offer of the gospel, and the promise thereof? And how is it evident that God deals fairly with men in this matter, seeing some only are elected and designed of God to the good of the promise? Why, sirs, does not God deal fairly, when he tells us plainly what he is doing, and that he designs to show his mercy towards some, and his justice towards others, Rom. ix. 22, 23: that he designs the revelation of Christ, for the falling and rising of many in Israel; and the gospel for a savour of life to some, and of death to others? If a gardener (as a great divine exemplifies it) watering his garden, where there are many weeds—yea, more weeds than herbs—declares that he waters the whole garden, both weeds and herbs together, that he may make them both to come up above ground, and appear what they are, and, after that, that he may pull out the weeds, and foster the herbs for special use; is not this very right, and fair, and reasonable, insomuch that none needs inquire further, why does he water the weeds? Even so, the church is God's garden, and many reprobate weeds are therein; and when God orders the watering of a gospel dispensation to a mixed multitude of elect and reprobate, declaring that the offer of the gospel is to both, for the conversion of the elect from their natural enmity, and for bringing to light the hatred and enmity of the reprobate against him and the offer of his grace; is it not fair dealing, and a reasonable answer to the cavils of men against the gospel-offer, God by his word makes it manifest that all men, elect and reprobate, are under sin and unbelief, and that no man can come to Christ in the gospel-promise unless the Father draw him? And none would come unless he shewed mercy on some. And this manner of proving men, and shewing them to be what they are, by a common offer of grace unto all, and casting in the net of the gospel-promise among them, is a part of that wonderful prudence whereby Christ makes all these that are outwardly called to be without excuse, and at the same time, fishes out the elect from the sea of sin and misery, when the rest perish: of which prudence speaks God by the prophet, Isa. lii. 13, "Behold, my Servant shall deal prudently, and prosper, and be extolled." O but this wisdom of God, then, in converting the elect, for whom the promise is especially designed, without giving cause of stumbling to the rest, is rather to be admired and praised

than disputed against! Rom. xi. 33, "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! God will have mercy on whom he will have mercy; and whom he will he hardeneth. Say not you, why does he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will? Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" Rom. ix. 18, 19, 20. If you be disputing for the devil and the reprobate against God's righteous decree, you must be left with all such proud and presumptuous unbelieving despisers of plain doctrine to reckon with your judge, who can well answer for all his decrees and designs; meantime you cannot answer for your presumption. Withal, know that God hath discharged all men to meddle with his secret counsel; "Secret things belong to the Lord our God, but to us the things that are revealed," Deut. xxix. 29. Our great inquiry, therefore, should be not what is God's secret will and promise, but rather who possesses it, and how we may be possessed of it. Therefore,

2. Who are the objects of the promise by whom it is possessed? Why, even all believers; for, "He that believeth hath everlasting life," says Christ, John vi. 47. Believers are in covenant actually, and the promise of the covenant is in their possession, the begun possession of eternal life is commenced with respect to them, and the charter of the promise is delivered to them, and established in their person, they being actually members of the mystical body of Christ; "They, as Isaac was, are children of the promise." Of which more afterwards.

3. Who are the objects of the promise to whom it is presented, that they may take possession, and build their faith and hope thereupon? And here, as the first question related to the object of the promise, with respect to God's eternal destination; and the second, to the object of it with respect to the Spirit's internal saving operation; so this third concerns the object thereof with respect to the gospel eternal dispensation: the first shews us by whom the promise shall be possessed; the second, by whom it is possessed; and the third, by whom it may be possessed. Here, I say, the promise is presented and given in the external gospel dispensation unto sinners, particularly,

(1.) To sinners of mankind: not to fallen angels, but to fallen men; these are the only kind of sinners that God designed to save, and for whose behoof Christ the promised seed was sent, came, died,

and suffered, 1 Tim. i. 15, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came to save sinners;" and so the promise is made, and the call to believe the same is given to them; "To you, O men, do I call, and my voice is to the sons of men:" and the minister's commission is, "Go preach the gospel to every creature."

(2.) To sinners in Zion, or the visible church. As the promise of Canaan was made to the whole people of Israel; so the promise of Christ, and all blessings in him, even the everlasting rest above, of which Canaan was a type; that such a promise is given forth to the visible church, see Heb. iv. 1, 2, 3. And hence, whereas these that are without the church are said to be aliens to the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise, Eph. ii. 12; so the members of the visible church are these to whom the promises are said to belong, as it was with the Jewish church, and much more with the Christian New Testament church, where the privileges are not lessened, but enlarged, see Acts ii. 39, "For the promise is to you and to your children; yea, even all that are afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call," namely, external call; for the apostle is there using this as a motive to their faith, who were yet only pricked in their hearts, and not believers with the heart. Compare ver. 37, 38, 41. This was the common privilege of the Jews; "To them belonged the promise," Rom. ix. 4, and so do they belong to us. Here is a foundation of faith laid in Zion, Isa. xxviii. 16, you have all a right of access, and warrant to come and take possession. Yea, I will certify you, in respect of the external gospel-dispensation, there is not a soul here but hath as good a right to the promise as ever any believer had the moment before he believed. Yea,

(3) It is to great sinners that the promise is presented and given forth; "The promise is to you," Acts ii. 39. To whom was the apostle speaking? Even to the crucifiers of Christ; to the murderers of the Lord of glory: and to whom he had said immediately before, "Him you have taken, and by wicked hands crucified and slain," ver. 23. It is presented as a ground of faith to enemies, rebels, fools, mockers, and scorners; Prov. i. 22, 23, "The scorners that delight in scorning, fools that hate knowledge, turn ye at my reproof." And what is the motive? Just a promise, a glorious promise presented to them; "Behold, I will pour out my Spirit upon you; and will make known my words unto you."

(4.) It is given not only to humbled and penitent sinners that see their need, and are convinced of their sin and misery, but even to the unhumbled and impenitent: though none indeed will flee to the promise, or to Christ therein, except they be convinced of their need. And though the promise is given forth to such, preaching good tidings to the meek, for binding up the broken-hearted, Isa. lxi. 1: yet, because these that are humbled are ordinarily the persons that complain, saying, Alas! I am neither humbled nor convinced; therefore I must tell you that the promise is presented and given out, not only to the humbled and legally penitent, but to the most unhumbled, impenitent, unconvinced, and hardened sinner that hears this gospel; even such as see nothing of their need, but think they are well enough without Christ. See Rev. iii. 17, 18, "Because thou sayest I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched:" where their very want of conviction and knowledge of their own sad state is made the reason of the gospel-offer by Christ; "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." See also Isaiah lv. 1, 2, where these that are thirsting after vanity are called to look to the free promise of life in Christ; "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." What sort of thirsters they were the challenge in the second verse sheweth, "Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." Hence the gospel-promise is given out to these whose hearts are hardened against God, and all that is good: "Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, and far from righteousness; I bring near my righteousness, it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry: I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory," Isa. xlvi. 12, 13.

Thus you see the promise is given forth to all sinners in the visible church, in a general indefinite way and manner, in the external dispensation of the word, which names no particular person of any sinner, but speaks to all, without distinction of nation, state or condition, and under such names and characters as are applicable

to all alike, in their natural, lost, dead, and undone circumstances. Thus run all the promises of the new covenant, both in the Old and New Testament, Gen. iii. 15, and xxii. 18, Gal. iii. 8. Jer. xxxvi. 25, 26, and xxxi. 31, 33, 34, compared with Heb. viii. 9, 10, 11, 12, where you see the promises come directed to all nations that shall hear of them, and to all persons indefinitely, and supposes them to be in a cursed, condemned, dead, and wretched state, to whom they are thus directed, presented and offered, and this makes it indeed to be the joyful sound of glad news to all people, Luke ii. 10. But here several questions may be propounded, and a solution of them attempted.

QUEST. 1. You will perhaps say, If the free and absolute promise be thus given forth to all in a gospel-dispensation, then, what need of the use of means?

I answer, 1. In favour of the sovereign grace of God, which is a thing that is neither furthered by our good, nor hindered by our evil, that God will have his elect saved and brought within the covenant, though they were even living in the contempt and neglect of good means: and therefore, I ask, What was Manasses doing, when God apprehended him in the briars and thorns of Babylon? And what was Paul doing, when God first took hold of him by his converting grace; I suppose he was furiously persecuting all that were using any good means; yea, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the church of God, and persecuting the Son of God; yea, no mean will be used rightly by any, till God begin the work, and pour some grace out of the absolute promise, which is indefinitely dispensed, and, therefore, not knowing but this same sovereign grace may take hold of some gospel-despisers, who are yet slighting all the means of grace, this doctrine of grace, absolutely free grace, must be preached, though reprobates should break their neck upon it. Yet,

2. In favour of the holiness of God, who hath appointed the use of means as the ordinary channel wherein his grace runs. I must tell you, that this doctrine carries no prejudice against the use of means, but rather fortifies the same; for the promises are absolute, in opposition to all conditionality on our part, but not in opposition to the diligent use of means: even as the decree of God in election is free and absolute, and yet does not exclude, but include God's executing and accomplishing his decree by such and such means, and ordering our use of them; even so the promise of God is abso-

lute, yet it does not exclude the use of means, no more than the absolute promise that Paul got, that none in the ship should die, did exclude the mean, which was their abiding in the ship, Acts xxvii. 24, 31. And therefore, though the natural use of means, which is all the use that can be made of them by natural men, is not connected with the promise necessarily; yet they that wilfully neglect the means of reading, hearing, praying, and the like, they are so far out of God's way, that they are excluding themselves from the benefits of the promise. If a man wilfully refuse to eat and drink, and use the means of natural life, will he not be accounted a self-murderer, notwithstanding of the absolute decree concerning the number of his days? And so, if a man wilfully refuse the word of life, and obstinately neglect the means of grace, will not God judge him for a self-damner, notwithstanding of the absolute promise given forth, generally and indefinitely, for the encouragement and excitement of faith, in the external dispensation of the gospel?

QUEST. 2. Why, but say you, If the absolute promise be presented to us all, how is it true. if it be not fulfilled in us all?

ANSW. A man may give his word, his promise, his charter to us; and yet, if we will not take his word, nor make use of his charter, we may reap no good of his word, while yet his word is true. Even so here; God, in the external dispensation of the gospel, presents his promise and word of grace to us; but, if we will not take his word, this does not hinder but his word is true, though yet his truth will not be to our advantage, while we will not credit his word, believe his promise, and receive his testimony. There is a great difference betwixt the unbelief of believers, and the incredulity of unbelievers: the unbelief of believers does them much harm; though it shall not make the promise of God of no effect, yet it may breed much wo to them in the meantime; but the incredulity of unbelievers, if they live and die in it, is just the cause of their utter ruin; and yet it makes not the truth of God of no effect; his truth in the promise does not profit us but in a way of believing. It is the best charter and security for heaven and salvation, but as for these that reject this security, and will not take it, it is what will aggravate their damnation; for, "He that believeth not shall be damned:" but they that by a faith of God's operation, embrace the promise, and take it as their only security, they shall find him faithful, to make out every word of promise to them.

QUEST. 3. But, say you, If God hath given a promise to me, will it not be accomplished whether I believe or not?

ANSW. If he give you grace to believe, and so give you it in possession, then it infers an obligation on God to accomplish it, because, to the believer, that receives the promise, it is given definitely and particularly, saying, Thou art the man to whom it is given ; but when it is given only in the gospel-offer, and external dispensation, as it is to all the hearers of the gospel, this infers no obligation upon God to make good the promise to any or every particular man, because it is made only generally and indefinitely, without defining the person in particular, but only pointing at sinners in general ; and it remains only general and indefinite in the offer, till, in a way of believing, you make it your own particular good ; and therefore God is faithful in denying this offered benefit, so long as you, through unbelief, reject it. If you offer a man your bond for a sum of money, and he reject it, then you are under no obligation, by that bond, to give him the contents of it : if he accept the bond, then you oblige yourself ; but if he reject, then you are free, and cannot be accused of unfaithfulness to your promise, or bond. So here, if you truly and believingly take God at his word, then he is bound, by his own promise, to make out all ; for then you, believing, have everlasting life ; but if you will not take God's bond, nor receive his record, but reject it by unbelief, saying, in effect, that it is not good enough security for your salvation and eternal life ; then you, through unbelief, make him a liar, and his word a lie, his promise an untruth ; in which case, if you live and die there, he is so far from being bound to give you the blessing contained in that charter, that he is bound, on the contrary, to execute his threatening upon you ; " He that believeth not, shall be damned." The promise, in the external dispensation, is like a blank bond, or an indefinite obligation to blank persons, that it might be a standing claim to all sinners of mankind to whom it comes, sinners in general are named, no person's name is particularly inserted therein ; but if you, by faith, fill up your name, then the bond gives right to you in particular ; and that which was yours only generally and indefinitely before, becomes yours actually and particularly, upon your receiving it with particular application to yourself.

4. Then, say you, after all that is said, it seems the promise is still conditional, namely, upon believing.

ANSW. Faith and believing is also promised absolutely ; and therefore I ask, What is the condition of that promise of faith and the Spirit of faith ? If this be not free and absolute, where is the

man that can tell me what is the condition upon which one may have faith, and the Spirit of faith to work it? Nay, the promise of it is free and absolute, though yet general and indefinite. And as the promise of faith is free, so justification, sanctification, glory, and all that follows faith, is freely promised: not to it, but on the back of it, in the new-covenant order. So that still the promise is absolute, free, and unconditional to us; the proper condition of them all is fulfilled by, and to be found in the glorious new-covenant Head, Christ Jesus; and upon this condition of his obedience unto death, you ought to plead them; for though they be absolute, in point of proper conditionality in us, yet not exclusively of the use of means. Therefore, O pray, pray: and cry that you may find the power of the promise upon your souls; God allows you to plead for this, Ezek. xxxvi. 37; where, after the enumeration of many absolute promises, the Lord says, "For this will I be inquired of by the house of Israel." O cry and wrestle in prayer, and use the means: only take care that you use not the means as a condition, thinking now you have done your part, and therefore God is obliged to do his, and to grant the promised grace; for thus you turn the free covenant of promise to a conditional covenant of works; and so you turn quite off from the gospel-way of believing, to the old legal way of doing; and consequently you will disappoint yourself, and make Christ of no effect to you, Gal. v. 4, 5, and iii. 29.

QUEST. 5. But, say you, What though I cry and groan for the grace of the promise; yet if the absolute promise be not particular to me, I can never be a partaker of it.

ANSW. In order to clear up this point, and set it in a proper light, let it be considered,

1. That though the promise be absolute, yet it is also indefinite; though dispensed in general, yet it excludes no particular man; so that no man in the world, living under the gospel, can truly say he is not intended in this promise, as well as others; and seeing, therefore, that God hath not excluded thee by name, and that there is no clause that shuts thee out, it is a grievous sin in thee to exclude thyself; these cavilling thoughts and discouragements then do arise from hell; it is the devil and thy own black heart, and not this doctrine that discourages thee. You think, if you had a particular promise bearing your name, you would believe: but, is it not all one, when there is a general promise to sinners, and the chief of sinners, with a command to you to come, and receive, and apply

the promise particularly to yourself, that thus all may be your own?

2. As the general promise lays an argument to your hand, whereby you may plead, saying, Lord, thou that tenders thy grace to me, do thou powerfully apply it; thou who has left me a promise, O let me not come short through unbelief; thou who gives the outward means, O give the inward grace. So, if thou thus groan after the Lord, it would be a sign that the promise, which belongs to all in general, belongs to you in particular; and that by virtue of the promise, something of spiritual life was begun in you; even as a sigh and a groan in a man, is a sign of natural life. If you be acquaint with any inward heart-groaning after the grace of the promise, such as perhaps you cannot put into words, groanings that cannot be uttered, I will tell you for your comfort, it is a sign that the Spirit of grace is already come, Rom. viii. 26: the foundation is laid; Christ will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax; he will satisfy the longing soul, and fill the hungry with good things. That hunger and thirst, that groaning and longing, hath a particular promise of being satisfied; "Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled," Matt. v. 6. Let this therefore turn your water into wine presently. Take your food, poor soul, and feast upon it: and let me speak to others, that are not so far forward as you, since I am opening the net of the gospel to all.

O sinner, the promise is held out to you; it is tendered to you, and Christ in it: or, Christ, and the promise in him, is presented to you; for the promise holds out the very remedy for your malady. Are you dead in sins? the promise holds out life to you; "The hour cometh, and now is, that the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and live." O if power would come along with the promise! Are you under wrath? the promise holds out Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come. Are you lost and undone? the promise holds out redemption through his blood, even the remission of sins. Are you unable to save yourself? the promise holds out Christ as the Lord our righteousness and strength; as able to save to the uttermost; and that help is laid upon one that is mighty. Are you unwilling, as well as unable? the promise holds out a power for breaking that enmity and resistance; "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." Have you a devilish heart within you? the promise holds out renewing grace; "A new

heart will I give you." Are you poor, blind, and naked? the promise holds out tried gold, to remedy your poverty; eye-salve to heal your blindness; and white raiment to cover your nakedness. Are you a poor, foolish, guilty, filthy, miserable creature? the promise holds out Christ to you, as made of God, for your behoof, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Tell me a case that the promise does not reach; nay, it is just proposed, O sinner, as a remedy for your malady: and therefore say not, Ah! what shall I do with these promises? or, what have I ado with them? Why, man, woman; "To you is the word of this salvation sent:" and I will acquaint you, in God's great name, what you are to do with it; you are just to take him at his word, saying, AMEN, Lord; even so do, I take thee upon thy promise: O let it take hold of me, for it is good news to me.

What is it to believe the gospel? Why, it is just to hearken to a promising God, and to welcome a promise into the heart. Faith hath relation to the promise, and takes it as a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, saying, O good news to me; for faith makes particular application of the promise held forth in the general dispensation. Take away the promise out of the Bible, and you take away the gospel; all the commands and threatenings of the law will not make one single sentence of gospel of themselves, and yet infinite wisdom makes a good use of them in a subserviency to the gospel; for, though no precept or threatening be properly any part of the gospel, yet they make preparation for it; they are, like John's rough sermon, to prepare Christ's way: the threatening serves to chase us into God's way, like a flaming sword; and the precept serves to direct us how to keep the way when we are in it. But the gospel itself is God in a promise: it is compared and made up of promises, whereof Christ is the sum total; the Yea and Amen. God, in the gospel, says, Notify to me what is the matter with you, and I will certainly help you; tell me what you would have, and I will undoubtedly give it you; signify to me what you are afraid of, and I will really deliver you. I will tell you, in a word, what the law says, what the gospel says, and what faith says: "By the law is the knowledge of sin;" and accordingly the law says, Man, you have a lawless mind, there is no ordering of it, no order in it; the gospel answers, "I will put my law in thy mind," and bring it to order: and faith says, Welcome the promise; O Lord, I am glad that thou do so; AMEN, "Do as thou hast said," (to us the words of David, 2 Sam. vii. 25). The

law, says Man, woman, your mind is ill, but your heart is worse ; you have a wicked nature, a stubborn and rebellious heart : the gospel answers, " I will take away the heart of stone, and give the heart of flesh : " then faith says, O welcome, Lord, with such a promise ; O ! " Do as thou hast said." The law says, Man, woman, you have a devil within you, an evil spirit, inclined to every evil : the gospel answers, " I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes : " and then faith says, O welcome, sweet promise ; Lord, I take thee at thy word ; " Do as thou hast said." The law says, Man, woman, you have committed many grievous sins, and heinous iniquities ; the gospel answers, " Your sins and iniquities will I remember no more ; " and, " I will blot out your sins as a cloud : " and then faith says, O blessed promise ! welcome, welcome ; Lord, I take thee at thy word ; I embrace thy promise ; O ! " Do as thou hast said." Again, the law says, Man, woman, your backslidings are increased ; you are but a backsliding heifer ; the gospel says, " I will heal your backslidings, and love you freely : " then faith says, O welcome, Lord, with the promise in thy hand ; " Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord ; O ! Do as thou hast said." Again, the law says, Man, woman, you are but an ignorant mortal ; you know nothing of God as you ought to know ; the convinced soul takes with the charge of the law : and the gospel answers, " You shall be all taught of God ; " and, " Then shall you know ; you shall follow on to know the Lord," as that word may be read, Hos. vi. 3 : then says faith, " O good is the word of the Lord ! " Welcome a promising God ; Lord, I take thee at thy word ; " Do as thou hast said," for I will look to thee for the performance of it. Further, the law says, Man, woman, you deserve to be thrust to the bottom of hell, to the darkest and deepest part of the pit of perdition ; and the convinced soul subscribes to the truth of it ; but the gospel answers, " Deliver his soul from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom : " then says faith, O welcome, welcome word of grace ! Lord, I embrace thy promise, and, " I will hope in thy word." The law says, Man, woman, thy plagues are great, and thy disease incurable ; nay, but the gospel answers, " I am the Lord that healeth thee ; the leaves of the Tree of Life, are for the healing of the nations ; " then says faith, Lord, I will take thee at thy word ; O ! " Do as thou hast said." Yes, says the Lord, but I will take a day of it, and my own time of accomplishing my promise ; for, " The vision is for an appointed time : "

Then says faith, Lord, I will wait upon thee; "I will look to the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me." Well, "The Lord is a God of judgment, and blessed are all they that wait for him."

Thus God is setting about his charter among you; who will sign and set to their name? The promises are flying about your heads and ears; is there none of them flying into your hearts? Have you no use, man, woman, for any of these promises? Woe is me, if God, with a promise in his hand, can get no credit among you? But if you be for the promise, then take it, and God's blessing with it, and Christ in the bosom of it; for, the promise is the place where the Lord lies. Say not, "Who will ascend to heaven to bring down Christ; or descend to the deep to bring him up?" Faith may see him lying in the promise: and if you take the promise in your heart, you take Christ in; and if you thus embrace the promise, then may I say, "As Isaac was, you are the children of the promise." This leads to

II. The Second General Head, which was, To open up the character of their being the children of promise. Now, to open up the nature of this filiation, I would shew, 1. In what respects believers, or the children of God, are the children of promise. 2. In what method and order they come to be actually the children of the promise.

1st, In what respects they are the children of promise; and, I think, they may be called so, in respect of spiritual conception, generation, nutrition, education, assimilation, and amplexation.

1. Believers are the children of promise in respect of spiritual conception: they are conceived in the womb of the promise, before ever they are born again, and long before they were believers; they were conceived by the gracious purpose and sovereign good pleasure of God, in the womb of the covenant that was made betwixt the Father and the Son from eternity, which is the promise in its original constitution; the elect, subjects of this promise, are the seed sown in the womb thereof; the seed promised to the Mediator, of which it is said, Isa. liii. 10, "He shall see his seed;" and Psal. cx. 3, that, "From the womb of the morning he shall have the dew of his youth." All that come to be actually, in time, the children of the promise, were virtually so, from all eternity; "According as he hath chosen us in Christ, before the foundation of the world," Eph. i. 4. "According to the promise of life, which is in Christ

Jesus," 2 Tim. i. 1: even "Eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began," Titus i. 1, "Not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ before the world began," 2 Tim. i. 9. Here is a glorious conception, that can never prove abortive. The children of the promise are the seed, Rom. ix. 8; and Christ will want none of the seed which the Father gave him; "All that the Father hath given me, shall come to me:" Hence he is brought in, saying, "Behold I, and the children which God hath given me," Heb. ii. 13. "He shall see the travail of his soul, and be satisfied," when, in the fulness of time, the pregnant womb of the promise is opened by the power of God; for, whenever the time of love comes, then the promise is come to its full time of bringing forth some child of grace, and heir of mercy, that is in the womb of it. Therefore,

2. Believers are the children of the promise, in respect of spiritual generation, and actual production: they are begotten and brought forth out of the womb of the promise: "Of his own will begat he us, by the word of truth," James i. 18. Where, as the efficient of the new birth is God, he begets us; and the moving cause is the good pleasure of God, "Of his own WILL he begat us," so the instrumental cause, and the immediate parent is the promise, the word of truth, impregnated with the power and Spirit of Christ; and thus believers are brought forth by the virtue of the promise. It is said of Ephraim, Hosea xiii. 13, that he should not stay long in the breaking forth of children. Why? how shall he be brought forth? Behold the promise immediately follows for that end! I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem from death: O death! I will be thy plague; O grave! I will be thy destruction." Which promise, whatever other mercy it imports, includes also the spiritual resurrection from the grave of sin, to a spiritual life, in and through Jesus Christ his death and resurrection: on which account, believers are taught to say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," 1 Pet. i. 3. Christ's death and resurrection is the confirmation of all the promises, by which believers are begotten again to a lively hope; and what is a believer, but a child of hope, brought forth out of the womb of the promise, impregnate with the almighty efficacy of the Holy Ghost, causing him to hope upon that promise, by which he was begotten again to

that lively hope? Hence the native cry of the new-born child of the promise, "Lord, remember the word on which thou hast caused me to hope," Psal. cxix. 49. And hence his over-word again and again, is, "I hope in thy word; I hope in thy word," ver. 74, 81, 114, 147. What is faith, and hope, and other graces, but parts of the new creature cast out of the womb of the promise? yea, the promise, you see, is both the mother and the nurse of hope; the mother brings forth that child of hope, being the instrument of begetting us thereunto: and then hope sucks her mother's breast, saying, "I hope in thy word." And hence,

3. Believers are the children of promise, in respect of spiritual nutrition, or nourishment: as the promise hath a generative virtue for begetting children; so it hath a nutritive virtue, for maintaining them: it hath both a fertile womb, for begetting children; and a full breast for nourishing of them. The children of God are nourished and suckled at the breast of the promise. Read to this purpose, Isa. lxvi. 8—11. The children of God are the children of Zion, or of the church, the spiritual society, where the pure ordinances are dispensed: hence the child of God is taught to say, "It is my mother's house, and the chamber of her that conceived me," Song iii. 4. And what are the promises, but the mother's breasts for the spiritual nourishment of her children, and of this man, or that man, that is born in her? And hence the word of grace is compared to the milk of the breasts; "As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby," 1 Pet. ii. 2. I will tell you some properties of this milk that is in the promise. It is very free milk, a very free breast; "Come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price." It is very fattening milk; it is just the feast of fat things, full of marrow, and makes the child of promise grow. It is very sweet and delicious milk; "Sweeter than the honey, and the honeycomb: How sweet are thy words to my taste? Sweeter than honey to my mouth." It is warm milk; the babe's heart is warmed with it, when applied by the Spirit; "Did not our hearts burn within us, when he talked with us by the way?" It is very medicinal milk; were the child of the promise under a spiritual decay and consumption, a new draught of this will cure the child; "He sent his word and healed them." Hence they come to ordinances, sometimes all full of plagues and diseases, just pained to death, as it were: but a word comes, and some drop of this milk, that makes them whole and

sound, and go away triumphing in the consolations of God. And why hath it these qualities? Even because it is pure milk; "The words of the Lord are pure," Psal. xii. 6. It is the sincere milk of the word; that is, without sophistication, without mixture: without erroneous mixture, or legal mixture. If we that are ministers should unduly mix any legal qualification with the gospel-milk of the free and absolute promise, it is enough to make the children loath the milk, and so hinder their growth in holiness and comfort: Why? Oh! says the child, I dare not apply such a promise, for I want such and such a qualification that the minister speaks of. I will tell you, man, it is the law that says, Hold off, for you are not meet you are a sinner; but the gospel says, Come, and take freely, be what you will. And therefore whatever hinders you from applying the promise, and sucking the milk of it, you may suspect it is no gospel.

4. Believers are the children of promise, in respect of education: they are trained up and eduate by the grace and virtue that flows from the divine promise. The children of the promise are but babes at best, and children, while here; therefore they are never weaned from the breast of the promise, so long as they are in this world, and always till faith and hope, grounded on the promise, be turned to vision and fruition in heaven, where all the promises will have their full accomplishment. And therefore the sons and daughters of Zion, to whom belong the covenant and the promises, are said to be nursed at her side, Isa. lx. 4. And hence, as children depend upon their parents, and in an ordinary way cannot live without them; so the life of believers here is a life of dependence upon the promise; their light, life, liberty, strength, comfort, and all issuing from the promise. As Moses' own mother brought him up for the princess, namely, Pharaoh's daughter, who adopted him for a prince in Pharaoh's family; thus believers are brought by the seed of the promise, and their mother breeds them kings and princes unto their God; "Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth," Psalm xlv. 16. Hence,

5. Believers are the children of promise in respect of assimilation, likeness and conformity; 2 Cor. iii. 18, "Beholding his glory as in a glass [that is, in the glass of the gospel]; we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Pet. i. 4, "Great and precious promises are given us, that by these we may be made partakers of the divine nature." The law,

as it is a rule of holiness, is the transcript of God's holiness in a command; the gospel is the image of his holiness in a promise; and when power accompanies the promise for begetting children unto God, what the law teaches preceptively, the gospel teaches effectively. "The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world," Titus ii. 11, 12. Indeed, holiness is a child of the promise, it is a daughter of the holy covenant; as children are like their parents, so believers, by virtue of the promise, are brought to a conformity thereunto; Rom. vi. 17, "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin; but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to you;" or rather, as it is in the margin, and in the Greek, "Whereto ye were delivered;" delivered into it as into a mould, as the wax is cast into the impression of the seal, answering it line for line, stroke for stroke, and wholly representing the shape and figure of it. Believers are, according to their measure, transformed into the likeness and similitude of the gospel, conformed unto it; understanding, will, affections, aims, principles, actions, and conversation, all becoming the gospel, and the promises thereof: hence the promises are made the springs of gospel-holiness; 2 Cor. vii. 1, "Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." The promise of Christ is the door of hope; and "He that hath this hope purifies himself, even as he is pure," 1 John iii. 3. The law, as a covenant, makes a man hopeless, and, consequently, heartless in every duty; it never purified a sinner to this day; it is the gospel that is the ministration of the Spirit, even the Spirit of holiness. I imagine you will know it even to your experience, believer. Let the law, or the legal preaching, press upon you with a hundred commands, and a hundred moral arguments to back it; yet all it does is but to make you dead, till life come out of a promise; and whenever a word of grace or promise is let into the heart, it joyfully conceives there, and brings forth the child, whose name is *Holiness to the Lord*. When are you most holy, but when the promise is most sweetly and powerfully applied, and when the grace of the promise comes and takes you in its arms? Therefore,

6. Believers are the children of promise in respect of amplexation (I only use that word, sirs, as comprehensive of what I have a mind

to say upon it; I do not love to express myself in words that you cannot all understand, but what I mean by it is this;) they are children of promise, in respect of the promises coming to embrace, and hug, and dandle them, as a mother does her child. Do you understand that? Yea, perhaps, you know the meaning of the word; but happy you, that know the thing itself to your experience, namely, the promise coming and embracing you in its arms. The promise is the joyful mother of all the children she brings forth; and therefore they are born upon her sides, and dandled upon her knees, as the expression is, Isaiah lxvi. 12. There are some rare folk in the world, sirs, that are Christ's favourites; all his children are so, but there are some of them in a more special manner that are his darlings; and how does he caress and dandle them? Why, there comes a promise, and in the bosom of it Christ the first-born child of the promise; and Christ by his Spirit, as the Spirit of promise, embraces the soul, and takes hold of it, and hugs it in his arms, and intimates the love and good-will of God, saying, perhaps such a word as that, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with everlasting kindness have I drawn thee. Son, daughter, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee." O how sweet is it to be thus within the arms and embraces of a promise! Then is the soul in the very arms of a God in Christ. Believers are said to embrace the promise, Heb. xi. 13. But though this be the duty of all, when the question is about the ground and warrant to believe; yet, when the question is about God's method of working faith, none will embrace the promise, till first the promise embrace them: never a soul took hold of the promise, with his whole heart, till first the promise took hold of his heart. God comes, by his powerful grace, breaking the natural enmity of the man, and killing him with his kindness. This is both the first and the last thing in the import of this designation, the children of promise; for still the promise is the mother and maintainer of faith, repentance, love, and all the graces; they have no being, till they be brought forth out of the womb of the promise; and still the believer is at a loss to believe and embrace the promise, till the promise take a new grip of him, and give him a new embracement. Thus you see in what respect they are the children of promise.

I have not yet said that believers are the children of promise in an active sense, as they are believers of the promise, or improvers of the promise, and the like; for though that be true, and may come

in its own proper place, yet it would not be suitable to the scope or meaning of the text, where they are considered as passively, and without their own concurrence, as Isaac was, when born to Abraham by the mere virtue of the promise. The promise is of the mere grace of God in Christ; and to be a child of the promise, is to be a child of God, by the grace of God in Christ. The question here is not, how believers act as believers? but, how the grace of God makes them believers? and that is by virtue of their being the children of promise, in the respects that I have already named.

2dly, In what method and manner they become actually the children of promise; actually, I say, because there are many, even all the elect of God, not yet converted, who are virtually the children of promise; but the womb of the promise is not yet open to bring them forth. Therefore the question is about the method of their being the actual children of promise, and so actually believers. And here you would notice, I am not speaking of the ground and object of faith, namely, the promise, of which formerly; but the way and method of God's working it; for these two ought not to be confounded, but distinctly considered in their own place. The word of God is the warrant, the Spirit of God is the worker of faith. Now, what hath been said already, may give some light to this inquiry; but there are these four things that I would further say concerning the method, speaking only of God's ordinary way of begetting children to himself.

1. The Lord brings home the threatening of the law, and applies it to their conscience, in a work of conviction. The conscience is naturally seared as with a hot iron; like these that have a part of their flesh burnt with an iron, though it be touched, yet they do not feel; this hard skin must be pierced; and therefore God makes the knife of conviction to go to the quick; makes the man see that he is a child of the devil, a child of wrath, puts him in fear of hell, and shews him that there is a standing quarrel betwixt God and him, and that this must be removed: hence a concern will be raised in the heart, "What shall I do to be saved?" Acts xvi. 30. They that are actual children of the promise, have found themselves actually under the dispensation of threatenings from Sinai; for the law is the schoolmaster, to awaken the sinner, and let him see his need of Christ.

2. The Lord imbitters sin, which gave force to the threatening, in a work of compunction. Both the spirituality of the law, in its

command ; and the severity of the law in its threatening, are set before the man ; in the consideration whereof, the soul not only cries out, Oh ! unclean, unclean ! but, Oh ! undone, undone ! The infinite majesty of God appears ; the infinite malignity of sin appears ; and the man is pricked in his heart, Acts ii. 37. The commandment comes, sin revives, and he dies, who before was alive without the law, Rom. vii. 9. Hence,

3. He discovers the absolute need of the promise of the gospel in a work of humiliation, and his undone state without it. A holy God stares the man in the face ; the unholy soul sees his holy God, and is afraid, and ashamed, and humbled ; humbled so far, as to take with the whole charge of God and his law against him. When ministers charge people with sins, they will either deny them, or cast a cloak over them, by manifold excuses ; and perhaps say, I was mistaken, or in a passion, or under such and such temptation ; but that is a plain evidence they are not humbled before God ; for, when God humbles the man, he is more exercised in condemning himself, than any minister can be capable to do ; he takes with the law-charge, saying, as Nathan, to David, I am the man, I am the devil, I am the monster. Indeed, this and other steps of humiliation may, perhaps, run along with him in his whole Christian course, after his first believing, as well as before ; but I speak now of the common and natural order. He is humbled, likewise, to a clearing of God's equity and righteousness, in sentencing him by the law, to the pit of perdition, and is made to clear and justify God, though he should condemn them. Some will say, We cannot think God will be so cruel, as to damn the most part of the world for their sin ; why, that is an evidence your soul was never humbled under a sense of sin. But, Oh ! says the humbled soul, death and damnation is the true wages of sin ; and if God should send me to hell, he is just ; I might preach his righteousness there, and declare that he never wronged me ; yea, it is my wonder that I have been so long out of the bottomless pit. Again, he is humbled to see, that as his damnation would be an act of justice, infinite justice ; so his salvation, if ever he share thereof, will be an act of sovereignty, glorious sovereignty and pure grace. He is humbled to see, that he cannot save himself ; that he is neither able to save himself, nor worthy that God should save him ; and that he is so far from having any righteousness of his own to plead, that his best righteousness is filthy rags ; and that God may justly damn him for his duties, as well as for his sins.

4. He discovers to the man, in this case, the excellency of the promise, and of the new-covenant way of salvation; the excellency of Christ, and the glory of his righteousness in a work of saving illumination; and now the good work, the saving work begins, when the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ is given, Eph. i. 17; and Christ is revealed in the man, Gal. i. 16; and this light is the light of life, whereby the soul is quickened to embrace the promise, to believe in Christ, and hope in his word.

The promise is opened up and applied to the begetting of faith. As Christ manifested forth his glory, and his disciples believed in him, John ii. 11; so, when he manifests his glory in a word of grace or promise, then the soul believes; for then, "The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith," Rom. i. 16. Power accompanies the revelation for the working of faith: for the faith of God's elect is the faith of God's operation, Col. ii. 12. Then the man believes, now he credits the truth and goodness of the promise, 1 Tim. i. 15. He cordially accepts, and receives, appropriates, and applies the great and good things promised to himself, with a confident persuasion of the accomplishment of the promise resting upon the faithfulness, power, and grace of the promises for the same, according to the measure of the communication of the Spirit of faith, Rom. x. 10, Heb. xi. 13, Rom. iv. 20, 21, Heb. xi. 11. And now, the man is actually a child of the promise; for the promise hath taken hold of him; and he hath, through grace, taken hold of it; the promise hath embraced him, and he hath embraced it; the embracement is mutual: now he is graciously inclined and engaged.

Let me tell you, in order to the further clearing of this method or manner of their becoming actually the children of promise, the ministry of the gospel is a kind of fishery; ministers are called Fishers of men, and so men and women are the fish. Now, God hath hung a bundle of promises together, as so many hooks upon a line, for taking all sorts of fishes, to take them ashore to himself; here are large hooks for taking large fishes, were they as large as a leviathan; here are little hooks for taking little fishes, were they as little as a mennon. Oh! says one, I am a great sinner, and my sins are mountainous; well there is a hook for you: "Who art thou, O great mountain, before our Zerubbael? Thou shalt become a plain; and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shout-

ing, crying, Grace, grace unto it," Zech. iv. 7.—Oh! says another, I am a poor insignificant worm, a worthless, mean, impotent creature; well, there is a hook for you: "Fear not, worm Jacob, I will help thee," Isa. xiv. 14. Are you poor and needy? there is a hook for you: "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongues fail for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Jacob will not forsake them," Isa. xli. 17, 18.—Are you a poor blind creature, that knows not what way to go? There is a hook for you, Isa. xlii. 16, "I will bring the blind by a way they know not, I will lead them in paths that they have not known."—Are you a piece of parched ground, like a parched wilderness? There is a hook for you, Isa. xlv. 3, "I will pour water on him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." Are you troubled that you cannot get a heart to pray? Well, there is a hook for taking you, Zech. xii. 10, "I will pour out upon the house of David the Spirit of grace and supplication."—Are you unable to believe and repent? There is a hook for catching you, in the following words:—"They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him;" where both faith and repentance are promised. Are you a lost and undone creature? There is a hook for you: "Jesus Christ came to seek and save that which was lost," Luke xix. 10. Are you a plagued wretch, oppressed with the plague of atheism and unbelief, with the plague of blasphemy and enmity, saying, O! there are devilish plagues, and hellish diseases in my heart? Well, there is a hook for you, Rev. xxii. 2, "The leaves of the tree of life are for the healing of all nations;" and Mal. iv. 2, "To you that fear my name, shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing under his wings." Oh! but say you, there is a conditional promise, it is to them that fear his name: I will tell you, man, there is no conditional form put upon any promise in the Bible, to keep back a soul from applying and taking hold of the promise, but to draw it in to embrace the condition, either by taking Christ for the condition, or running to an absolute promise, where that condition is promised; for instance, are you apprehensive that you are destitute of that fear of God? Then there is a hook for you to swallow down, that you may be taken by it, Jer. xxxii. 40, "I will put my fear in your hearts, that you shall not depart from me." And thus you are to do with all the promises that seem to run in a conditional form. Let not the condition fright you from opening your mouth wide, to catch the hook of the pro-

mise ; or, if still you dare not meddle with it, then run to the absolute promise, where the condition itself is promised ; if you cannot find out that, then run to Christ himself, in whom all fulness is, and in whom all the promises are yea and amen ; having him, you will have the condition of all the promises. If you stand a-back from the promise, and will not open your mouth to receive it, or if you reject it for want of this condition or qualification, you mistake the nature of the gospel, and are ignorant of the free covenant of promise. There is no evil you would have removed, no want you would have supplied, but you may get a promise for it ; and if one cannot make for you (as none of them but will, if rightly understood), go to another ; if one hook be too large for you to swallow down, you may get another more meet for you ; therefore, go about, and seek thy meat, and take fast hold of the promise that makes best for thee. And, O happy soul, if you be taken ! For the hook will not hurt you, but only hale you to the same happy shore with all the children of promise.

Perhaps there is a secret thought in somebody's breast, Alas ! Sir, but I do not find the promise taking hold of me ; and therefore, how shall I take hold of it ? You have been saying, none embraces the promise, till the promise embrace them ; now, I do not find, I do not feel the promise taking hold of me.

ANSW. I fear, by this way of speaking, you are making sense and feeling the ground of your faith, and not the promise ; this is not believing, but feeling ; like Thomas, that would not believe till he felt and saw Christ ; but, " Blessed is he that believeth, and hath not seen."

QUEST. But, say you, Must I not feel the power of God making me believe, before I can believe ?

ANSW. Yea, it is the power of God only that can make you believe ; but make not your feeling of that power to be your warrant to believe ; for the word of promise is your warrant, and also the immediate object and ground of faith ; therefore, when there is a promise meet for you, and suited of God to your case, stretch out the withered hand to receive it at his call, never stopping for fear that the power of God be not enabling you ; for no sooner will you essay to stretch out your hand, than the power of God will be beforehand with you, though, perhaps, in an unsensible manner ; whereas, if you wait for a sensible feeling of his power, you are not believing, nor trusting in his word. If you would believe, it must

be when you feel him not : for, believing is not feeling, and feeling is not believing.

OBJECT. But, if I believe his word without feeling his power, I fear I shall but presume, and take the promise only in my own strength ; or, like the stony-ground hearers, receive the word with joy, by a temporary faith, which will fail.

ANSW. People may indeed say they believe, and fancy they believe, and deceive themselves ; but fancy is one thing, and faith is another ; true, right, and solid belief, is what you need not fear can be done in your own strength ! What ! to take the word of a God for your security ; to quit the law-way of salvation, and flee to the gospel-promise ; and to trust the faithfulness of a God pledged in his promise, for your salvation from sin and corruption, as well as from hell and damnation ; to set your seal that God is true, and to receive his record with particular application to yourself ; if you do this, never fear that you are doing it by your own strength ; for it is not natural, but supernatural power that is dealing, when you are acting. If you get a heart to embrace the promise, you may be sure the promise is embracing you ; for it is only virtue coming out of it, that enables you to embrace it ; before your embracing of it, the virtue may be insensible and invisible ; but after the embracement, you may find sensible virtue. When the woman touched the hem of Christ's garment, sensible virtue came out of him ; but there was some invisible and insensible virtue came first from him to enable her to touch him ; but she never wist of that precedent virtue, till once she touched him. A man may not know, till he believe, that it is the power of God that is dealing with him to make him believe, God's power deals and works so wonderfully in this matter : " No man can tell whence it comes, and whither it goes," John iii. 8. What impressions the stamp of his power hath made, and how it makes the impression, cannot be seen till on the back of it, or afterwards, in order of nature at least ; even as the impression that the seal makes upon the melted wax is not seen till the seal be lifted, and there the impression remains. You cannot see yourself in a glass, till you look to it ; but look to it when you will, your image in the glass is beforehand with you : so, look to God in the promise ; but lo, his looking to you therein prevents you. Your embracing the promise will flow from the promise embracing you ; therefore when the promise is set before you, and held out to you to be believed, take it in God's name, without any more ado ; and then

say with yourself, now there is a word for me, and it is the word of the God of truth; therefore that word and I shall never part; welcome, O blessed word, death shall not separate you and me; I will hang by this hook, I will rely upon his word, till all be made good to me. And thus you will receive the engrafted word, that is able to save your soul.

III. The Third Head of the method was, To state the comparison, and run the parallel betwixt believers and Isaac; and so to shew more particularly, how they are, as Isaac, the children of promise. And here the parallel may be stated in these following particulars:—

1. As Isaac was the child of Abraham, so are believers children of Abraham: “Know ye, therefore, that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham,” Gal. iii. 17. See also ver. 29, “And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” As Isaac was a child of Abraham, not by natural power, for both his body and Sarah’s were dead, but by a gracious promise, Gen. xvii. 19, even so, believers are the children of Abraham, not by natural descent, such as the Jews boasted of, when they said, “We have Abraham for our father,” but by virtue of the gracious promise made to Abraham, that in his seed [*i.e.* in Christ] all nations of the earth shall be blessed.” Gal. iii. 8, compared with Gen. xviii. 18, To “Abraham and his seed was the promise made. He says not, unto seeds, as of many; but as of one; and to thy seed, which is Christ,” Galat. iii. 16. Thus, as Isaac was a child of the promise made to Abraham, so believers are not only children of the promise made to Abraham, but also the children of the promise made to Christ, the seed of Abraham: “In thy seed [that is in Christ] shall they be blessed. To Abraham and his seed were the promises made;” and as Abraham trusted God for the accomplishment of the promise of Isaac, Rom. iv. 19, 20, 31, even so Christ trusted his Father for the accomplishment of the promise made to him concerning his elect children, Heb. ii. 13; there he is brought in saying, “I will put my trust in him;” and then, “Behold I, and the children which God hath given me.” Abraham’s confidence was strong, but Christ’s confidence in his Father was perfect; it was not possible that the Mediator could distrust his Father.

2. As Isaac was the special seed of Abraham, of whom it was said, “In Isaac shall thy seed be called,” Heb. xi. 18; Gen. xxi.

12; Rom. ix. 7: even so, believers are God's peculiar people, a chosen generation; "To you that believe he is precious: You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that you should shew forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness to his marvellous light," 1 Pet. ii. 7, 8. Abraham had another son, namely, Ishmael; but the promise was not to Ishmael, but to Isaac: so God hath other people that are his children, not only by creation, but by general adoption, and church membership, and whose right to the promises is but general in point of access and warrant to believe, sealed in the sacrament of baptism, which yet is such as renders them inexcusable, when they do not improve that right of access they have: but believers are the children of God by a special adoption, having a special interest in, and possession of the promise.

3. Isaac was the fruit of prayer, as well as the child of promise to Abraham. You may see the prayer of Abraham concerning a seed, Gen. xv. 3, "Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?" May we not allude to this here? The children of God are not only the children of the promise made to the Mediator, but also the children of prayer made by him; they are the fruit of Christ's prayer, mediation, and intercession, John xvii. 20. He prayed not only for all that are believers, but for all that should believe on him; and he prays them all to heaven, ver. 24, "Father, I will, that they also whom thou hast given me may be with me, where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me; for thou loved me before the foundation of the world."

4. Isaac was the child of a promise whereof the accomplishment was long delayed; though yet the delay did carry no prejudice to the certainty of the promise as to its accomplishment, which took place in the fulness of time appointed of God, Gen. xvii. 21, and chap. xxi. 2. Thus it is with believers, the children of the promise—there is a set time of their birth, or their being brought forth out of the womb of the promise; and the Lord waits, as it were, for that time which he hath set: "He waits to be gracious," Isaiah xxx. 18. And after they are actually the children of the promise by converting grace, there is a set time for accomplishing particular promises to them, for which they are to wait: "The vision is for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie; though it tarry wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry," Hab. ii. 3. It was more than twenty years after God promised

Abraham a seed that Isaac was born. Perhaps there is a twenty year old promise, or a ten year old promise, or what you got so many years ago, not yet like to be accomplished. But, believer, the time is drawing near; as a man that is far off, every step he takes in his return, he draws nearer and nearer home; so the fulness of time is coming for the promise to bring forth, and the vision to speak; it does not tarry in the day, nor in the night, though it seems to tarry, but approaches every moment: the longer you live, believer, the nearer you come to the accomplishment of the promise, "Now is your salvation nearer than when you believed" The promise of Isaac, however long delayed, was as certain as the promise of Christ's coming, for Christ was to come of him; even so, the children of promise shall all as certainly be brought forth, and the promise as certainly be accomplished to them, as it is certain that Christ the promised seed is come. Indeed, the accomplishment of that promise of his coming is a certain pledge of the accomplishment of all the rest of the promises, for they are all chained to that great link; it was the leading promise, though about four thousand years before it was accomplished; yet, in the fulness of time God sent his Son, made of a woman," and so accomplished that promise on which all the rest depended. God will not forget to keep his day, were it never so long betwixt the promise and the day that he hath set, *Exod. xii. 41*, compared with *Gen. xv. 13*.

5. Isaac was a child of the promise, born in a very unlikely, unexpected, and wonderful manner. Insuperable difficulties stood in the way, outward means did fail, and, by the course of nature, no such thing could be expected as the promised Isaac. Abraham was an hundred years old, and his body was dead and withered; Sarah was ninety years old, and her womb was dead and barren, *Rom. iv. 19*, *Heb. xi. 11*. Even so it is with believers, the children of promise; when the promise comes to its full time of bringing forth its issue, the birth of any of the children of promise is always surprising, wonderful, and most unlikely to natural sense and carnal reason, when mountains of sin and guilt, and insuperable difficulties are in the way. Thus we will find the gospel coming in with the sweetest cordial, even when the law is raising the greatest difficulty, as in *Isa. xliii. 22, 25*, "Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; thou hast been weary of me, O Israel; thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, and wearied me with thine iniquities." Who could expect, immediately after this, to hear God saying, as it just follows,

“I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins!” So Isa. lvii. 17, 18, “For the iniquity of his covetousness I was wroth, and smote him; I hid me and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart.” O what a wonderful and surprising birth of free grace is that which follows: “I have seen his ways and will heal him; I will lead him also, and restore comfort unto him and to his mourners.” When one would think, now the threatening is big with child, and ready to bring forth vengeance; then, to the praise of free grace, the promise, being big with a blessing, brings forth mercy and salvation. This is what makes Abraham’s faith necessary, according to its measure, in all the children of promise; because some resemblance of the difficulties that Abraham’s faith had to encounter, does present to them. Why, say you, it was a thing incredible that was promised to Abraham, he being so superannuated and dead, and Sarah likewise so old and barren. Well, man, woman, but the case is yours in other respects: you have the old man of sin and corruption, and your heart is dead and barren of any spiritual good; and it is as impossible for you to bring forth any spiritual issue as it was for Abraham and Sarah to have an Isaac, if he had not been a child of promise, brought forth, not by the power of nature, but by the virtue of the promise: Even so it is with you, you need Abraham’s faith, and faith of the same nature you will have, if you be a child of Abraham. Sense and reason will oppose and say, it is incredible that spiritual life and fruit can issue out of such a dead and barren soul; but now the language of faith is, What says the promise? “As Abraham considered not the deadness of his own body, or of Sarah’s womb,” nor the difficulties that stood in the way of the promise, but the truth, faithfulness, and power of the promiser; even so, faith considers not the deadness, hardness, and barrenness of the heart, but the truth and veracity of that God who is able of stones to raise up children to Abraham, according to his promise. And thus the promise brings forth its happy issue, and the child of promise owns that it is not by the power of nature, but merely by the power of grace, and virtue of the promise, that any spiritual good is brought forth, saying, “By grace I am what I am.” Thus, “We are the children of God by faith;” and, as Isaac, the children of the promise.”

6. Isaac’s birth was the joy of his parents; the comfort of Abraham, the laughter of Sarah, Gen. xxi. 6; even so, the birth of

the promise is the joy of their heavenly relations. It is a day wherein God is evidencing that he is well-pleased in Christ: it is the day of the gladness of Christ's heart; saints and angels are glad; the church militant and triumphant rejoice; "There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth," Luke xv. 7-10. See how, in the preceding verse, where our text lies, the barren Christian church is called to rejoice when children are born to God within her, Gal iv. 27, "Rejoice, thou barren, that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not; for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband." Then is the church in joyful circumstances, when, by virtue of the gospel promise, children are brought forth in her, even this man and that man there. Such happy days have been in the Church of Scotland, when the spirit of reformation was poured out; but when that spirit is much quenched, and reformation-light obscured, and reformation zeal cooled, when the edge of it is blunted, when the carved work thereof is burnt, the covenanted work buried much in oblivion, and when old reformation principles, together with the gospel doctrine of free grace, which was the great instrument of conversion, is brought under much contempt and reproach; little wonder, when God is to give the mother church a bill of divorce, that she be not the joyful mother of many children to him. The gospel promise, and the free revelation of grace in Christ, is the very womb of the church, that brings forth her children; but, now-a-days, the doctrine of the gospel is brought under much disparagement, under much suspicion, as if it were some new dangerous scheme of doctrine; as the Athenians said of Paul's, Acts xvii. 19. Yea, it was said of Christ's, "What new doctrine is this?" Mark i. 37. Such is the natural bias towards the law, as a covenant, and so natively does a church and people fall into it, even after and under a profession of sound principles, that when evangelical doctrine comes to be revived in any measure, it is still branded with novelty. Thus it was with Christ himself; his doctrine was called new, when he came to be a minister of the old and ancient truths of God, even to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, Rom. xv. 8. But it is the free promise, the free grace of God, that begets holy children to God; and therefore an unholy devil will raise up all the calumnies in the world against it, that so, when it is brought under an ill report, and universal suspicion, none may receive or get good of it; for all the saving good that is gotten is by the power of grace, by the virtue of the pro-

mise ; however, The election shall obtain ;” but, if the devil could get his will, the promise should never be the joyful mother of any children.

7. Isaac was born, not after the flesh, but by the promise ; not of the bond-woman, but of the free. See the context, Gal. iv. 23, 25. And how this is explained, you see in the following verses 24, 25, 26 ; and how it is applied both in the text, and verse 31, where it is in like manner said of all believers, “ So then, brethren, we are not children of the bond-woman, but of the free.” As Hagar and Sarah here signify the old and new covenant, as I shewed in the explication ; so Ishmael and Isaac hold forth these that are under the law, and these that are under grace. Now, believers are thus distinguished from all unbelieving Ishmaelites, that they are not under the law, but under grace ; and hence sin cannot have dominion over them, Rom. vi. 14. There is a threefold bondage to the law that unbelievers are under, which the children of the promise and the free woman are delivered from.

(1.) The commanding power of the law ; that is, the precept of it under this conditional form, Do and live. The law of works that they are under says, “ Do and live,” Rom. x. 5. That law that they are under says to them, “ If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments ;” which, no doubt, is galling to the conscience, as it was to that young man in the gospel, to whom Christ thus speaks for his awakening and conviction. How galling must it be to them that are under the law, to understand that they are under such an imprestable command, Do perfectly, and live eternally ; considering the holiness and spirituality of that law, and also the wickedness and inability of the creature ? Therefore,

(2.) They are under the bondage of the condemning power of the law, cursing every one that continues not in all things written in the book of the law to do them, Gal. iii. 10. The law not only curses its transgressors from heaven, which they have forfeited, but curses them to hell, which they have incurred ; for, “ All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,” Romans iii. 23 ; yea, “ The wages of sin is death ;” and, “ The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men,” Rom. i. 18.

(3.) They are under the bondage of the irritating power of the law ; “ the motions of sin which are by the law, work in their members to bring forth fruit unto death,” Rom. vii. 5. The spiritual

law mightily irritates the corruption of a man in nature, so as he becomes angry and chafed, and sins more and more; for, "The carnal mind is enmity against, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." The law enrages his corruption like a mad horse, that rages the more that he is checked with the bridle: here is a sad bondage, that all unbelievers, Ishmaelites, children of the bond-woman are under. Now, believers, the children of promise are, with Isaac, the children of the free woman, being delivered from that bondage: from the first, by Christ's obedience imputed, Rom. v. 19; from the second, by his satisfaction imputed, Gal. iii. 13; from the third, by his grace imparted, and his Spirit implanted according to the new covenant, Rom. viii. 2. The believer is not under the law of works, because Christ hath done all for him: he is not under the threatening of it, because Christ hath suffered all for him; he is not under the irritation of it, for the law, as a rule, is written in his heart, and Christ, by his Spirit, works in him both to will and to do of his good pleasure. He is not under the law as a covenant of works, to be thereby either justified or condemned; hence he is neither under the bondage of doing duty, from hope that he shall be justified by doing it; nor from the fear that he shall be condemned for not doing it, seeing that as by the deeds of the law no flesh living shall be justified, so "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ." He is freed both from the legal hope of getting to heaven by his doing, and slavish fear of going to hell for not doing; for, as his title to heaven is founded on Christ's obedience only, and his security from hell upon Christ's death and satisfaction only; so his motives to obedience are more evangelical, and suited to the gospel liberty that he is under, such as love and gratitude towards that God who hath saved him. I speak of believers now as such, and in so far as freed from the law, and not in so far as unbelief and a legal temper, in the sad remains thereof, may hold them under much bondage: but such is their freedom, as I have expressed, in so far as they hold fast the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free, Gal. v. 1. I might here also speak of the freedom of God's children even from the ceremonial law, which may be a part of the apostle's intent; a bondage which the Jews, by their own consent, are still under; this is called, by that famous council, Acts xv. 10, "A yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear." And if instituted ceremonies were such, how much more must uninstituted ones

be? This is a yoke which many in our land are wreathing about their own necks, embracing the abjured English Popish ceremonies, and new modes of divine service which have no stamp of divine authority. We should even pity and pray for those who are fond of such a yoke as cannot but in the issue gall their necks, and that this generation may not run wholly back to Rome. Now, I said, that as Isaac was born of the free woman, so are believers free indeed, because the Son makes them free; they are from Jerusalem, which is above, and is free, verse 26, "They are not under the law, but under grace."

8. Isaac was no sooner born than he was mocked and persecuted by Ishmael, the son of the bond-woman; "As he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, so it is now," said the apostle in his day, Gal. iv. 29; and so it is now, say I, in our day; and so it will be to the end of the world. Our apostle here designs to prevent the believing Galatians their stumbling at the opposition they might meet with from the Jews, who were so tenacious of their law, as to be ready to persecute these that would not submit to it; he tells them that this was no more than what was pointed out in the type; and, as it was betwixt Isaac and Ishmael, so will it be betwixt believers and unbelievers, these that are under the law, and these that are under grace. The seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent cannot agree; "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution," 2 Tim. iii. 12. ALL, without exception, that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must lay their account with persecution; and more especially these that preach and profess the gospel, must look to be hated and reproached; "You shall be hated of all men for my name's sake," Luke xxi. 17; Matth. x. 22. *Of all men*; that is, of all that do not embrace the gospel, you in particular shall be hated; for the devil shoots his arrows at the whitest marks. The apostle here seems to point at secret enemies and false brethren, that pretend to religion, and are seemingly holy, Gal. ii. 4, compared with chap. i. 6, 7. And here it was a circumcised Ishmael that scoffed at Isaac, Gal. vi. 29, compared with Gen. xxi. 9. The most deadly enemies of Christ were these who stiled themselves Abraham's seed, and were so according to the flesh; hence the church complains, Song i. 6, "My mother's children were angry with me;" *i.e.*, my mother's children by external profession. The greatest enemies of the church, for the most part, are these vipers that lie in her own bowels: the

children of promise may look to be cast out by their seeming brethren, Isa. lxi. 5; and to be counted as monsters, signs, and wonders, and that even in Israel, Isa. viii. 18, and men wondered at, Zech. iii. 8, if it be so to this very day, think it not strange, for the world will be like itself; "I would be offended," said Luther, "if the world were not offended at me." There is persecution in reproachful words; Ishmael's mocking of Isaac is here called persecution. We read of fourteen or fifteen several trials that the Old Testament martyrs endured, Heb. xi. 35-38, whereof this was one, cruel mockings. To be smitten with the tongue is sometimes a very cruel thing; to be called mad, drunk, pestilent, turbulent fellows, as the apostles were, Acts ii. 13; xvii. 18, 19; xxvii. 24; xxviii. 22: to be counted the off-scourings of all things: yea, and fire-brands of contention, are greivous charges, and afflicting to the godly: "Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast born me a man of strife, and a man of contention to the whole earth?" Jer. xv. 10. The best cordial for a child of God in that case, is the like of that word, "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth on you," 1 Pet. iv. 13, 14. "On their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified," Matth. v. 11, 12.

9. Isaac was the heir by promise, though thus persecuted, Gal. iv. 30, compared with Gen. xxi. 10; xv. 3, 4. Even so, believers, the children of promise, are heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; "If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together," Rom. viii. 17. They are born heirs of the crown of glory; as children of the promise, they are just begotten to a lively hope by the resurrection of Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away, 1 Pet. iii. 4, 5. They that are effectually hooked by the promise, though they may swim for a while in the sea of this sinful and troublesome world, yet the line on which the hook of the promise hangs, will draw them at length to the shore of glory; "Faithful is he that promiseth, who also will do it." Yea, the gospel believer only is the heir, Rom. iv. 14.

10. The trials and difficulties that encountered Isaac in the way of the accomplishment of the promise, were very great; and so may it be with all believers, the children of promise, before they be put in full possession of the promised inheritance. We touched already the trial of Abraham's faith with respect to the birth of Isaac,

and the difficulties that stood in the way of that promise, Abraham's body being dead, and Sarah also being of a barren sterile constitution, naturally ; and now past the prolific age. But after Isaac was given in this extraordinary manner, and entered heir of the promise, such difficulties presented themselves as seemed at one blow to cut off the entail of the promise for ever. Behold, Abraham is ordered to go and sacrifice Isaac ; Gen. xxii. 2, compared with Heb. xi. 17, 18, 19. A greater trial was never put upon any creature after he had received the promise. What promise ? That in Isaac should his seed be called ; that he should be one of the progenitors of the Messias, and all nations be blessed in him ; so that, in being called to offer up his Isaac, the hope of his family, his only son, whom he loved ; he seemed at the same time to be called to go and cut off the promises of God, to prevent the coming of Christ, and so destroy the whole world ; to sacrifice his own soul, and his hopes of salvation in Christ promised to come of Isaac ; and to cut off the church of God at one blow ; a very terrible trial ! Isaac was the only one he was to have by his wife Sarah, the only one that was to be the child and heir of the promise ; the only son that could convey to all nations the promised blessing ; a son for whom he waited so long, received in so wonderful a manner, on whom his heart was set ; and to offer up his son as a sacrifice, and that by his own hand, which looked like the murder forbidden in the sixth commandment ; it was a trial that would have upset the firmest and strongest mind that ever informed a human body. Yet he offered up Isaac by faith ; he did it intentionally, and was ready to have done it actually, and went as far in it as the critical moment, and would have gone through with it, if God had not prevented him ; for the ground of his faith was, that he accounted that God was able to raise him up from the dead ; so that it would seem that Abraham had no expectation of being countermanded. Thus the trial went to the last extremity ; and then, you know, how the Lord appeared. Now, in like manner, the children of promise, believers in Christ, after they are entered heirs of the promise, extraordinary difficulties may appear, which their faith will have no struggle with ; providences may run so cross to the promise, as that the fatal knife may seem to be at the very throat of the promise, to cut it off for ever from being accomplished. Isaac was given up for dead ; and Abraham received him, as it were, from the dead, Heb. xi. 19 ; his return to him was no less than a resurrection. The children and heirs of the

promise are not then to think strange concerning the fiery trial, that is to try them, as though some strange thing happened to them, 1 Pet. iv. 12 ; but are to believe that the promise will make its way through fire, and water, and death, and dreadful extremities : “ That the trial of faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, may be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Christ Jesus,” 1 Pet. i. 7. Thus you may observe the parallel, in manifold particulars, betwixt believers and Isaac ; and see how, as Isaac was, they are the children of the promise.

IV. The Fourth general Head, which was, To offer the grounds and reasons of the doctrine, whence and why it is that the children of God are the children of promise. And here three distinct questions may be accounted for. 1. Whence it is that the promise hath such a prolific virtue for begetting children to God ? 2. Why God will have his children to be so by the promise ? 3. Why will he have them, and them only, to be the children of the promise ? A word to each of these.

1st, Whence it is that the promise hath such a prolific virtue for begetting children to God ? or, how it is the mean of bringing forth children ? In general, it is by divine destination and appointment made the great instrument of begetting God’s children : “ Of his own will begat he us, with the word of truth,” James i. 18. And more particularly, it hath virtue for producing this effect, in the following respects :—

1. As it is the discovery of divine love, the manifestation of divine grace, in Christ : “ The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men,” Tit. ii. 11, and this revelation is the channel of divine power : “ I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ : for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth ; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek ; for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith,” Rom. i. 16, 17. The riches of God’s grace and love to sinners are manifested in the gospel-promise and the freedom thereof, namely, his loving them because he loves them, Deut. vii. 6, 7, 8, and that he will pity for his own name’s sake, as is often intimate in the promise. And when the Lord offers, in the promise, to break through all the unworthiness and deservings of the creature, this tends to melt the greatest sinner to the greatest self-abasement, and the deepest sense of his own nothingness, saying, “ Lord, what am I ?” It tends also to make the soul break forth into the highest admiration of God,

saying, "O! who is like unto thee?" and to fall in love with that wonderful device of salvation by free grace, through Christ Jesus, as the Lord our righteousness; and thus to bring the soul to God, as a child of promise, conquered by the irresistible grace thereof.

2. The promise hath prolific virtue, as it is the object of faith, and the mean thereof; Rom. i. 16. It is revealed to faith; that is, to be believed; there is the immediate object of faith; and it is this revelation that is appointed of God to be the very mean of faith; therefore it is said, Rom. x. 17, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God;" and when faith comes this way, then persons are the children of God by faith in Christ.

3. The promise hath this prolific virtue, as it is the ground of hope to the poor perishing sinner; and when he begins to hope upon this ground, then regeneration begins; 1 Pet. i. 3, "He hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead:" that is, I suppose, by the revelation of Christ as the sinner's righteousness for justification, confirmed and manifested in his resurrection from the dead, hence Christ speaks of his Spirit convincing men of righteousness, because he hath ascended to his Father, after he arose for our justification, John xvi. 10, compared with Rom. iv. 25.

4. And consequently, the promise hath this prolific virtue, as it is the seed of regeneration; the incorruptible seed, 1 Pet. i. 23, 25. When the word of grace, the promise, is sown into the heart, then the incorruptible seed is sown there, which hath a generative virtue for begetting the person to a lively hope, and making him a child of promise by regeneration: "Of his own will begat he us, by the word of truth."

5. The promise hath this prolific virtue, as it is the impartation and communication of grace. In the new covenant there are not only promises of blessings, and of more grace to them that have grace, which may be called conditional promises; but promises of grace to them that want, which are absolute promises, and necessarily presupposes a total want; and so runs the covenant, Heb. viii. 8, 12. Every dram of grace is the fruit, result, and issue of an absolute promise, they all being so reductively; every good condition and qualification being promises therein, and no good condition or qualification takes place in the soul till that be accomplished; the instant before the promise of quickening be accomplished, the soul is dead in trespasses and sins, Eph. ii. 4; the moment before

reconciliation, it stands in enmity against the Lord, Col. i. 21 ; and immediately before the promise of sanctification be made good, it is under sin and pollution. Hereupon the sinner hath encouragement to come to Christ, and the free promise, notwithstanding of the want of all good qualifications, because all gracious qualifications are derived to the sinner through the promise. The Lord is a free agent, and may work how he pleases ; but hath not warranted any soul to stay one moment from closing with the Lord Jesus Christ, upon the want of any qualification, or upon any account whatsoever ; otherwise he would allow their staying so long in unbelief, whereas that is hateful and abominable to him. Now, seeing grace is here dispensed to the graceless ; faith, to the faithless ; repentance, to the impenitent ; holiness, to the unholy ; and all good things, to them that have nothing but all evil about them ; thence the prolific virtue of the gospel of grace does proceed ; and hence the gospel-dispensation comes with a commission to open the eyes of the blind ; to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God ; that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in Christ Jesus, Acts xxvi. 18. And, indeed, if grace were not freely imparted and communicated by the gospel unto sinners, that by nature are destitute of all good and all grace ; none of Adam's sinful race could be the better of the gospel, for they are all graceless, cursed enemies to God ; but it hath virtue to beget grace, because it is the channel in which grace runs out towards them freely.

6. The gospel promise hath this prolific virtue, as it is the chariot of the Spirit in which he rides ; hence called the ministration of the Spirit, 2 Cor. iii. 8. The doctrine of the gospel is that in which the Spirit is received, Galat. iii. 2 ; yea, the promise is so much the chariot of the Spirit, Galat. iii. 14 ; and the Spirit is called the Spirit of promise, Ephes. i. 13. This, indeed, is the great thing that is the source and spring of the prolific virtue of the promise, and what all that hath been said, is reducible unto, namely, its being the Spirit's chariot, wherein he rides prosperously, conquering and to conquer. The Spirit of faith, mixing in with the doctrine of faith, makes it the rod of his strength sent out of Zion, Psal. cx. 2, upon which it follows, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power. Now, the word of grace, and the Spirit of grace, joining hand in hand, to beget children unto God, is a promise

made to the God-man Mediator, to take place to the end of time ; “ As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord, my Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seeds’ seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever,” Isaiah lix. 21. And thus the promise, with the Spirit in it, is productive of children to Christ. The Spirit promised was first upon Christ the head, and from the head descends to the members : and all believers are his seed ; and the mean by which a seed is perpetuate and kept up for him, is the word and Spirit. The word is said to be first in Christ’s mouth, he is our Prophet ; and then in the mouth of his seed, the church ; for there the promise shall be published : and thus by the word and Spirit going together, the seed is maintained, and the children brought forth. O cry for the Spirit, then, to put virtue in the promise ! Happy they that know the promise, given by the Father, sealed by the Son, and applied by the Holy Ghost ! So much for the question here, how the promise is a mean of begetting children to God ?

2dly, Why will God have his children to be so by the promise ? Believers are the children of God, by being the children of promise, for these following reasons, briefly touched at.

1. Because there is no life or salvation any other way. There are but two ways to eternal life supposable ; the one is by the law, and the other by promise : by the law it is impossible, Gal. iii. 16 ; therefore it must be by promise. These two ways you see set in opposition to each other, Rom. iv. 14, Gal. iii. 18, “ If the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise ; but God gave it to Abraham by promise :” and why ? Even because it was not possible to have it by the law, ver. 21, “ For if there had been a law given, which could have given life, then verily righteousness should have been by the law :” but so it is, that no law was given, which could give life to any sinner ; therefore righteousness and justification must be by promise in Christ. This argument stands confirmed by the very death of Christ, Gal. ii. 21, “ If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain ;” but now, to assert that Christ is dead in vain, were blasphemy ; why then, righteousness and life come not by the law, but by the promise in Christ.

2. God will have his children to be so by promise, that their salvation may be sure. What surer than the promise of God, con-

firmed by the oath of God, and sealed by the blood of God? It is therefore called the sure mercies of David, Isaiah lv. 3. This covenant of promise stands first in Christ. The promise of the covenant of works, which promised life upon our doing, is forfeited by our disobedience, insomuch that nothing remains to these that are under that covenant, but a precept that is imprestible, every way unperformable, by sinful creatures; and a penalty that is intolerable by finite creatures; a command that cannot be obeyed; and a threatening that cannot be endured: hence, as life eternal is impossible to be obtained by them, and death eternal is inevitable while they remain there out of Christ: so even to Adam in innocence, the promise of life, by that covenant, was very unsure, as the effect shewed, but now, the children of God, being the children of promise, have eternal life insured upon a law-biding righteousness, which is everlasting and immutable; through which righteousness, "Grace reigns to eternal life," Rom. v. 21. Therefore,

3. God will have his children to be the children of promise, that their salvation may be free, as well as sure. See these two joined, Rom. iv. 16, "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed." Indeed, if the promise were not free, salvation could not be sure: for, a properly conditional promise were a covenant of works; and if we failed in the condition of such a covenant even in a state of innocence, what would we do now in a state of sin and misery? Could that be sure? No, no; therefore, that it may be sure, it is of grace, Rom. xi. 6. I dare say, believer, you will put your seal to it, that your salvation could not be sure, if it were not of grace, of free grace manifested in the free promise.

4. God will have his children to be so by promise, that their salvation may be full and complete: for the children of promise are the heirs: and what are they heirs of? Why, they inherit all things, Rev. xxi. 4, for they are heirs of God, Rom. viii. 17, Gal. iii. 29. The children of the promise in Christ are complete in him, in whom is all the fulness of the Godhead; and who is made of God to them, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. The law of works did not hold forth a full and complete salvation; for though it promised life upon doing, yet it did not promise grace to do and persevere: but here is a covenant of better promises, wherein Christ, and all grace in him, is held forth; and not only eternal life, comprehending grace and glory, salvation from sin and from hell,

all upon the condition fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ, even his everlasting righteousness; but eternal life to the greatest advantage, both with respect to God's greater glory, and man's greater happiness; for, he came to give life, and to give it more abundantly, John x. 11.

5. God will have his children to be so by promise, that their salvation may be surprising and wonderful. To be saved by a free promise, is to be saved in a way that is the world's wonder. It crosses and confounds the wisdom of the world; it is a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence to them, Rom. ix. 33. They cannot think it possible that God will save us for nothing; that he will save us without our cost, without our charge, without our assistance, without our desert, without our desire: yet so it is, that none, by nature, have so much as a desire after Christ; nay, they say, "There is no beauty in him that we should desire him; he is despised and rejected of men," Isa. liii. 2, 3. Men will not take with it, that they are downright enemies to Christ, and his gospel of free grace: but yet they are miserable enough, if they be but, AS IT WERE, enemies to it. There are too sad and ominous AS IT WERE'S in scripture, to this purpose; one is, Isa. liii. 3, "We hid AS IT WERE our faces from him;" that is, they disesteemed Christ; another is, Rom. ix. 32, "They sought righteousness and life, AS IT WERE, by the works of the law:" and that is explained to be a stumbling at Christ. Well, these that sought life in this manner, lost it; who then found it? Even these that were not seeking it at all, were not desiring it; in consequence to this word, "I am found of them that sought me not." This the apostle expresses with wonder at the free grace of God, Rom. ix. 30, 31. This doctrine is so wonderful and mysterious, so opposite to the legal bias of the children of men, that the world cannot admit of it. The children of promise themselves can hardly believe the promise, it is so free. What! will God save me, upon no consideration in me, but that of sin and misery, and upon no other terms but as I am a sinner, and he a Saviour? Indeed, one of the great things that makes believing to be difficult is, because we cannot admit it into our thoughts, that salvation is to be had at such an easy rate: the old conditional covenant of works is so ingrained in our nature; *Do and live*, is so stamped on our hearts, that God will give us heaven, while yet we do nothing for it: yet so it is, that if we seek life, even, as it were, by the works of the law, we stumble at the grace of God. O how

wonderfully is this grace of God in Christ displayed in the promise.

6. God will have his children to be children of promise, that their salvation may be in a way exclusive of boasting; Rom. iii. 27, "Where is boasting then? It is excluded: By what law? Of works? Nay, but by the law of faith." He will have them saved in a way that is most for his exaltation, and their humiliation: "That he that glories, may glory in the Lord; and that no flesh may glory in his presence: that the haughtiness of man may be humbled, and the Lord exalted," Isa. iii. 11. The works of the law, and the faith of the promise, differ extremely; in that the former encourages boasting, and the latter excludes it. The promise of life, by the law, is to him that works for his life; this fosters pride and boasting, therefore it is out of doors; but the promise of life, by the gospel, is to him that works not, but believes on him that justifies the ungodly, Rom. iv. 5. This excludes boasting: it brings down the pride of man, and exalts the grace of God: therefore it is God's way. Man's way is quite contrary to God's; through their natural pride, they cannot submit to the righteousness of God, without their own legal righteousness mixt with it, Rom. x. 3; even when, by the gospel, the righteousness of God, without the law is manifested, Rom. iii. 21. Now, it is the property of faith to come empty-handed, without the law, or any expectation by the works thereof; and being empty-handed of its own works and righteousness, it is fit for taking in the righteousness of another; whereas the full-handed legalist hath no room, cannot take Christ and a promise in his hand; the law fills both his hands: or, if he takes the promise in one hand, and the law in another; Christ's righteousness in one hand, and his own righteousness in another, and think to make up a perfect righteousness of both together; how does he thus bewray his proud boasting of a personal righteousness, to the reproach of the personal righteousness of Christ, as if it were not perfect? Faith excludes boasting, because it lives on a promise of free grace; and whatever we have, or seem to have of our own, whether it be work or worthiness, faith casts it wholly to the ground and itself also, that Christ may be All in all, for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Thus you see some of the reasons why God will have his children to be the children of promise.

3dly, The Third question was, Why will he have them, and

them only, to be the actual children of promise? Why will he have his children thus distinguished from the rest of the world?

1. Because they are the children of his purpose, they are the fruit of his eternal predestination: "Having predestinate us into the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will," Eph. i. 4, 5. He had a purpose of grace concerning them; therefore they are effectually called according to his purpose. See Rom. viii. 28, 29, 30.

2. They are the children of promise, because they are the children of his donation. How many times does Christ speak of the blessed number that was given him of the Father? John xvii., and thereupon he gives this as a reason why he made known his word of grace to them, ver. 8, 14, "I have given them thy word." And again, "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." Hence also the connexion betwixt their being given to him from eternity, and coming to him in time, is declared, John vi. 37, "All that the Father hath given me, shall come to me."

3. They are the children of promise, because they are the children of his affection, and of his everlasting loving-kindness; this follows upon the former; and this is given as a reason why the Lord draws them by his grace in time, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness will I draw thee," Jer. xiii. 3. His love of complacence must be manifested in time, to these whom he hath loved with a love of destination from eternity; "His delights were with the sons of men."

4. They are the children of promise, because they are the children of his purchase. They are dearly bought, and therefore shall not be easily lost; redeemed by the price of his blood upon the cross; and therefore shall be redeemed by the power of the Spirit, in the application of the promise, which is Yea and Amen in Christ, ratified by his blood. The promise shall take hold of them, and bring them forth; hence, Isa. liii. 10, 11, upon his making his soul an offering for sin, it is said, "He shall see his seed; the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand: he shall see the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied; by his knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities."

5. They are the children of promise, because they are the children of his prayers, Isa. liii. 12, "He made intercession for the transgressors." John xvii. 8, "I pray for them, I pray not for the

world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine." And what Christ prays for, you see, John xiv. 16, 17, 26. Even the Spirit of truth, the Spirit of promise, to teach them all things, and make application of the promise in its prolific virtue.

5. They are the children of promise, because they are the children of his praise; Isa. xliii. 21, "This people have I formed for myself, they shall show forth my praise:" upon which follows that free promise, ver. 25, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thine iniquities, for mine own name's sake, and will not remember thy sins." They are the children of promise, that they may shew forth the praise of a promising God, 1 Pet. ii. 9. God says of one and all his children, that are so by the promise, as it is, Isa. lxix. 3, "Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified." I will have all my perfections glorified in thee, by virtue of thy being a child of promise in Christ, in whom, as the centre of all the promises, Glory to God in the highest does accrue; I will glorify my mercy, in making the promise; I will glorify my truth, in fulfilling the promise; as it is said, Micah vii. 20, "Thou wilt perform the truth unto Jacob, and the mercy unto Abraham." It is MERCY to Abraham, because to him it was made; and TRUTH to Jacob, because to him it was fulfilled: even so, God is upon a design of glorifying his mercy in promising, his truth in performing the promise. How does he glorify his wisdom? In ordering it to run through so many intricacies; and his power, in guarding it against so many difficulties and oppositions. How does he glorify his holiness and justice? Herein also, and that both in respect of the Surety, by whom it is sealed; and the sinner, to whom it is applied. In respect of the Surety by whom it is sealed, how does he glorify his holiness? Seeing Christ's perfect obedience makes it stand good, without prejudice to the precept of the law. And then, with respect to the sinner, to whom it is applied, how does he glorify his holiness? In making the promise the very means of sanctification, 2 Pet. i. 4. For thereby the soul is made a partaker of the divine nature. And, how does he glorify his justice? In sprinkling the promise of mercy with the justice-satisfying blood of Christ, that so the soul to whom it is applied, may not doubt of his mercy for fear of his justice, and that the promise in Christ may appear white and ruddy like himself; white, with the marvellous mercy that it brings, and ruddy, with the justice satisfying blood in which it is conveyed. And hence the child of promise may see, to his unspeakable joy,

that God is not only merciful, but just also, in giving the promise of grace and glory to him, however vile and unworthy in himself; that he is not only merciful, but just, in forgiving of sin; Rom. iii. 24, 25, "He hath set forth Christ to be the propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sin—that he may be just, and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus:" not only to declare his mercy, but to declare his justice. O sirs, his great design is to glorify himself in this matter; and indeed his glorifying himself thus, in saving us by the new covenant promise, is ground of everlasting praise; Isa. xlv. 23, "Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it; shout, ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein; for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel." Here will be the sweetest part of the song of heaven to eternity, that God hath so redeemed and saved his people, as to glorify himself in all his glorious perfections; mercy and justice, and all his other attributes, gloriously and harmoniously embracing each other. Oh! what poor, base, legal, selfish, mean, pitiful, and unworthy notions and dreams have we about the gospel, if our thoughts concerning it be not sunk into this ocean of divine glory! A sovereign God, who shews mercy on whom he will, hath this as his main view in creating any the children of his promise, even that they may be children of his praise. So much for the grounds of the doctrine, with reference to the virtue of the promise, and the children thereof. I now proceed,

V. To the Fifth general head of the method, which was to make application of the whole. Manifold uses may be made of this doctrine; I shall comprise what I have to say in these four, viz., an use of information, examination, caution, and exhortation. I begin,

1st, With an use of information. Is it so, that all the children of God, or true believers, are like Isaac, the children of promise, in the manner that I have explained this text and doctrine? Then hence see,

I. What is the nature of the gospel properly taken; it is a promise, a free promise of life and salvation, through Christ: as declares our apostle here, Gal. iii. 8, "The scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel to Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." What makes he the gospel to be then? Even a free promise, such

as that given to Abraham, "In thy seed [that is, in Christ] shall all nations of the earth be blessed." It is true if we take the gospel largely for the manner of the dispensation of it, we find commands and threatenings both intermixed with this dispensation, to be a fence to the gospel, that people may know both their duty as to the improving of it; hence such commands as that, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" and also their danger in abusing and misimproving it; hence such threatenings as that, "He that believeth not shall be damned." These and the like commands and threatenings, intermixed with the gospel dispensation, are a fence to the gospel; the law is thus subservient to it; but the gospel, strictly taken, is neither the command nor the threatening, with relation to believing; but it is the thing itself to be believed, namely, the good news of salvation, to sinners through Christ; or, which is all one, the promise of life to be had in him. And the reason why we assert this is, not only because the scripture is plain herein, but also for the honour of God's law, which is perfect, containing every duty incumbent on us; which it could not be, if the gospel taught us some new duty which was not contained in the law; and also for the security of the gospel, that it may not be adulterated and abused with legal mixtures, to the subversion of the glorious end and design thereof, which is to manifest the righteousness of God without the law, Rom. iii. 21. If the gospel were a new law, with new precepts and sanction, beside that law which Christ came under to fulfil in our room; then it behoved to be a new covenant of works, and there behoved to be a new righteousness corresponding to that law, beside the righteousness of Christ for our justification; and how dangerous and destructive this is to the nature of the gospel, is evident from the delusions of some, that hereupon make the act of believing, in obedience to the new command, to be our justifying righteousness before God; in opposition to which, our excellent Standards, the Confession of Faith and Catechisms, exclude the very act of believing, as well as the fruits of faith, from the matter of our justification before God; and that for a good reason, because we are not justified by the works of the law, among which faith itself is, as it is our act, even through grace; yea, they who make the gospel properly a new law, cannot evite the darkening and perverting of the gospel, even though they would seem to befriend it, Gal. i. 6, 7. This doctrine shews that the gospel properly is a promise.

2. Hence see the power and efficacy of the gospel, under the influence of the eternal Spirit accompanying it; seeing it, being a divine promise, hath virtue for bringing forth children to God, who are therefore called the children of promise; hence, says the apostle, Rom. i. 15, 17, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation, while therein is revealed the righteousness of God, from faith to faith. They that are the children of God are begotten by the word of truth, by the virtue of the promise, as Isaac was. O sirs, the gospel should be valued and prized; for, all the saving good that is done to the soul, is by the gospel. The law, rightly used, is the mean of conviction, Rom. iii. 20. By the law is the knowledge of sin, so as a man may see his need of Christ; also the law, as a rule rightly applied, is for the direction of our paths in the way of holiness, when once we are got in to Christ; but it is the gospel only, that converts a man, and brings him to fellowship with God in Christ; it is the preaching of Christ and the promise, the preaching of the gospel, that hath converted all the converts that ever were to this day; for that only is the ministration of the Spirit; and it hath the same effect to this day, when it comes not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance, 1 Thess. i. 5. It is true, the preaching that is all gospel, may yet do no good, if it come in word only; but yet so it is, that when converting power comes at all, it comes by the gospel. It is true also, that a preaching that hath much dross, a legal mixture, and but little gospel in it, may perhaps be the instrument of conversion; but so it is, that it is only the gospel-part of it that does the saving good. O sirs, let the gospel-promise be prized; for it is that which hath the virtue to draw out the soul to Christ.

3. Hence see the freedom of grace in the new covenant. Seeing all the parts of salvation are the fruit and offspring of the promise sealed by the blood of Christ, believers being children of promise, whatever constitutes their character and privilege, must be the offspring of the promise; all the graces they possess, and the benefits they enjoy in time, or shall enjoy to eternity, are children of promise. Thus all the new-covenant graces are children of promise, and free-born children. Faith is a child of promise, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." Repentance, as a fruit of faith, is a child of promise, "They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn." Love is a child of promise, "I will circumcise their hearts to love me. The Spirit of prayer is a child of

promise, "I will pour out upon the house of David the Spirit of grace and supplication." Holy fear is a child of promise, "I will put my fear in your heart." The Spirit of praise is a child of promise, "They shall sing in the ways of the Lord: for great is the glory of the Lord." Tell me a grace that is not the offspring of the promise. Again, all the benefits and blessings of the new covenant are the children of promise in Christ; of whom, in general, it is said, "Men shall be blest in him, and all nations shall call him blessed." Implantation and union unto Christ, the foundation of all spiritual blessings, is a child of promise, "They shall be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified," Isa. lxi. 3, compared with lxii. 21. This planting of the Lord is also a planting in the Lord, "Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation; surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength;" and again, "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory," Isa. xlv. 17, 34, 35. Hence justification is a child of promise, "In the Lord shall they be justified; By his knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many." Pardon is a child of promise, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." Sanctification is a child of promise, "I am the Lord that sanctifies you; I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes. Adoption is a child of promise: I will be a Father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord God Almighty," 2 Cor. vi. 12. Peace with God is a child of promise, "This man shall be the peace." Growth in grace and holiness is a child of promise, "I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon; his branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon." Recovery after falls is a child of promise, "I will heal their backslidings, and love them freely." Reverting after decays is a child of promise, "They that dwell under his shadow shall return, they shall revive as the corn; I am a green fig-tree, from me is thy fruit found." Renewed visits after desertion is a child of promise, "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercy will I gather thee; in a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee," Isa. liv. 7, 8. Continuation of divine favour amidst all changes is a child of promise, "I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and vowedst the vow. The mountains shall depart, and

the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed," Isaiah liv. 10. Even the mountains of myrrh and of sensible presence may depart, these of which you are apt to say, "My mountain stands strong, and I shall never be moved." Mountains of myrrh, and hills of frankincense; mountains of sensible enjoyments, and hills of sweet frames, may depart, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed. In a word, heaven, and eternal life, and victory over death, are all children of promise, "Death shall be swallowed up in victory, and so shall we be ever with the Lord." I might go through all the covenant of promise here, and tell you how every blessing of the covenant that can be named is a free-born child of promise. O see the freedom of the grace of the new covenant, and take fast hold of this grace, for it is your life!

4. Hence see the freedom of God's children from the law, and their security from the power of a covenant of works, because they are the children of promise. As to the precept of the law, they do not owe it a cup of cold water, as it is a covenant of works; Christ's obedience discharges them from that debt. As to the threatening of the law, they do not owe it a drop of warm blood; Christ's satisfaction discharges them from that debt; the person of the believer in Christ is so far from being liable to death, and hell, and everlasting wrath, whatever be his sins and infirmities that in their own nature deserve it, that he is not liable to the smallest stroke of vindictive wrath; that stroke hath gone by him, and lighted upon his Surety with a vengeance, and got all the satisfaction upon him that infinite justice can demand, "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ;" they are discharged from all the law-debt, and therefore, "Who will lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?"

5. Hence see the miserable state of all unbelievers; they are not actually children of promise; what then, O ye that are without Christ? Ye are the children of wrath by nature: the children of disobedience, by practice; the children of the devil; the children of the bond-woman, and not of the free; under bondage to the law, as a covenant of works; cursed children; bond-men and bond-women, in bondage, as Ishmael; under bondage to the mandatory part of the law in its utmost rigour, Gal. v. 3, being debtors to do the whole law: under bondage to the minatory part of the law, under the

curse thereof: for, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them," Gal. iii. 10. Why? "For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse," that is, as many as are under the command, are under the penalty and threatening also: and so you are exposed to everlasting wrath and indignation. Oh! know and be concerned about this sad state that you are under, who have never yet fled for refuge to the hope set before you: you are not yet as Isaac, the children of promise, and of the free-woman; but as Ishmael, the children of the bond-woman, and being under the bondage of the law, you are under the bondage of death, hell, and wrath; cursed in your basket and in your store; cursed in your soul and in your body; and, if you continue there, you are cursed in your life and in your death; cursed in time, and will be so through eternity. O! consider where you are, and how you shall escape the wrath you are under; otherwise woe to you for ever, as sure as God lives; for your name is ANATHEMA, MARANATHA, cursed here, and cursed at the coming of Christ. And, to provoke you to flee for refuge to this Jesus, and to take hold of a promise, consider the following inferences:—

6. Hence, from this doctrine, see the happy state of all believers in Christ; they are actually, as Isaac, the children of promise, and so they are the children of all the grace, all the glory promised in the new covenant; being the children of promise, they are the children of God, the children of light, the children of liberty, the children of the free-woman; free from the bondage, rigour, and malediction of the law; free from the guilt and power of sin; free from the sting and horror of death; free from the tyranny and dominion of the devil; free from the wrath and displeasure of God; free from hell and eternal damnation; free-born children, and heirs of the promise; children of the kingdom, in the strictest sense, that can never be cast out; for, it is their Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom, and to give them all the contents of the covenant of promise, whereof they are children, and whereof they have evidence by their being believers; that is, such as have, through grace, embraced the promise as their only security, having no hope or expectation from the law; no hope or expectation from themselves, or their own best endeavours, but all their hope and expectation from the promise of God in Christ, as revealed in the gospel freely and absolutely.

7. Hence see the duty of all gospel-hearers in general, namely,

to plead the gospel-promise, and lay hold upon it, that they may have evidence of their being the children of promise, and so be the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, Gal. iii. 26, "Let us therefore fear," says the apostle, Heb. iv. 1, "lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it;" for, though the gospel of promises be preached to us, yet the word preached does no profit, not being mixed with faith in them that hear it. We do not profit by the promise, if it be not believed or received by faith, with application to ourselves. It is true, faith itself is a child of the promise; and the mother must bring forth the child out of her prolific womb, before the child can have a breath in the gospel-air: and therefore do not dream of drawing faith out of your own bowels, or of believing in your own strength or power; for believing includes rather a renouncing of your own power and strength, and trusting in the Lord JEHOVAH, in whom there is everlasting strength: it is a laying hold of his strength, exhibit to you in a free promise. Neither is it a laying hold on his strength by your own strength: but even the poor feeble soul laying hold on his strength for grace to lay hold on his strength. If the promise were only the object of faith, on which faith depends; then, where shall we look for grace to depend upon it? But it being also the mother, or prolific womb, that brings it forth under the influence of heaven; then it is not only an embracing of the promise, but a drawing power from the promise to embrace the promise. Faith, in some respect, is the weakest thing in all the world, though it can do all things; why? it is weak in itself, but strong in the Lord: for faith's acting on a promise, speaks to this purpose, saying, "O JEHOVAH, thou knowest that I have no strength to make use of that word, that promise, no more than I can make a world: but, O there is the promise of the God of truth, who is also a God of power, able to give a being to his promise: therefore my heart says AMEN to that word; be it to me according to thy word; and even so I take it, through thy grace." Is that the way of your believing, man, woman? However weak in the degree of it, yet I will tell you, for your encouragement, that it is as good believing in the kind of it, as ever was in a believer in this world.

Now, I say, it is the duty of all that hear this gospel, to believe the gospel, by setting to their seal that God is true; and by receiving the record of God, that he hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. The law and the promise differ in this, that

the law cannot be satisfied but by doing, but the promise cannot be profitably received but by believing; and believing in contradistinction from doing, yea, in contradiction to it; for legal doing and work, into whatever evangelical shape the world may cast it, is the very reverse of believing. Expect not the promised mercies and blessings then, in a way of doing and working; for that is the law-way; but in a way of believing the promise. It is true, there may be abusers of the promise, and abusers that may say, "God be thanked, we have nothing ado for heaven but believe; and therefore we will live as we list in the pursuit of our lusts, and yet believe all will be well." What, man! believe, and yet resolve to live in your lusts and sins! You do not know what believing is in that case, otherwise you could not speak or think a thing so contradictory to common sense; so blasphemous to our holy Jesus, as if he that were the object of faith, were the minister of sin. To believe in Christ, beside what I have said, is to employ him as a Saviour to save you from sin; and, therefore, to say you will believe in Christ, and yet live in sin, is both nonsense and blasphemy. You may fancy you believe in such a case, but that sort of believing is not believing, but blaspheming; and it is not a saving, but a damning faith: and the object of that faith is not God's word, but the devil's delusion. The true and glorious object of genuine and saving faith, is CHRIST, as made of God to us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, and so for complete salvation from sin and wrath: and the immediate object, wherein this Christ is presented to us, is the promise. God, in the law, deals with sinners merely by commands and threatenings; and if that were all the dispensation we were under woe would be to us for ever! But God, in the gospel, strictly considered, deals with us sinners by promises; and therefore we are called to deal with him by believing in him, and rely on his word of grace, for all the salvation that we, as poor miserable sinners, stand in need of. The promise comes to sinners as sinners; and there would be no promise of mercy, if there were no sinners. The promise is God's letter from heaven, signed with the hand of Christ, and sealed with the blood of Christ; and if you be a sinner, the letter is backed for you, saying, "To you is the word of this salvation sent, that Jesus Christ came to save sinners." Your duty, then, O sinner, is to open the letter, read it, and apply it as all to you; and then bless God for such a dispensation of grace.

8. Hence see the duty of *every* believer in particular. If believers are the children of promise, then, as it is the duty of sinners to believe the promise, so it is the duty of believers to live by faith upon the promise: as children live upon their mother, and babes upon the breast, so ye that are the children of promise, live upon the promise, and suck the milk that is in the breast thereof; for it is your life, it is your food, it is your provision and maintenance, in every case, till you come to live at the fountain head in glory, where the promising God will be enjoyed for ever, as the performing God. This was Paul's life; "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I live is by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me," Gal. ii. 20. What is it to live by the faith of the Son of God; Why, it is even to live upon Christ, as held forth in a promise: for faith's immediate object is the word. To live upon Christ, abstract from the word, would be the life of vision and fruition, which only takes place in heaven; but to live on Christ by faith, is to live upon him in a word of grace, a gospel-promise; and seeing there are promises suited unto every case, therefore live upon the promise in every case. In case of darkness, live upon the promise of enlightening grace; "I will lead the blind in a way they know not, in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before thee, and crooked things straight." In case of deadness, live upon the promise of life and reviving grace; such as that, "I am the resurrection and the life; and, because I live ye shall live also." In case of desertion, live upon the promise of never leaving nor forsaking grace: such as that, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," Heb. xiii. 5. In the Greek it is, OΥ ΜΕ ΣΕ ΑΝΟ ΟΥΔ ΟΥ ΜΕ ΣΕ ΕΓΚΑΤΑΛΙΠΟ, that is, "I will never, never, never, never leave thee, nor forsake thee." In case of weakness, live upon the promise of strengthening grace; "My grace shall be sufficient for thee, and my strength shall be perfected in thy weakness." In case of desertion, live upon the promise of comforting grace; "I have seen his ways, and will heal him; I will also restore comforts to him, and to his mourners." In case of fainting and affliction, live upon the promise of supporting and upholding grace; such as that, "Fear not, for I am with thee: be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." In case of temptation, live upon the promise of devil conquering grace; "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your

feet shortly." In case of the power and prevalency of sin, look to the promise of sin-conquering grace ; " Sin shall not have dominion over you ; for you are not under the law, but under grace." In case of the fear of death, look to the promise of death-conquering grace : " O death, I will be thy plagues ; O grave I will be thy destruction." In whatever case you are, look to, and live upon the promise. And seeing you are called to glorify God before the world, by obeying him in your life, as well as to glorify him by believing him with your heart ; therefore see that your faith be a working faith, Faith working by love ; this will evidence to the world, and to yourself also, that your faith is unfeigned. If a man would have an evidence that the sun is just risen within our hemisphere, though it be not within his view as yet, he will see it better, as I noticed on another occasion, by looking west, than by looking east : for, before he can see the body of the sun, he may see the light of it shining upon some high tower or mountain : and so by looking west, he will see the sun is risen, or rising in the east ; so, when the world would have an evidence of your being a believer, they will not look to your faith, but to your works, and the rays and beams that flow from faith ; and to look towards your works, is to look a way quite contrary to your faith : for, as faith and works are contrary in the matter of justification, so faith renounces all works in point of dependence, though it produces them in point of performance. Therefore, seeing the world will not look to your heart, which they cannot see, but to your life ; and will not look to your faith, which God only sees, but to your works which the world may see ; O take care that it be a working faith : " Shew me thy faith by thy works." And if you would have faith work to good purpose, see that faith be fixed upon Christ in the promise, wherein he engages to work in you both to will and to do, otherwise the fruits of your faith will be very unconstant and uneven ; for faith hath two feet, as I observed elsewhere, the one a fixed, and the other a running foot ; like the feet of a pair of compasses, the one is fixed in the centre, and the other turns about to make the circle ; but if the foot that is in the centre do not remain fixed, but waver hither and thither, then the other foot will make a very uneven and excentrical motion. So it is here, one foot of faith is fixed upon Christ the centre, and the other runs a course of holy, spiritual gospel-obedience ; but if that foot that should be kept fixed upon

Christ and the promise, shall waver hither and thither, then your motion will be very uneven in obedience. Therefore, as you would glorify God your heavenly Father, O look to him for grace to live by faith on the promise, and so evidence yourselves to be the children of promise.¹

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper is a seal either of a curse or of a blessing : either of a threatening or a promise : to the unbeliever it seals a curse and a threatening : "He that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation [or Judgment] to himself." To the believer it seals a blessing and a promise, being the seal of the covenant of promise. This is the very tenor of the institution, "This cup is the new testament in my blood : " it is the new covenant, and all the promises thereof sealed and ratified by the blood of Christ ; therefore these that have right to it are the children of promise : consequently the text is fitted for the day.

Among the manifold characters given to the children of God in scripture, here is one of the most sweet and significant, that they are the children of promise. It is a great privilege and dignity to be a child of promise ; for such a relation to the promise will argue a near relation to Christ ; Christ is the nearest relation to the promise : it is Yea and Amen in him ; Yea in point of affirmation, and Amen in point of confirmation. All the promises are affirmed and confirmed by him ; affirmed by his word, and confirmed by his blood : and so, to be a child of promise, is to be Christ's near relation ; Christ himself is the first-born child of the promise, and next to him are all believers the children of promise.

Having formerly discoursed the doctrinal part of the subject, we entered upon the application, and deduced eight inferences for information ; I come now to offer some further lessons from this doctrine, by way of information.

1. Hence see the nature of faith. If all believers, as believers, are the children of promise, then faith itself is a child of promise, as well as all the rest of the graces, blessings, benefits, and privileges, in time and through eternity, that believers shall and do enjoy ; they are all children of promise, or promised mercies. Particularly, faith is a child of promise in two respects ; the one is breeding, and

(1) The following Sermon, which is the Third on this text, was preached at Portmoak, on Monday, July 17th, 1726, after the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.—The two first paragraphs are introductory.

the other is feeding: the promise is the womb that breeds faith, and the promise is the breast that feeds it. Faith is first brought forth out of the womb of the promise, it is begotten by the word of truth, James i. 18, "Of his own will begat he us," thereby. Indeed, the faith of God's elect is the faith of God's operation; and God works it by the means of the word; "Faith comes by hearing." While the power of the Spirit of faith comes along with the doctrine of grace, then the womb of the promise is impregnated with almighty efficacy, and comes to its full time of bringing forth the grace of faith in the heart; and then faith, when it is brought forth, or cast out of the promise into the heart of the sinner, he becomes a believer; and when that child that is called Faith is born, how does it actually exert itself? Why, being a daughter of the promise, she sucks her mother's breast by embracing the promise; as a child embracing the parent that bore her, and cleaving close to her breast, and according to the measure of its strength, drawing in and applying to itself the milk. The metaphor agrees here with respect to the application and appropriation that is in the nature of faith; only the child's taking the breast is a natural act of the body, but faith's taking the promise is the spiritual act of the soul, and particularly of the understanding, for to embrace the promise is to believe it, to believe it is to give a cordial assent thereunto, with particular application. It is a taking God's word as a sufficient security to me for life and salvation. Therefore, if any ask whether assurance be in the nature of faith, I would ask how the particular faith of a promise can be without assurance in the nature of it. To believe is to take the promise to yourself; and to take the promise to yourself is to believe, or be sure of it with respect to yourself. If one promise some good thing to you, what do you when you take his word, or take his promise? If you be not assured and persuaded of it with respect to yourself, then you do not take it: but if you take it, then, upon the fidelity of the promiser, you are assured and persuaded of it with respect to yourself; even so it is here, faith is a taking God's word, a resting on God's promise, and trusting to the fidelity of the Promiser, Romans iv. 20, 21. It is the nature of unbelief to stagger at the promise: and, indeed, the believer may have many doubtings and staggerings, because he hath much unbelief; and the most part of believers, in our day, are unbelieving believers, staggering believers; but it is not faith that staggers, it is unbelief. The question is, What he does when he believes? Why, it is the

nature of faith to be persuaded of the promise, and to take God at his word ; and it is by the virtue and power of the promise, to believe the truth and accomplishment of the promise, saying, "Faithful is he that hath promised, who also will do it."

2. Hence see the difference betwixt faith and spiritual sense ; or the assurance of faith, and the assurance of sense. Faith is a taking possession of the promise, but sense is a begun possession of the thing promised ; faith is a believing the promise, sense is an enjoying what is promised ; faith is a taking of his word, sense is a feeling of his work in conformity to his word. The assurance that is ordinarily so called is not faith at all, but sense ; for it is not grounded upon God's word without, but upon his work within : it is the fruit and effect of faith, and not in the direct act of it ; it is the man's reflecting upon his faith, and other graces, and seeing, in the light of the Spirit of God, that he hath faith : faith lives upon the promise, sense lives upon the performance of the promise : by faith the believer credits the truth of the promise, by sense he tastes the sweetness of it : the assurance of faith says, I am sure, because God says it ; and the assurance of sense says, I am sure, because I feel it. To rid marches thus distinctly betwixt these two would be of great use : for, when you hear one assert that there can be no faith without assurance, why, it is true, when it is meant of the assurance of faith. If another assert that there may be faith where there is no assurance, why, that is true also, if he speak of the assurance of sense. But if this distinction be not observed, then a man cannot but speak confusedly on this head ; nor can he reconcile himself either with the doctrine of the word, or the doctrine of our Reformers, and the doctrine of our received Standards, which we are solemnly bound to maintain. But, by stating the matter fairly, we will be in case to show the consistency betwixt our faith, and the faith of our believing forefathers, who placed assurance in the nature of it ; and also the consistency betwixt our older and latter Standards, which differ not at all in this matter, when it is distinctly explained.

3. Hence see the difference betwixt faith and hope, with relation to the promise, whereof believers are the children. Why, faith respects the promise itself, and hope respects the thing promised : faith respects the truth of the promise, hope respects the good of the promise ; like a king sending his messenger to acquaint his favourite that he is to come to his house ; the favourite receives the messen-

ger, and then goes out to meet the prince: so faith receives the messenger, the promise: and then hope goes out to meet the King, and wait for the thing promised. The object of faith, then, is the truth of God, for it looks to the word of promise; the object of hope is the goodness of God, it looks out towards the good thing promised.

4. Hence see the difference betwixt the law and the gospel. See here how they differ in their nature: the law is the precept, and the gospel a promise: hence the law and the promise are set in opposition to each other, Gal. iii. 18 21, "For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise. Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid." The gospel is not a new law, otherwise it would be a new covenant of works; if there were new commands in it, that were not imported in the law, either directly or indirectly, then these new commands behoved to have a new righteousness answering them, in order to our justification, besides the righteousness of Christ; and so we would need another righteousness to justify us, than Christ's righteousness fulfilling the law in our room.

QUEST, What say you? Is not faith and repentance new gospel commands that were not in the law?

ANSW. They may be called gospel commands, as they are brought in to the gospel dispensation; but, strictly as commands, they belong to the law. Faith and repentance, and the like, may be considered three ways, 1. As they are conditions. 2. As they are duties. 3. As they are graces.

(1.) As they are conditions; I mean made so by men, they belong to the covenant of works, which is the conditional covenant; and though the covenant of works required nothing less than perfection as its condition nor accepts of repentance, yet men make a new covenant of works to themselves, when they make faith and repentance the conditions of life. Now, as conditions, we have nothing ado with them; for the only condition of our eternal life is Christ's obedience unto death.

(2.) Consider them as duties, and thus they belong to the moral law in the hand of Christ, and the general dispensation of the gospel: or to the gospel largely taken, which comprehends all the duties of the moral law: and, in this sense, we are still under obligation to do these duties; for Christ came not under the law as a rule, to dissolve our obligation to obedience to it, as a rule; though he came

under the law as a covenant, to dissolve our obligation to obedience to it, as a condition of life.

(3.) If you consider them as graces, then they belong to the gospel strictly so called ; for they are both promises thereof, even as all grace and glory is promised therein. Now it is necessary that we consider the gospel strictly taken as a promise, even as the scripture calls it, that so we may not confound the law and the promise together, and so confound the old and new covenant, namely, the covenant of works and grace. Thus the apostle, Rom. xi. 6, "And if by grace, then is it no more of works ; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace, otherwise work is no more work." The law and the promise cannot be mixed together, no more than fire and water ; the law joined with the free promise, disannuls that promise : "If life come by the law, then it comes not by the promise ;" says Paul, Rom. iv. 14, "If they which are of the law be heirs, then the promise is of none effect." The law promises life upon condition of our doing ; the gospel promises life only upon the condition of Christ's doing.

QUEST. Does not the gospel promise life upon condition of our faith ?

ANSW. As faith is the free gift of God, as well as eternal life, so it is to be considered, not as a work done by us, but as an instrument to receive the promise, and the things promised ; and true faith never looked upon itself as a proper condition, but disclaimed itself always, and took on with Christ for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, and all. The difference betwixt the law and the gospel must be kept as a treasure, for it is the ground of many other gospel truths ; and ignorance of this point, hath been the decay of religion in all ages of the church. When faith and works, in the matter of justification, are confounded, gospel-holiness and sanctification itself is marred ; because no holiness comes by the law, but by grace. Therefore the gospel considers not faith in itself as a work ; for it does not cause, effect, or procure our salvation or justification, but, as the beggar's hand, it receives them, being wholly wrought and given of God. Hence, the law, being a word of precept to be done, the gospel, a word of promise to be believed ; believing and doing, faith and works, are, by the apostle, set in direct opposition to each other ; and the mistaking of this distinction betwixt the law and the gospel, hath been the ruin of the gospel. "Men dangerously fail," says Luther, "if they do not

heedfully distinguish betwixt the voice of the law, and the voice of the gospel, in this essential difference, that the law only teaches what we ought to do, but the gospel teaches what we ought to receive."

5. Hence see the difference betwixt the law and gospel, not only in their nature, but in their effects. Why, the law is a killing letter; the ministration of death and condemnation, 2 Cor. iii. 6, 7. But the gospel is the ministration of the Spirit, and life, and righteousness, ver. 8, 9. It is the gospel-promise that is the prolific womb for bringing forth children to God; therefore they are called the children of promise. Here law and gospel differ as much as life and death. Since the law was broken, it was never able to quicken the soul, or to bring it from death to life; nay, it is weak through the flesh, Rom. viii. 3. The law may convince and awaken, but it cannot convert and quicken; God hath reserved that honour for the gospel-promise, to beget children to him, because it is the channel in which the Spirit runs, Gal. iii. 2. Hence, take a man who understands the gospel, and let the law come home upon him with a thousand precepts, and a thousand moral arguments to back them; yet all its urging is good for nothing, but to make him dead and stupid, till once the promise be presented, by the Spirit of God, and then life comes in, and the soul is quickened. Why? Because then relief is presented, and so his heart and hope rise out of the depth in which they were sunk.

6. Hence also see the difference betwixt these things that may be called legal, and these that are evangelical; such as,

(1.) Here you may see the difference betwixt a gospel and a legal hypocrite. Why? the gospel-hypocrite is indeed all for the promise, but he is an abuser thereof, and a mangler of the promise; he is not for the whole promise; he hugs the promise of indemnity, but he hates the promise of sanctity; he takes the promise of pardon, but he rejects the promise of purity; he likes the promise of happiness, but dislikes the promise of holiness; and so he is an injurer and mangler of the gospel, and of the promise. On the other hand, the legal hypocrite, he is all for the law; but he is an unaccountable abuser and mangler of the law; instead of satisfying the law, by the perfect obedience of Christ, he thinks to satisfy the law by his own imperfect, silly, trifling duties. Paul calls all his own righteousness dung; and what better is your obedience, man? and think you to satisfy God's holy law with a piece of dung? Oh'

what an affront does that man cast upon the law, who does not come to Christ for righteousness! Nay, say you, It is my obedience and Christ's together, by which I hope to satisfy the law. Nay, but man, if you think to be justified by the law, in part or in whole, to the neglect of the free promise of life and justification through Christ only, the apostle tells you, that Christ is of no effect to you, and that, if you will pay any of the debt to the law, you must pay all, and art a debtor to do the whole law, Gal. v. 2, 3, 4. Besides, as the law requires a perfect, so it requires a personal obedience; that is, the obedience of one person only; you must not think to join the obedience of two persons, to make up one perfect obedience; for, in that case, the obedience both of the one and of the other is imperfect, and so not conform to the law, therefore it cannot be accepted for righteousness; but the soul that has it must die, because it is a sinful soul, Ezek. xviii. 4.

(2.) Here you may see the difference betwixt a legal and a gospel believer. There may be some true believers that are more legal than others that are more evangelical; the gospel-believer deals most with promises, in a way of believing, and living by faith; and hence he is the most holy, the most joyful, and the most cheerful Christian; whereas the legal believer, though, so far as he is a believer, he is not under the law: yet through unbelief, he keeps himself much under it, and deals more with the precept than with the promise: hence, upon every shortcoming and defect in his obedience, he is discouraged and heartless, and filled with doubts and fears. Some people are like these the apostle speaks of, Gal. iv. 21, that desire to be under the law.

QUEST. When may a person, even a believer, *desire* to be under the law?

ANSW. When, according to the legal temper in them, they incline to ground their acceptance with God upon their own duties and performances, instead of grounding it upon Christ's obedience, and more upon grace within inherent, than upon the imputed righteousness of Christ. Also, when he is more influenced in obedience by the terror of the law, and the curse thereof, than by the allurements of grace in the free promise; and when there is a looking for what is promised only in a conditional way, then there is a keeping up of the old covenant, which did run upon a conditional promise, Do so and so, and live. When they have been helped to duty, and think the Lord engaged to give out mercy upon their performing thereof;

when they look for nothing but upon their performing of some condition, like these, Isa. lviii. 3, "Wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge?" And when their hope of mercy rises and falls with their own performances rather than by the rule of free grace and faithfulness of God, then is a man a legal believer with a witness, if he can be called a believer at all. Little wonder than he be a staggering one. Happy is the believer that is more enlightened in the mystery of the gospel! Surely he is more in case to glorify God.

(3.) Here you may see the difference between a legal and a gospel-strain of doctrine. Why, the legal strain sets forth God more especially as a commanding and a threatening God; the gospel-strain sets him forth more especially as a promising God; the legal strain makes God, as it were, nothing but a commander; but the gospel exhibits him as a promiser. Why, the law is God in a command; but the gospel is God in a promise, God in Christ. The legal strain humours the natural pride of man, as if life were to be sought, as it were, by the works of the law; but the gospel-strain humbles the pride of man, while it shews life to be had only by the free promise. Hence the gospel is such a strange thing to carnal reason, learning cannot reach it: worldly wisdom is offended at it: nature is astonished at it; what! life and salvation for nothing! life and salvation in a free promise! This gospel is foolishness to the world; it is hard to believe it: why, the world cannot think that God will give salvation at such a low rate. In a word, the legal strain gives men more to do for salvation, than they are able to do; the gospel-strain gives men less ado for salvation than they are willing to do; for no man is willing to be saved by absolutely free grace, till God make them willing in a day of power. A legal strain speaks as if all depended upon our obeying a command; a gospel-strain speaks on the contrary, as if all depended upon God's fulfilling of a promise. As the law gives man all the work, and the gospel gives grace all the work, that it may get all the glory; so the legal strain leads a man to himself, the gospel-strain leads a man out of himself to Christ for all. Hence also the legal strain genders unto fear and bondage; but the gospel-strain to hope and liberty.

(4.) Here you may see the difference betwixt legal and gospel-repentance, and betwixt legal and gospel-obedience. Repentance is a fruit of faith, whatever kind it be of; legal repentance is influ-

enced by the faith of the law, and its threatenings ; hence it hath a mixture of dreadful horror and terror in it ; gospel-repentance is influenced by the faith of the gospel and its promises ; hence it hath a mixture of joy and gladness, the man reads the promise of pardon with tears of joy. To speak of gospel-repentance before faith, is a strange dream. No gospel-repentance can take place till faith apprehend the mercy of God in Christ through the glass of a gospel-promise. Again, for obedience : legal obedience is influenced by the legal hope of heaven, or the slavish fear of hell, according to the tenor of the law, “ Do and live ;” or, “ If not, thou shalt die ;” but gospel-obedience is influenced by the faith of God’s free love and favour in Christ, manifested in the promise. Thus this doctrine shews us the difference betwixt legal and evangelical matters.

7. Hence see the difference betwixt believers and unbelievers. Believers of the promise are the children of the promise ; and they are distinguished from others that pretend to faith, even by their faith. Believers credit the promise, and apply what they believe to themselves ; the wicked may believe like the devil, that knows all to be true, but cannot apply. The faith of many is like the gadding hen, that carries her eggs to another, but never lays them at home ; so they believe that others shall be saved but not themselves ; they believe the promise with reference to others, but not with reference to themselves. How believers and unbelievers differ in point of quality and disposition, may appear afterwards, in the use of examination ; but how they differ in point of privilege, the text and doctrine declare to us ; particularly they are free-born children of the promise ; children of the free-woman, as the context says ; whereas unbelievers are the children of the bond-woman ; that is, believers are freed from the law as a covenant of works, and unbelievers are in bondage to it ; and being in bondage to the law, they are in bondage to their lusts, Rom. vi. 12. It is only the privilege of the believer, that however sin may domineer some time, yet, “ Sin shall not have dominion over him, because he is not under the law, but under grace ;” but, on the contrary, it is the misery of the wicked and unbelievers, that sin must have dominion over them, because they are not under grace, but under the law. And the law hath no promise of sanctity to the sinner ; the law that he is under, curses and condemns him to hell for his sin, but cannot save him from sin or hell either. But believers are free from the law, as a covenant of works, and consequently free from the guilt and power

of sin both, being not under the law, but under grace ; grace makes him free ; justifying grace frees from the guilt, and sanctifying grace from the power of sin. Hence, does the doctrine of the believer's freedom from the law, as a covenant, open a door to him for looseness and licentiousness ? Oh ! gross ignorance ! It is the only thing that liberates him from sin, according to the apostle's experience, " I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. Do we then make void the law, through faith ? God forbid ; nay, we establish the law."

8. Hence see the difference betwixt the security of the covenant of works, and the security of the covenant of grace, with reference to eternal life ; the former depended upon a promise made to man's changeable righteousness, and so it failed ; the latter depends upon a promise made in Christ Jesus, upon his everlasting righteousness ; and now the believer's title to eternal life stands upon the sure bottom of Christ's perfect obedience to the precept of the law, not upon the sandy foundation of any personal obedience of his own ; and as his security for eternal life stands upon Christ's obedience to the precepts of the law, so his security from eternal death stands upon Christ's satisfaction given to the threatening of the law ; he cannot any more be under the threatening of eternal death, because he is a child of promise. How false is it then to assert, That believers, by their new sins, become liable to death and hell. Their sins deserve hell, but they can never be liable to it, so long as they are children of a promise, ratified by the oath of God, and the blood of Christ ; God hath other ways of correcting his children, than by casting them out of his family, or turning them off from being children of promise to be children of wrath again, as they were by nature ; nay, as they cannot again incur the forfeiture of eternal life, because Christ's active obedience does confirm the promise of life to them ; so they cannot incur a liableness to eternal death, because Christ's passive obedience and suffering to death, hath confirmed the promise of their freedom from it : " There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them that are in Christ ;" and to make them liable to it, were to invalidate both the virtue of Christ's death, and the truth of God's promise at once. We are so far from being ashamed or afraid to preach these truths, sirs, however opposed by some, that we look upon them as a most sacred treasure, worthy to be contended for, were it even unto blood.

9. Hence see where it is that both the hope of a sinner, and

the portion of a saint, doth lie ; namely, in the free promise of God in Christ, whereof believers are the children I said, both the hope of a sinner, and treasure of a saint, lie in the promise ; that is in the mercy of God in Christ, that gives forth the promise unto sinners ; and the truth of God in Christ, that is engaged to make out the promise to the saints or believers ; therefore, the giving a promise is called mercy ; and the accomplishing truth. Micah vii. 20, "Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham." It is MERCY to Abraham, because God glorified his mercy in giving the promise to him ; and TRUTH to Jacob, because God glorified his faithfulness, which was now concerned to make out the promise which he had made ; and it teaches us this, that the hope of a sinner lies nowhere but in the promise which God as a merciful God in Christ, gives forth to him, to be received and applied by him ; and that the treasure of a saint lies nowhere but in the promise, which God, as a true and faithful God in Christ, is concerned to accomplish to him, as being actually a child of promise.

O then, sinner, see a door of hope open to you ; that very promise, which is the saint's treasure, comprehending God, and Christ, and the Spirit, and grace, and glory ; that very promise is presented to you, in this gospel, by a merciful God in Christ, that you may take it for your treasure, even all the unsearchable riches of Christ. It is not your own peculiar treasure indeed, till, through grace, you take it for your own ; but, be who you will, you are as welcome to take it for your own, as the offer of the gospel, and the command of the God of heaven can make you. I speak even to you, O graceless, Christless, and hitherto impenitent and unbelieving sinner ! you have as good a right to come and take the promise, and Christ in it, as ever a believer had the day or hour before he believed. It is true none will come, unless the Lord draw them by his powerful grace ; yet the foundation of God stands sure, and the Lord knows them that are his, and whom he hath a mind to draw. But since he draws by such means as these, namely, the gospel-offer, and universal call to all sinners to whom the gospel comes ; and hence hath ordered us to preach the gospel to every creature, that he may take whom he hath a mind, and leave the rest inexcusable in their wilful enmity, to show how justly he will proceed against them in judgment ; and since he hath a mind to glorify his mercy on the vessels of mercy, therefore, like a merciful God, he holds forth himself as a promising God, opening his treasures to you in free promises ; and

he hath put his treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of man. What are poor ministers sent here for, but as earthen vessels presenting to you all the divine treasures in the gospel-promise? Whether you will take the treasure or not, yet be it known to you, O sinner, that there is no other door of hope, no other ground of hope to you, with reference to eternal life and salvation, but this promise of life in Christ Jesus, which the mercy of God is holding out to you, as a treasure to enrich you to eternity, and holding out to you in the like of me his earthen vessel, that is now presenting it to you in God's name.

O miserable sinner, that hath lost God, and all good by the loss of him, here is a treasure for you to come to, in that promise, "I will be thy God." O bewildered sinner, that hath lost your way to God, and knows not where to find him, here is a treasure for you in that promise, "I will lead the blind in a way they know not;" that is in Christ, who says, "I am the way." O stupid, ignorant sinner, that cannot see this way, nor know Christ, unless you have a guide and instructor, here is a treasure for you, in that promise that Christ hath made of his Spirit, "I will send the Comforter, and he shall testify of me; he shall convince the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shew it unto you." O guilty sinner, whose sins are of a scarlet colour, and of a deep dye, there is a treasure of pardoning mercy held out to you, in that promise, "Come and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool: I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions." O filthy, filthy sinner, whose heart is nothing but a nest of unclean devils, and whose life hath been nothing but a mass of unclean practices, here is a treasure of purifying mercy; if you will not wilfully reject it, you may have it for the taking, in that free promise, "There shall be a fountain open for the house of David, and inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness" both: that is, not only for sin and guilt, but for pollution and defilement: the fountain that is open to you, is just the fountain of the blood of the Lamb, the blood of Christ, that cleanses from all sin. O prodigious sinner, whose sins are of such a nature, that may be you are thinking God cannot be calling me by that offer of grace; for there are some secret abo-

minations about me that are about none of the world ; there is something horrid, something monstrous, that none but God and my conscience knows of, and that would make the hair of a man's head to stand to hear tell of it ; and if it were known what I am, I would be a disgrace to all living, I would be the reproach of men, and the sport of devils ; I think my neighbours would either stone me to death, or cause burn me alive, if they knew what I were : even to you, man, I say, there is a treasure of welcoming mercy for you, held out in the offer and promise of the gospel : " Whosoever will, let him come ; and him that comes I will in no wise cast out ; " that is, I will by no means cast out, I will on no account cast him out, and for no fault, or folly, or blasphemy that ever he was guilty of will I cast him out. If you welcome the grace that is welcoming you, you shall find, in the Lord's time, that you shall be made as kindly welcome as ever a sinner was since Adam's fall, and as ever any sinners were that are now glorified saints. Again, O plentiful sinner ; I mean, whose sins are more numerous and plentiful than the piles of grass upon the ground ; here is a treasure of plentiful mercy for you in that promise, " With the Lord there is mercy, and with him there is plentiful redemption ; " therefore will he redeem Israel from all his iniquity. His mercies are more plentiful than drops in the ocean, the cloud of mercy breaks in plentiful showers. O hard-hearted sinner, that cannot be wrought upon by the grace and kindness of God manifested in the gospel, here is a treasure of heart-melting grace presented to you in the promise, " I will take away the heart of stone ; " and again, " Hearken to me, ye stout-hearted and far from righteousness, I bring near my righteousness, and my salvation shall not tarry. " O rebellious sinner, whose heart and nature is nothing but a hoard of rebellion and enmity against God and Christ, here is a treasure of conquering grace for you, held out in the promise, " He hath ascended up on high, and led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that God the Lord might dwell among them : " he hath received the spirit above measure, and it is for rebels, such as you and I are by nature. O let your heart clasp about the promise, take hold of it, and take him at his word. O cursed sinner ; cursed in the first Adam, and for ever under the curse of God, if you die without taking hold of the promise ; here is a treasure of blessings, spiritual and eternal blessings, held out to you in the promise, saying, " In him shall all nations of the earth be blessed ; men shall be blest in him, and all nations shall call him blessed. "

Christ is here knocking at the door of your hearts : O can you find in your hearts to hold him out, and his blessing too? or will you let him in with a hearty AMEN to the word of promise, saying, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus;" and, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord?" Are you a powerless sinner, that finds you cannot take what God is offering you? Here is a treasure of strengthening grace laid to your hand in the promise, "He gives power to the faint; and to him that hath no might he increaseth strength: Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." There is power promised, and there would be hope in Israel concerning you, if, under a sense of your own weakness, you were crying, O for power, divine power, to enable me to apply the promise! Faith is never acted in the sense of strength, but in the sense of weakness; faith never hath any language like this, Lo, now I have power, now I have strength in myself: and therefore, in the strength that I have received, I will do so and so: no, that is never faith's way of speaking, but it says, Oh! I have no power, no strength in myself, nor ever had; therefore I will go quite out of myself, saying, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength," according to the promise, "Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." Are you a witless sinner, perhaps, fearing that you mismanage in the way of believing and applying of the promise? Here is a treasure of conducting and instructing grace for you to take hold of in the promise, "They shall be all taught of God; every man therefore that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me," John vi. 45. Christ, who is the sum total of the treasure held forth to you in the promise, is both the power of God and the wisdom of God, and "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Treasures of instruction are laid to your hand in the promise, and if you take God's word of promise for it, as it is yours in the offer to warrant your taking it, so it shall be yours in possession. All the treasures you need to enrich you, O poor sinner, are hid in the field of the gospel-promise; yea, it is God's treasure house, and the door is open, that you may go in and take what promise soever you need; and if you come in and take you are a child of promise, as well as the best.

Say not, I am a sinner, and I must stay till I turn from sin, before I venture to meddle with a promise: indeed, if you think you can turn from sin, before you come to Christ to turn you, you do not know the power of sin, nor the office of Christ as a Saviour

to save from sin. Beware of ignorant misinterpretations of scripture texts concerning turning to the Lord; for example, that text, Isa. lix. 20, "The Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, says the Lord." I own, sirs, I have sometimes been kept in bondage by such scriptures as that, while misunderstood; and, perhaps, some mistake them the same way, saying, O there is no benefit to be expected from Christ, till I turn from my transgressions; and yet I can no more turn aright from sin than I can turn the sun in the firmament that is going west, and make it turn back and go east. And what shall I do? Indeed, sirs, if I were of their opinion that make gospel-repentance, and turning from sin to be before faith, I could preach no relief to you in that case; but I know and believe otherwise from God's word: therefore I only desire you to remember to take that text, and such like, in the gospel-sense of it. Why, say you, what is the gospel-sense of it? Indeed, I shall not gloss it to you out of my own head, for then you needed little regard it; but see the gospel gloss that the apostle, or rather the Spirit of God, gives it, Rom. xi. 26, "There shall come out of Zion the deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." Why, then the meaning of the prophet's words, "He will come to them that turn," is this, he will come and turn them, and turn away ungodliness from them. O sinner, how like you that gloss? Is there not a door of hope open here? Cannot the Lord Jesus, by virtue of his office, turn you, and according to his promise, which you are called to plead, saying, "Lord, turn me, and I shall be turned?" This is his covenant, his promise, that he will turn sinners, Rom. xi. 27, "For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sin." Why, then, for the Lord's sake, do not think, poor brat of old Adam by nature, without strength, able to do nothing; do not think to take Christ's work out of his hand. Expect not salvation from him under the notion of saints, but of sinners: he will not save you upon any other terms, but as you are a sinner and he a Saviour. The promise comes to you as a sinner; and Christ in the promise comes to you as sinners; and there would be no need of such a person as Christ if there were no sinners: there would be no need of any of his saving offices. If there were no blind sinners, there would be no need of Christ as a Prophet; if there were no sinners, there would be no need of Christ as a Priest; if there were no bound and enslaved sinners, under captivity to the devil and lusts, there would

be no need of Christ as a King. He hath no office as Redeemer but what concerns sinners, and he would get no glory as a Saviour if there were no sinners; therefore sinners, as sinners, and nothing but sinners, are the only persons that God calls to come to Christ in the promise. In all the world I know no use you have for Christ if you have no sin to be pardoned, no lusts to be conquered, no plagues to be healed, no hard heart to be softened, no broken bones to be helped, no dead and dry bones to be quickened, no devil to be cast out of you, no unbelief, atheism, enmity, stupidity, carnality, or any such like diseases, to be cured. If there were nothing ad to this purpose among sinners, why, then, Christ, and the gospel, and the promise, would be the most useless things in all the world.

Therefore, O my dear fellow-creatures, he that enjoins me to preach the gospel to every creature, even that gospel that Jesus Christ came to save sinners, commands me to warn you that you stand not at a distance from Christ because you are sinners; but rather come to Christ because you are sinners, and the more work of this nature you have for Christ, the more glory will he get in saving you. He looks on it at his honour to save sinners: and of all the sins that ever you was guilty of, here is the greatest, if you will not let Christ have the credit of saving you according to the gospel-promise.

But should I not be so humbled and convinced before I come to Christ as held out to me in the gospel-promise, and before I apply the promise to myself? Why, man, if you have been so far humbled as to see that Christ would be of any use to you, and that you would be the better of him if you had him, then, for the Lord's sake, stay not away from Christ, waiting for other sort of preparation, for otherwise the law will get such hold of you by the way, that it will not suffer you to apply the promise at all. The law says you must have this and that qualification before you come to Christ, or apply the promise; and if they were obtained, it will say, Stand back yet, for you are a sinner, and must have perfection before you come; and so there will be no end of it. Never will you come to Christ at all if you will hear nothing but the voice of the law, and the legal bias, and the legal conscience that is by nature within you, but the voice of the gospel is, Whosoever will, let him come; be what you will, come; whatever qualification you want, it is lying within the bosom of

the promise ; therefore come and take freely, without fear of presuming.

Indeed, man, if you come to Christ, or the promise, with any conditions or qualifications, and fancy that you must do so, it is presumption, and not faith ; you are presuming to deal with God in the old conditional way of the covenant of works, and so you will make no hand of it, and have no success ; but if you come to Christ as held out in the promise in order to get all, and all freely, and all for nothing, except it be for God's own name's sake, and for his Christ's sake ; then you may come boldly, there is no fear of presuming. This the law says, Give, and give all, even to perfection ; the gospel says, Take all, for you have nothing to give : and since God is here dealing with you by the gospel, and not by the law, it is presumption for you to pretend to come and give, when God is saying, Come and take.

The legal heart, and the legal strain of doctrine, would make it presumption for you to come to Christ, or apply the promise, without some good qualification before-hand ; but I will tell you, in God's name, that it is not only impossible for you to bring, but presumptuous for you to pretend to bring any good qualification with you. It is nothing but a proud treating with God upon the old covenant footing, and that even when God is treating with you, as a promising God upon the ground of the free, absolute, unconditional promise of the new covenant, whereof Christ hath fulfilled the condition by his death, to God's full satisfaction. If ever the second Adam find you, it will be where the first Adam left you ; that is, plunged into the gulf of a sinful, miserable, guilty, and condemned state, destitute of all good qualifications, except hell and enmity, death and confusion, can be so called ; and it is just in these doleful circumstances, that you are called to come, and embrace the gospel promise, for your complete relief. Hence, whenever the Spirit of faith is sent, it makes the man come under the notion of a lost sinner to a Saviour, and as a bankrupt to a surety ; and as a filthy vessel, empty of all good, to an immense ocean of all fulness, where all good is to be had.

Now, I have insisted the longer upon this, because it is of the greatest concernment to all Christless sinners, to all sorts of sinners that hear the gospel, to know what door of hope there is for them to enter in at ; and that is, Christ presented to you in the promise, to be received and applied by you. I know no other door ; and if you

do not think yourself concerned in this matter, poor sinner, know that the day is coming, when judgment and eternity will stare you in t' e face, and it may be sooner than you are aware of, when you shall find no relief for you under heaven, if you have never treated with God in Christ as held out in the gospel-promise. If you find not God clothed with a promise, a gracious promise in Christ, you will find him arrayed in a terrible threatening; yea, if you meet not with God in a promise, you will meet him in a flame of fire and vengeance. God in a promise, is God as a Redeemer, a God in Christ, a Father, a friend, all love and mercy: but God out of a promise, is God out of Christ, a consuming fire, according to the tenor of the violated covenant of works, commanding, threatening, judging, condemning, and avenging himself upon his enemies; there is no hope then, but through the promise; and if, by virtue of the promise, you were begotten again to a new and lively hope, then you would be with Isaac, the children of promise.

But now, as hence we see where the hope of a sinner lies, so hence you see where the portion of the saint lies. By the saints, I mean, they who, though they still look upon themselves as sinners, and nothing but sinners in themselves, yet have fled out of themselves to Christ as held forth in the gospel-promise, and who are brought forth from the prolific womb of the promise, like Isaac, and by the generative virtue thereof are begotten again to a lively hope, and so are actually children of promise. Your portion lies in the promise; for God and Christ, and the Spirit, and all things else, are conveyed to you by promise; and it is secure enough; it is God's bond of provision for you, in time and through eternity; hence the children of promise only are the heirs, Gal. iv. 30, Rom. iv. 13, 14. As Isaac was the heir, so are believers heirs of all the promises; having not only a right of access thereto, as other sinners have, this being a door of hope to them, as I was saying; but also a right of possession, as children begotten by the word of truth, born and bred up by the side of the promise, insomuch that now the promise is their portion, their inheritance, their bond of provision, till they come to the full possession of all the inheritance therein secured to them by the word and oath of God, the two immutable things, by which it is impossible for God to lie, that they may have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to the hope set before them, Heb. vi. 18. Christ in the promise, is the hope set before sinners; but believers are these who have fled for refuge thereto; and so,

being actually children of promise, they are infest (may I so express it?) into their father's estate; "If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." Your name, believer, is filled up in the bond; and so the promise is no more given forth generally and indefinitely to you, as to the rest that hear the gospel, but particularly and definitely your portion is secured there, and it is your bond of provision by name. How many *Items* soever you have to give in, by way of charge, for your daily supply, till you get to heaven, so many articles there are, by way of discharge, to be found in the bond of provision for you, among the rest of the children of promise. What items, and what articles answering them are here, cannot be all mentioned; I only name a few of them.

Item, So much of a charge for bread and water, for daily necessities; the article for discharging thereof is, Isa. xxxiii. 16, "Bread shall be given them, and their water shall be sure." *Item*, So much necessary for wine and milk to maintain the children: well the article for answering that is, Joel iii. 18, "The mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk." And it is, "Wine and milk, without money and without price—a feast of fat things, and wines on the lees." *Item*, For clearing of all by-gone accounts, and discharging all debts that were owing to the law; the article is, Jer. xxiii. 6, "His name shall be called, the Lord our righteousness; therefore will I be merciful to their unrighteousness, their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. He was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." *Item*, For clearing all the debts that may be afterwards contracted, through the power of corruption, and daily infirmities; the article is, Jer. l. 20, "The iniquities of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found." Why? what will become of them? "He will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea," Micah vii. 19. What sea? even that of Christ's blood, "The Lamb of God, that takes away the sins of the world." When he takes them away, they shall not be found any more. *Item*, For clothing to the children of promise; the article is, Isa. lxi. 3, "I will give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Hence, ver. 10, "I will rejoice in the Lord, for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, and covered me with the robe of righteousness." *Item*, For washing the children's garments, or rather of their feet, when

they are ready to puddle and defile themselves; the article is, Isa. liv. 4, where the Lord is said to wash away the filth of the daughter of Zion, by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning. If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me," said Christ to Peter. Indeed the children need daily washing. Though the garment of imputed righteousness they have needs no washing; it is the perfect, spotless righteousness of God: yet the garment of their imparted righteousness, their graces and duties, need constant washing.

Item, For teaching and schooling of the children in the knowledge of the mysteries of the gospel; the article is, Isa. liv. 11—13, "O thou afflicted, &c. All thy children shall be taught of God."

Item, For correcting the children for their faults, yet so as they shall never incur any liableness to the forfeiture of the promise; the article is, Psal. lxxxix. 30, "If his children break my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes; nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail."

Item, For cordials to the corrected child, lest he should faint under affliction; the article is, Isaiah lvii. 16, "I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth, lest the spirit should fail before me, and the soul which I have made. For the iniquity of his covetousness I was wroth, and smote him; I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart: therefore I have seen his ways, and will heal him." O wonder! as if a God of infinite grace should say, Simple correction will not do with my children, and therefore I must even go and caress and dandle them again; I will restore comforts to him and to his mourners."

Item, For reviving of the child, when under deadness of frame and indisposition; the article is, "I am the resurrection and the life; and because I live ye shall live also."

Item, For strengthening of the child, when under weakness, ready to be overcome with corruption, or to succumb in duty; the article is, "My grace shall be sufficient for thee; my strength shall be made perfect in thy weakness."

Item, So much for light and candle; I mean, the candle of the Lord, to enlighten them, when they are in the dark, and ready to mistake their way; the article is, "They shall hear a voice behind them, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it. I will lead the blind in a way they know not."

Item, so much necessary for bearing the charges, both of their work and war-

fare, in the wilderness ; the article is, "He will send none a warfare, on their own charges. He will perform all our works in us and for us :—I will strengthen, I will uphold with the right hand of my righteousness." *Item*, For medicine to cure the falling sickness of the child, and for raising him up when he falls and hurts himself: the article is, "I will heal thy backslidings, I will love thee freely." *Item*, For antidotes and preventives, to hinder the child's falling totally and utterly away : the article is, Psalm xxxvii. 24, "He shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholds him with his hand. I will put my fear in their hearts, and they shall not depart from me." *Item*, For sanatives to heal some desperate diseases, and dreadful hardness of heart : the article is, "I am JEHOVAH-ROPHI, the Lord that healeth thee. The leaves of the tree of life are for the healing of the nations," even of their deadly wound *Item*, For corrosives, to eat our sin and corruption, and all these noxious humours that distemper the child : the article is, "I will subdue your iniquity : " And, Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace." *Item*, For purgatives to make the child of grace to grow in grace, and the planting of the Lord to flourish ; the article is, "Every branch in me that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." And, "I will be as the dew to Israel : he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon ; his branches shall spread, his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon." *Item*, For restoratives, to make the child recover and revert after decays of grace ; the article is, "They that dwell under his shadow shall return ; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine ; the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon ; I am like a green fir-tree, from me is thy fruit found." What shall I say ? Tell me the *Item*, and I will tell you the article of the promise that will answer it. *Item*, For antidotes against the temptations of the devil ; the article is, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly ; The Seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent." *Item*, For securing of renewed visits after desertion ; the article is, "For a small moment have I forsaken thee ; but with great mercy will I gather thee ; In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee." *Item*, For securing the continuation of divine favour amidst all the changes either of frames or providences ; the article is, "I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and

vowelst the vow unto me. The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed [even mountains of myrrh and hills of frankincense of which you are ready sometimes to say, "My mountain stands strong, and I shall never be moved," even these mountains of sensible enjoyments, and hills of sweet frames may depart;] but my kindness shall not depart from thee." *Item*, For victory over the world, not only over the god of this world, the devil; but over the things of this world, "The lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life;" also the losses and crosses, the allurements or entanglements of the world; the article is, "Though in the world ye shall have tribulation; yet be of good cheer, I have overcome the world," that my victory may be yours. *Item*, For a blessing upon all providences, and for sanctifying of all crosses and calamities they meet with; the article is, "All things shall work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose." *Item*, For the want of love to God, or the weakness of it; for the want or weakness of faith, repentance, zeal, and other graces; the article is, "In him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead;" And, "Ye are complete in him;" And, "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell, that out of his fulness ye might receive grace for grace." He is the author and finisher of faith; the author and finisher of love; the ALPHA and OMEGA of all grace. Are there any more items in the charge, for which there is no article in the bond of provision to discharge it? Nay, nay; sit down and devise items; the child of promise may find articles in the bond to answer them. *Item*, For conduct through all snares and difficulties in your way; the article is, "I will guide thee with mine eye; I will guide thee by my counsel." *Item*, For victory over death, and a happy entrance to eternal life; the article is, "Death shall be swallowed up in victory." And, "The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come unto Zion with songs; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away; and so shall we be ever with the Lord." What think you, believing child, of the promise? What think you of your bond of provision? Come read over the charge and discharge, compare them together, and see if there be anything wanting in the covenant of promise, and see if it hath not all your salvation in it. If I have passed by or forgot anything, I shall make it up in one word; *Item*, For defraying the charge of the want of all things; the article for answering it is, Rom. viii. 32, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up to the death for us all

how shall he not with him freely give us all things? All things are yours; and ye are Christ's." Yea, ten thousand times more than all things is in the bond of the promise; God himself is in it, "I will be thy God. Christ himself is in it, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," &c. The Spirit himself is in the bond, to be the Spirit of faith, love, light, life, and liberty, grace, and glory; "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; even my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing on thine offspring." And if God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be in the bond of provision; pray, what is wanting when he who is *all in all* is in the bond? What want you believer, that is not here? If you converse only with the law, you will find all wanting; item, all spent; but when you come to the promise, you will find a stock that can never be exhausted.

Now, believer, you see where your portion lies; rejoice in your heirship: being a child of promise, you have Christ in it, and you are called to live upon your winning; being a child of the promise, you should live upon the promise in every case; suck the breasts of the promise, as the child does the mother's breast, for that is to live by faith. As you would be holy, as you would be happy, as you would be grateful and fruitful, as you would glorify God, and edify your neighbour, make more use of the promise, by pleading the promise by prayer, and feeding on the promise by faith, and applying the promise for answering all charges of the law; for in the law you will never find any thing, either for paying your debt, or performing your duty; but the discharge that is in the gospel-promise, and that only, can answer it.

I will tell you, my friends, what would make notable religion among us; if the charge of the law were duly known, and conscience taking home that; therefore consider what the law-charge is, and what conscience says to it; also what the gospel-discharge is, and what faith says to that.

(1.) The law-charge is, Man you have a wicked, devilish hard heart; you are nothing but a mass of sin: for, "By the law is the knowledge of sin." What says conscience to that? does it take with the charge? Then hear how the gospel-discharge runs, "I will take away the heart of stone, and give the heart of flesh." What says faith to that? O welcome promise! Lord, I take thee at thy word: "Be it to me according to thy word."

(2.) Again, the law charge is, Man, you are a grievous, heinous sinner, that justly should be thrust down to the bottom of hell to be burnt in the fire of God's wrath for ever. What says conscience to that charge? does it take with the charge, saying, True, true? Then hear how the gospel-discharge runs, "Deliver his soul from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom." What says faith to that? O welcome sweet word of grace! Lord, I take hold of thy promise, and "I will hope in thy word."

(3.) Again, the law-charge and challenge is, Man, woman, you are destitute of all holiness, and unable to serve God, or honour him, by walking in his way. What says conscience to that? Why, if it be not feared, it takes with the charge. Well, the gospel-discharge answers, "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." What says faith to that? Why, if you have any, it will say, O welcome, welcome, blessed promise! Lord, I will take thee at thy word; Amen, even so be it unto me according to it.

(4.) Again, the law-charge runs thus, Man, woman, you are an ignorant creature, you know nothing of God as you ought to know. What says conscience to that? If it be not sleeping, it will say, Oh! a true charge, a true challenge; I take with it. Well, the gospel-discharge answers, "They shall be all taught of God: I will send the Comforter, and he shall teach you all things: He shall open the eyes of the blind, and bring them from darkness to light." What says faith to that? Even, O welcome, good tidings: welcome sweet promise! Lord, I know no other school but thine, where I can be savingly instructed; therefore, I will take thee at thy word, "Do as thou hast said."

(5) Again, the law-charge runs thus, Man, woman, you are cursed and condemned; for, Cursed is every one that continues not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." What says conscience? If it be not dumb, it will say, Then, according to the tenor of the law, I am the man, the cursed man, that hath broken God's law; the charge is just and true. Well, the gospel-discharge answers, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." What says faith to this? O it will say, Welcome, sweet gospel-promise? Lord, I take thee at thy word; I embrace the promise, with application to myself, for there is all my salvation.

(6.) In a word, the law-charge is, Man, woman, you are in

every respect a broken bankrupt: your debt of obedience to the precept of the law is impossible, you cannot do it; your debt of satisfaction to the penalty of the law is intolerable, you cannot bear it; and as your debt of obedience and satisfaction to the law, as a covenant, is insolvable, so your duty of obedience and observance of the law, as a rule, is impracticable by you. What says conscience to this? If it be awakened, it takes with the charge, saying, O true, true; I am every way indeed broken and insolvent. Well, the gospel-discharge runs thus, "Christ is a Surety of a better testament; the Lord our righteousness and strength;" our righteousness, for paying all the debt we owe to the law, as a covenant, by his justifying merit; our strength, for defraying the charge of all the duty we owe in point of gratitude to the law, as a rule, and that by his sanctifying Spirit. Now, what says faith to this? Why, if it speak, it will now say, O welcome promise? O welcome Surety? welcome debt-payer and burden-bearer! It takes God at his word, and says, "Surely in the Lord only have I righteousness and strength."

Now, then, does a man act like a child of promise, when conscience takes with the law-charge, and owns it: and when, at the same time, faith takes the gospel-discharge, and answers the law with it, by a particular application; for, as it is with conscience in applying the threatening of the law for conviction, it is with particular application; so it is with faith in applying the promise of the gospel, it is with a particular close application. I am concerned with that charge of the law, says conscience: I take it to myself; I am the sinful guilty man; well, so says faith, I am concerned with this discharge of the gospel-promise, I take it to myself, and believe, through grace, I am the absolved man. Something of this particular appropriation, more or less, must be in faith; otherwise there is no relief comes in by the gospel. As it is with the law, if there were no close application of the threatening, with some assurance that the threatening is to me, I would have no conviction by the law; so it is with the gospel, if there were no close application of the promise, with some assurance that it is to me, I would have no relief or consolation by the gospel. Let this be marked, I pray you; if a man hear the law-charge, without reckoning himself much concerned, he may think he believes it, and yet be but an atheist; his conscience was never wounded by it; and if a man hear the gospel-discharge, or promise, without reckoning himself much concerned in

the matter, he may think he believes the gospel, but he deceives himself, his heart was never healed by it; why? there is no application. If any think that it is easy to believe with application, let it be considered, that this application, in the nature of faith, is the best way to find out whether your faith be but a fancy or not; for, if you say you believe, and yet it is with no particular concern and application to yourself; it is not faith, but a strong fancy, a strong imagination, yea, a strong delusion; if it can be called faith, yet it is not the faith of God's elect. If you should hear that there is a great man in America that hath so many thousands a-year; why, if a man of ordinary credit tell you this, you readily believe it, because you are not much concerned about it; but if at the same time you are made to understand that you will turn to beggary, and have nothing in the world but what you must receive from that great man, and that you must be supplied out of his store, and that he is heartily content to impart it for your use; why, if you find yourself so much concerned, you would begin to be a little more scrupulous in believing the point, and entertain a thousand suspicions about it; or, if you got his bond, I suppose you would receive it with application, and see if you could draw any bills of exchange upon it: even so it is here: while you hear that there is a great Saviour in heaven, that hath unsearchable riches, and all the fulness of the Godhead, perhaps you never saw what concern you had in him; you are able, you think, to do your own business without him, and so you think you believe well enough, and never doubted of your faith; you have an easy credulity about that, in which you have little or no concern: but did you once know, that as you are poor and needy, so you will die a bankrupt, and be sent for ever to the prison of hell, for the debt that you owe to God's justice, unless Christ be your Surety for paying your debt; then it is another matter to believe, when it comes to a believing with application. While men are still sleeping in their natural security, and see no need of Christ, they think they can easily believe all that the gospel reports to them, and so never doubt. What! would you have us to be such atheists and infidels, as not believe the Bible? Yea, but when God awakens the conscience, to see how much depends upon it, with respect to their own particular concern, then they find believing is another thing than they imagined.

Therefore, you that think you have been good enough believers all your days, and never doubted of your faith, you may suspect

your faith is but a fancy. O man, do not hazard your soul upon a strong imagination; yet withal, faith in its nature does not consist in doubting, for it is just the opposite of it. Do not think you believe, because you doubt; for doubting is unbelief; and unbelief is neither a negative nor a positive mark of faith: I mean, doubting of God's word of promise, so as not to receive it with application; which differs vastly from doubting about your faith. When the object of a man's doubting is about his own faith, there is good reason for his doubting of that, until once he believe God's word of promise with application: which, when through grace he does, then he hath no more reason to doubt of his faith: but when the object of a man's doubting is God's word of promise, which God commands him to believe with application, there is no reason in the world for his doubting of that; nay, his doubting of it will be still his sin, as long as unbelief is his sin: and while he doubts of that word of grace, and does not receive the promise with application to himself, he hath good reason to doubt of his faith; for application and appropriation of the promise, and of Christ in it, is the very heart and soul of faith, and the most vital act of the child of promise, whereby he takes it as God's bond to himself, and thereupon draws bill of exchange upon Christ, as made of God to him, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; and looks to him as a promising God in Christ; pleads the promise for all necessary supply that is held forth there; and lives upon the promise, like a child upon the breast, till the full performance come.

May the Lord give you understanding in all things, and help you thus to believe to the saving of your souls, and to the evidencing that you are the children of the promise.¹

HAVING thus given you a succinct view of what we had formerly offered upon this subject elsewhere, in the brief recapitulation of some of the principal topics insisted upon, I proceed now to some further inferences.

10. Hence see what is the reason that all men, by nature, are not only under the curse of the law, but also, at the same time, un-

(1.) Where this sermon, which is the fourth upon the text, was delivered, cannot be positively ascertained, in regard the Author omitted to mark it in his notes but it is probable it was preached at Dunfermline, July 23d, 1726, his ordinary place of preaching; for, by noticing the place and date of the preceding one, viz., Portmoak, July 17th, and the date and place of the following ones, viz., Glendovan, July 31st, there is just one free Sabbath between these two sacramental solemnities; and therefore the more likely he was at home.

der a cursed bias and inclination to the law-way of justification. Why? because they are, with Ishmael, children of the bond woman: and not like Isaac, children of the promise. We are all by nature cursed Ishmaelites; born under bondage to the law as a covenant of works. Hence sinners, that remain in that state, though the law curse them, yet they desire to be under the law; that is, to be saved by their doing, or in some conditional way, and cannot think it possible to be saved by a free and absolute promise; yea, they will run down and persecute all these that would vilify their works, and represent them as dung in point of justification before God. What, say they, these men are certainly ill men, enemies to the law and good works, that would have us cast away all our hope built upon our religious duties, and would have us building upon a quite contrary foundation. Hence persecution arises, as it is said in the verse following our text. The children of the promise, like Isaac, need not think it strange though they be persecuted in the world by the Ishmaelites, the children of the bond woman, and that particularly by mocking tongues; for so was Isaac by Ishmael. The scripture foresaw this, and God therein forewarned us, that when such a dispensation takes place, we may not be surprised at it. However, the main ground of the difference is the same that the text and context does speak of, namely, the law and the promise. The one is ignorantly zealous for the law; and the other is spiritually zealous for the promise; the one is for salvation, as it were, by the law; the other is for salvation merely by the promise: the one cries up sanctity and holiness, and that in a conformity to the law; the other is for sanctity and holiness also, but not by the law, but by the promise, and as the fruit of the faith of free justification, without the deeds of the law, knowing that this faith, and this only, works by love. Hence Papists and ignorant Protestants also declare themselves to be Ishmaelites and children of the bond woman, even though they pretend to be zealous for the gospel, while they turn the gospel to a new law, a conditional covenant betwixt God and man, with so much on his part, and so much on ours. But all the children of promise that have any tolerable insight into the gospel, will own it to be a "free and absolute promise, unconditional to us; and that ever since the covenant of works was broken, God never made any covenant with us, for life and salvation, but that covenant that he made with Christ, and in him with all the elect as his seed," as our Larger

Catechism declares. Meantime, think not strange, when either you find in yourself, or others, a strange propensity towards the old-covenant-way of salvation and justification; for, we are all by nature the children of the bond-woman. And, O believer, bless God, if he hath opened your eyes to know the gospel-liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free; happy are they that are the children of the free-woman! they are the children of promise.

11. Hence see the freedom and sovereignty of the grace of God, in the adoption of any child to himself. Why, all his children are children of promise, as Isaac, who was not born by the strength of nature; for Abraham and Sarah were both old, and his body was dead, and her womb was barren; and, besides natural barrenness, she was past the prolific age; so that Isaac was not born by the strength of nature, but merely by the virtue of the promise: so believers are made the children of God, not by the power of nature, but by the virtue of the promise, when the Spirit of God puts a generative virtue therein. It is the promise of God in Christ, that makes us children; and the promise is of the mere free grace of God; therefore they that are God's children, are so by the mere free grace of God; "Having predestinate us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved," Eph. i. 5. How dishonourable then to the doctrine of God's free grace and sovereignty is it, for any to assert, "That election and adoption is according to God's foreknowledge of our faith and obedience?" For, thus would we elect ourselves, and be children, not by divine promise, but of our own free-will and faith. God foresaw the faith of his elect, indeed, because he first decreed to give the grace of faith to them; for the foreknowledge of things to come to pass, depends upon a precedent will in God; nothing comes to pass without his will. The friends and favourites of the free-will of man, in converting themselves, are enemies to the free grace of God in begetting children to himself, by virtue of his promise in Christ, and by the means thereof. Neither does this abolish the freedom of the will; for, as the generative promise is just the absolute will of God, so the determination of man's will by the will of God, is the liberty of the will, and not the bondage of it; when he works powerfully on the will of man, he gives both to will and to do, he makes the man willing; and this is

the perfection of liberty, when man's will is made conform to the will of God. Thus all the children of God are the children of promise.

12. Hence see what is the great business of ministers, if they would be the happy instruments of begetting children to God. If all that are his children, are the children of promise, then his ministers had need to be the heralds of the promise, ministers of the New Testament, which is the covenant of promise, not of the letter, but of the Spirit. It is the gospel, in contradistinction from the law, that is the ministration of the Spirit, 2 Cor. iii. 6, 7, 8. The law is to be preached, indeed, but it is only in a subserviency to the gospel. The sinner must hear what the law hath to charge upon him, that so, when he takes with the charge of the law, he may haste to flee to the discharge that is presented in the gospel-promise, or to Christ as the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth. None can lawfully preach the law as a covenant, unless they preach Christ as the end of it; nay, nor can any rightly preach the law as a rule, unless they preach Christ as the beginning of it; I mean Christ for our righteousness, is the end of the law as a covenant; and Christ for our strength, is the spring of our obedience to the law as a rule. Think not strange that we harp so much upon this string, especially in a day wherein the gospel is brought under so much contempt, reproach, and suspicion, as if it were a door of licentiousness. As the express words of our commission are, "Go preach the gospel to every creature," to every rational creature; so it is the gospel only that saves all that are saved, and that sanctifies all that are sanctified; for it is the ministration of the Spirit, and the power of God to salvation; and it is the gospel-promise, and that alone, that is the prolific womb from whence all the children of God have their new birth, for they are the children of the promise. O then, sirs, let us then put honour and respect upon the promise. A throne without a promise, is but the devil's dungeon; wealth, without a promise, is but fuel for hell; temporal enjoyments, without a promise, are but dreadful curses; life, and health, and merriment, without a promise, are nothing but a silk thread, by which you are hanging over the gulf of death and eternal damnation; therefore, O intreat God to manifest himself to you in the promise, and to make you know the mystery of the gospel! Religious duties themselves, without a promise, are nothing but a building of your habitation about the old ruinous walls of a covenant of works which

will tumble down and fall upon you with a vengeance ; therefore, O seek to know God in Christ, God in a promise, where alone you can find him reconciled ! God in a promise, is all love ; Christ, in a promise, is all heaven ; the Spirit, in a promise, is all holiness, and comfort ; and everything, with a promise, is sweet. Outward blessings, with a promise, are blessings indeed ; a cup of cold water, with a promise, is a feast ; yea, a cross, with a promise, is a cordial ; a dungeon, a prison, with a promise is a paradise : a bloody scaffold, with a promise, is a place of honour ; death, with a promise, is a door of life ; O then, seek to know God in a promise ! God as a law giver and commander ; is no mystery to the world, for nature's light shows something of that ; but God in a promise, is indeed a mystery. Hence more errors have arisen about the gospel than about the law, because the principles of the law are written in man's nature. Heathens have made laws against all manner of outward vices forbidden by the moral law ; but the gospel is supernatural, and the gospel-promise, of writing the law, in the heart, by a new creation in Christ unto good works. It is the greatest honour of any nation to be the seat of the gospel ; as the ark was the glory of Israel, so is Christ in the promise, the glory of the church of God. And what is it that makes a flourishing church, but the gospel-promise impregnated with the power of the Spirit for bringing forth children unto God ? As you see in the verse preceding our text, " Rejoice thou barren, that bearest not ; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not ; for the desolate hath many more children, than she which hath an husband." What made our reformation days and Scotland's covenanting days to be such joyful and heartsome days of the church, in bringing forth many children unto God ? Why, the matter was, a gospel-spirit was poured out, in opposition to the old Popish, legal strain ; and, when the free promise, the free grace of God in Christ took a vent, then was the church a joyful mother of many children unto God, a nation, as it were, born at once : a multitude of converts was born in her. But, alas ! whence is the barren womb of the church of Scotland in these covenant breaking days, wherein our solemn covenants are much buried in oblivion ; yea, the obligation thereof impugned and denied by many, who consequently justify the burning and burial of our covenant, and condemn the principles of our covenanting reformers, and purest assemblies, that laid the foundation of the Lord's house among us ; and travelled night and day to get the work of reformation brought

to the Scripture pattern ; and transmitted gospel truths down to us at the expense of their blood, some sealing it by their martyrdom ; while we, their ungrateful posterity, are either forgetting their labours, or casting a reproach upon them, as if they had been more led by phrenzy than true zeal : notwithstanding all their prayers, and tears, and wrestling with God, in behalf of our Zion ? But as their remarkable success, shewed how much they were honoured of God ; so our remarkable barrenness shews how much we are left of God. The glorious gospel is brought under much contempt, and the gospel preaching marked out with notes of ignominy and calumny, whereby God is dishonoured, Christ is despised, the Spirit is grieved, the gospel is slighted, and the edification of souls marred, and many led to suspect the truth as if it were error, and few or none honoured to do any good to souls. The legal preacher is not honoured, because the law is not the ministration of the Spirit ; the gospel preacher is not honoured, because God is angry at his mother church, and she, and all her children are under a cloud. Oh ! seek that the Lord may pity us, and return with a day of power, that he may appear in his glory, and build up Zion. Meantime, you may see what our great business should be in preaching the word to you ; particularly, rightly to rid marches betwixt the law and the promise ; for, when law and gospel are mixed and confounded together, neither true law nor true gospel can be preached, but a hotch-potch of both, to the marring of both ; just like the mingling together of water and wine, which makes flash matter of both, and is rejected of God, Isaiah i. 22. And how miserable are you that are gospel hearers, if you can never come to understand what is the gospel, and what is the law, and whether your salvation be in this or that ? My text leads me to no more of the difference betwixt the law and the gospel at present, than to tell you that the gospel is a promise, or a revelation of God's grace and good-will to sinners in Christ ; and that it is the gospel promise only, under the influence of the Spirit, that begets children unto God. And if this one point were observed, it might be of use to you all your life-time, in hearing the word preached, for making you understand what is the voice of the law, and what is the voice of the gospel therein ; for the law runs always in a mandatory or minatory strain ; that is, in commands and threatenings : but the gospel runs in a promissory strain ; the former begets fear and dread, and the latter begets

hope ; and happy they, who, being terrified by the law, are made to flee away to the gospel, and thereby are begotten to a lively hope ; but woe will be to you, if you can never distinguish betwixt God in a threatening and God in a promise, so as to flee from a threatening to a promising God ; that is, from a God out of Christ, clothed with threatenings and wrath, to a God in Christ clothed with promises, and mercy, and grace ; for there lies all your salvation. O ! sirs, seek that the dispensation of the gospel may be powerful towards you !

Having elsewhere finished the doctrinal part of this subject, and prosecuted an use of information at considerable length, the second use, I propose, is by way of examination and trial ; namely, for resolving this inquiry, Whether or not you be children of promise ? Much depends upon this inquiry : for, if you be a child of promise, you are a child of God, and an heir of glory ; if you be not a child of promise, you are yet under the curse of the law, and upon the very brink of hell and damnation, and under the power of sin and Satan ; a servant unto sin, and a slave to the devil. Try then, whether you be a child of promise or not ; I mean, an actual child of promise, for the Lord only knows who are the children of promise virtually. Isaac was a child of promise virtually, before ever he was born by the power of the promise ; he was lying in the womb of the promise, till the promise came to the full time of bringing him forth ; so, I hope there may be some here that are the children of promise virtually, but they are not yet brought forth, they are lying in the womb of God's gracious purpose and promise, and such will be brought forth in the fulness of time ; for, " All that the Father hath given me, shall come to me," says Christ ; but as to themselves, and their natural state, they are in same common mass of sin and misery with the rest of the world, and may be worse than their neighbours, and are yet strangers to the covenant of promise. The question and inquiry is not concerning these ; no marks can be given of these, but such as will find them out to be children of the devil, enemies to God, aliens and strangers to Christ ; understand the question then to be meant of these that are the actual children of promise, adopted, regenerated, and begotten by the word of truth.

(1) What follows of this subject was delivered in three Sermons, at dispensing the sacrament of the Lord's Supper at Glendovan, July 31st, 1726, on the Saturday, Sabbath, and Monday.

Now, I might here offer negative marks, to shew who are not the children of the promise ; particularly,

1. None that are mocking Ishmaelites, that hate and oppose, mock and ridicule the free gospel dispensation, and the close followers thereof ; for here the children of promise, as Isaac, are set in opposition to mocking Ishmael, the son of the bond-woman. These, then, that mock, persecute, and malign the freedom of the gospel, when it is set forth in contradistinction to the law, and reproach the believers and professors thereof, as if it were a new invention to expect salvation by a free promise, and not by the law. Mockers of the free grace of God, had need to take care what they are doing ; for, if that same grace do not marvellously prevent, they shall be cast out of God's family ; though for a time they may bear sway therein, as Ishmael did in Abraham's family, till it came to this, *Cast forth the bond-woman and her son.* Mockers of the gospel, then, are not the children of promise.

2. None that live in the practice, and under the power of any known sin whatsoever, secret or open, are the children of promise ; for, the faith of the promise purifies the heart. The children of the promise are begotten again to a lively hope, by the promise ; and, "He that hath this hope, purifieth himself." It is true, the children of promise may feel the power of sin, and sometimes fear they be under the power of it because of the strength of corruption hurrying them oft down the stream ; but yet their pleading of the promise of God against the power of sin, and their secret wrestling with God on that head, declares that they are not under the power of sin, and that sin shall not have dominion over them, because they are not under the law, but under grace ; but as for these that sin with a high hand, that live in drunkenness, whoredom, swearing, sabbath-breaking, and in the neglect of secret and family prayer, or in any other sin without control, it is evident they are not under the power of the gospel-promise ; sin hath dominion over them, because they are not under grace, but under the law.—Therefore,

3. None that are self-justiciaries, people looking to be saved and justified by the law, and the works of the law, either in whole or in part ; none of these are the children of promise ; nay, such can have no part in the kingdom of heaven ; they are to be cast out of the church and family of God, as you see in the context: *Cast out the bond-woman and her son.* There is the voice of God, casting down from heaven to hell the greatest part of the earth, the Turk,

the Jew, the Pagan, and the Papist, together with all the grossly ignorant Protestants and professors, that know no other way of salvation and justification but by their works, or seek salvation, as it were, by the works of the law. Oh! how is the world perishing in a legal dream, imagining to deal with God in the law, not knowing God in Christ, or in the promise? And some that hear of Christ, and that there is no salvation but in him, how do they dream of salvation partly by the law, and partly by the promise! and so they divide salvation betwixt themselves and Christ; and in doing so, they take all the honour to themselves, and Christ hath but the name by way of compliment. How expect you to be saved man? Why, say you, it is only by Christ? Well said; but, why expect you to be saved by Christ? Why say you, because I do as well as I can, and am a good honest neighbour, that never wronged anybody; I am just in my dealings, and frugal in my calling, and sober in my conversation; yea, I read, and pray, and communicate; and though I be not perfect, for none are without faults, yet I am sincere, and have a good meaning. Very well, man; but what of all that? Why, say you, therefore I hope Christ will save me, or God will save me for Christ's sake, because I do my best. Nay, man, I tell you, therefore God will cast you out, because you give Christ but the compliment of being your Saviour, and you take the honour to yourself; your hope is not built upon God's promise, but upon your own practice. What, sir, would you have us giving up with all good works and good practice, and running into Antinomian laxness? O! gross ignorance of the grace of God! Do you think that your giving up with your dead works, will be the ruin of good works? All your works before faith in the free promise, are dead works; and you are lost for ever, if you get not the blood of Christ to purge your conscience from these dead works, to serve the living God, Heb. ix. 14. And there is no serving of the living God acceptably, till the old dead works be purged out. You cannot be too much occupied in reading, and praying, and hearing, and using the means; but your turning the means to conditions, as if you were to deal with God upon the terms of the old covenant, this is a siding with the conditional law, against the free absolute promise.

4. None are the children of the promise, who are strangers to the power and virtue of it; for all the true-born children thereof, are brought forth by the virtue thereof. If your religion spring only from education, from custom, from example, from your own

free-will, and the refinement and improvement of natural parts, not from the virtue and efficacy of the promise, under the influence of the powerful Spirit of God, you are but still-born, or a bastard, like Ishmael; not a free-born child, like Isaac. The promise bears all the expenses of her own children; they cannot do without a promise and power in it, or without Christ and virtue from him, for bearing the charges of their religion, and of all their religious actions. As Christ hath said, "Without me ye can do nothing," so they find and know, to their experience, that they are not sufficient of themselves to think anything of themselves; therefore, their dependence is upon, and their succour is from the free promise, the free grace of God in Christ. Whereas, these that are not born by the virtue of the promise, as Isaac, but by the power of nature, as Ishmael, they can do all by their own natural power; indeed they may learn to say, O without Christ we can do nothing; but they lie, for they have a rooted persuasion in their heart, that they can defray their own charges well enough; they can hear, they can read, they can pray, they can believe, they can communicate, and all, with the greatest ease, and without any difficulty, and maybe think strange to hear some of God's people complaining of difficulties, and making it impossible kind of work to them, for they never found any difficulty; it was always possible and practicable enough for them. Why, what is the matter? Indeed, it is just here, they were never acted by the strength and virtue of the promise, but merely by the power of nature, and common influences; for they are not the children of promise.

But now I proceed to offer some positive marks of the children of promise. And, 1, I would offer some antecedent marks. 2. Lay down some conclusive and determining evidences of them.

I would, first, offer some antecedent marks of the children of promise. Such as,

1. These that are actually by grace the children of promise, have well known and understood, that by nature they are the children of disobedience, and by practice also, Eph. ii. 2. They have been convinced of sin in breaking the commands of the law, which makes them value that salvation from sin, that is held forth in the promise of the gospel. They that have not known God in the command, as offended and dishonoured by them, surely they have not yet known God in a promise, as reconciled to them. Till the commandment come, the man is alive to the law, Rom.

vii. 9; or alive without the law; but when the command comes, and the man sees the spirituality of the precept, then sin revives, and he dies. Some look only to the letter of the law, and so think they are very innocent; but if the Spirit of God had once discovered the spirit of the law, then the soul will cry out, Unclean! unclean! I have broken every command. If you will believe some people, I mean ignorant legalists, they speak as if they had never broken none of the ten commands: why, I was never given to idolatry, superstition, profaning of God's name, nor his Sabbath; never disobedient to my parents, nor a murderer, adulterer, thief, nor a false swearer, nor a coveter of my neighbour's wife, house, or goods, &c. O! but they that are humbled by the coming of the commandment, they see what a huge mass of corruption the natural heart is, even the reverse of all God's commands.

The language of the child of promise that hath got a view of God in the command to his conviction, is not, "All these things have I done from my youth up;" but, in all these things have I offended. In opposition to the first command, my heart is but a throne of iniquity, a receptacle of false gods: I have broken it a thousand times, for so many lusts and idols as I have had, so many strange gods have taken away my heart. In opposition to the second command, my heart is but a chamber of imagery: as oft as I have neglected God's worship, or worshipped him in an unsuitable manner, so oft have I broken this command, and that is times without number. In opposition to the third command, my heart is but a dungeon of profanity: and as oft as I have thought amiss of God's holy name, and spoken irreverently of it, or of any of his titles, attributes, ordinances, words, and works, so oft am I chargeable with guilt here. In opposition to the fourth command, my heart is but a sacrilegious waster of holy time, a playhouse of idleness: and as oft as I have entertained carnal and worldly thoughts, and spoken vain and foolish words, and put off God with dead and formal prayers, and roving affections in reading, hearing, singing, and praying on the Lord's day: so oft have I been a damnable breaker of God's Sabbath. In opposition to the fifth command, my heart is but a palace of pride, the spring of all my haughty carriage towards my neighbours, whether superiors, inferiors, or equals: and as oft as I have failed in the duties of my station, as a magistrate, minister, elder, husband or wife, parent or child, master or mistress, or servant, not instructing my children and servants, not receiving instruc-

tion from master or superior, &c., so oft have I miserably thwarted this command. In opposition to the sixth command, Oh! my heart is but a house of slaughter; many cruel thoughts against my neighbour make my heart but a slaughter house: for God hath said, "He that hates his brother in his heart is a murderer;" yea, "He that is angry with his brother, and says to him, RACA, Thou fool, is in danger of hell-fire;" therefore, so oft as I have been guilty of angry thoughts, angry words, and mocking carriage, so oft have I broken this command. In opposition to the seventh command my heart is but a cage of unclean birds, a fountain of pollution: Christ charges the lustful eye to be a committing adultery in the heart; and as often as I have had unclean thoughts, obscene words, an immodest carriage, or a wanton garb or dress, so oft have I broken this command. In opposition to the eighth command, Oh! my heart is but a den of thieves, and a field of robbery: for, as oft as I have devised fraud, and contrived how to have advantage of my neighbour, so as to gain at his loss, so often have I offended here. In opposition to the ninth command, my heart is but a fountain of backbiting, and a seed-pot of slander, debate, and reviling: and as often as I have reproached his name, received an ill report, and been glad to hear an ill tale of him, and fond to repeat it, so oft have I transgressed this command. In opposition to the tenth command, my heart is but a temple of idolatry, for covetousness is idolatry; and so oft as I have not been fully content with my own estate, nor pulled out the eyes of envy with respect to my neighbour's goods and possession, wishing what is his were mine, so oft have I broken this command. Alas! sirs, you that say or think you have a good heart, or a good nature, did you ever look to your heart and nature in this glass of God's commands? No, no; if you see the spirituality of God's law, you cannot but see the carnality and corruption of your heart and nature, Rom. viii. 7. If you have seen God in a command, you cannot but cry out, "Oh! I am a transgressor from the womb; the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin." Surely, if you have not seen God in the law command to your conviction, you have not known him in the gospel promise to your consolation; you are not a child of promise.

2. The second antecedent mark is this, That these that are actually by grace the children of promise, have well known and understood that as, by nature, they are children of disobedience, so of consequence that by nature they are children of wrath, Eph. ii. 3.

And as they have not only seen God in the command, whose authority was affronted by them; but God in a threatening, whose curse was gone out against them, according to the tenor of the law; "Cursed is every one that continues not in all things written in the book of the law to do them," Gal. iii. 10. I speak not of the measure of this dispensation; but so it is, that the children of promise are persons that have been so far awakened by the threatening of God's wrath to a sight of their misery, as to make them see their need of Christ, held out in the promise, and flee for refuge to that quarter. I speak not just now of the warrant that all have to flee to the promise, but of the method wherein God brings them to it, whom he calls effectually to be the children of promise: he convinces them of sin and misery; not only of sin, by opening up the spirituality of the command; but also of misery, by opening up the severity of the threatening, shewing them that "The wages of sin is death;" that "The soul that sinneth shall die; tribulation and anguish to every soul that doth evil." If you was never put in fear of hell and damnation, which all Christless unbelieving sinners ought to fear, or if you have never been terrified at the sight of God manifested in the threatening, it is much to be feared you have never been truly relieved by the sight of God manifested in a promise. God manifesting himself in a command makes way for Christ's perfect obedience to be esteemed; and God manifesting himself in a threatening makes way for Christ's complete satisfaction to be prized: and it is no wonder that Christ, the great promise, be slighted, so long as people have not, in the light of the command, seen themselves to be children of disobedience: and in the light of the threatening, seen themselves to be children of wrath.

A man's being a child of promise, does therefore presuppose both these: yet these are but antecedent marks, and cannot determine the case, except in conjunction with what is to follow: for it is possible a man may be convinced both of his sin and misery, and see himself both a child of disobedience, and a child of wrath by reason thereof, and yet not a child of promise. Though all the children of promise are thus conceived, yet all that are thus conceived, are not the children of promise. The following marks, therefore, are conclusive and determining, being either concomitant with, or consequent unto, your being the children of promise.

1st, The first mark then is, they that are children of promise are the special discerners of the promise. Their eyes are enlightened by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ: Enlightened to see God in a promise, as the only door of hope and relief in that extremity I was speaking of: or to see God in some gospel-truth and revelation equivalent to the promise. This is that knowledge of God in Christ spoken of, 2 Cor. iv. 6, "The God who commanded light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts, to give us the light of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ;" and the glass wherein that blessed face is to be seen is the gospel promise, or word of grace. When a limner draws a picture, he begins at the eye; so, when God draws his image on the soul, he opens the eyes, and discovers his glory in the gospel. The child of promise, then, I say, is a special discerner of the promise; I mean, he hath got a spiritual discerning of the gospel, and of the things of God; for, "The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned." Natural men think the gospel foolishness, but the child of promise hath another kind of discerning knowledge of Christ and the gospel.

QUEST. How shall I understand if my knowledge of Christ and the gospel be of a special nature?

To this I answer by asking these questions following.

1. Have you seen your utter darkness, that you had not a spark of saving light and knowledge, saying, "Once I was blind?" This is a good appearance.

2. Have you seen the wisdom of God, in investing Christ with the office of a prophet; and that he could never have been so fit a Saviour, unless he had been a light to lighten the Gentiles?

3. Have you seen the absolute need of divine teaching, and still see it, being humbled under a sense of your utter want of light, saying with Agur, Prov. xxx. 2, "I am more foolish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man;" and with Asaph, Psal. lxxiii. 22, "So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a beast before thee:" humbled as the most confused creature, and greatest fool in the world? Why, in that case, it would seem you are one of God's fools. "Let him become a fool, that he may be wise."

4. Have you been made to cry for light and knowledge, saying, as Psalm xliii. 3, "O send forth thy light and thy truth, and

let them be guides unto me?" And do you prize every degree of light, knowing it pleasant to see the sun, pleasant to see God in a promise; for there is the wisdom of God in a mystery, and there is all your salvation, all your relief? Why, man, if you can answer these questions, it seems you are a special discerner of the promise.

2ndly, They that are the children of promise are the special descendants of the promise, and the free and powerful offspring thereof. As Isaac was a child of Abraham, not by the power of nature, but by the virtue and efficacy of the promise; so here, the child of promise is not so by works, but by grace; "There is a remnant according to the election of grace: and, if by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace; but if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work," Rom xi. 5, 6.

QUEST. How shall I know if I be thus a special descendant of the promise?

To which we reply: If you be a special descendant of the promise, to be sure the Spirit of God hath put power into the promise for this end, and given the promise strength to bring you forth; the gospel hath been the power of God to your salvation, Romans i. 16, "Knowing, brethren, your election of God; for our gospel came not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance," 1 Thess. i. 4, 5. The gospel hath come to you, not in the external objective revelation only, but in the internal subjective efficacy and demonstration of the Spirit. What have you experienced of this power? If you be the children of promise, you have been begotten of God's own will, by the word of truth; begotten to a lively hope; not by the power of nature, but by the power of grace; not by the power of the law, but by the power of the promise.

But here again it may be urged, How shall one know that it is not by the power of the law, but by the power of the promise, that he hath been begotten to a profession of religion? For the law, the bond-woman, hath power to beget children like Ishmael, that are not the children of promise or of grace. How, then, shall I know that it is not the power of the law, but the power of the gospel grace and promise that I was touched with?

Whereunto it might be replied: If you have been begotten by the promise, and so by the power of divine sovereign grace, then you have found that God hath shewn no regard either to your good

or evil, in making you his child. If you be a child of promise, you have found he hath shewn no regard to your good or goodness; for you had no good to move him: and that he hath shewn no regard to your evil; for you had enough of that to hinder him. What, then, hath moved him? Nothing but his own free sovereign grace. Sovereign grace is a thing that can neither be hindered by our ill, nor furthered by our good. Do you see it is nothing but free, free and sovereign grace that hath done it? "Of his own will begat he us, by the word of truth." If you be a child of promise, and not a descendant of the bond-woman, the law, then you have seen that your salvation and justification is wholly of grace, and not of works; NOT OF WORKS; that is, neither for works, nor in works, nor by works, nor according to your works.

1. You will see that your salvation is not for your works, and that the promise comes not for your sake; "Not for your sake do I this, says the Lord God, be it known unto you; be ashamed and confounded for your own way," Ezek. xxxvi. 32. Though the Lord save his people to good works, Eph. ii. 10, "Creating them in Christ unto good works;" yet all the children of promise know full well that he does not save them for their good works: for that is just the old covenant way, which now is impassable: "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified."

2. You will see that as you are not saved for, so you are not saved in your good works: for you was just in your sins when the Lord saved you; in the law-dungeon of hellish enmity, unbelief, and when dead in trespasses and sins, Eph. ii. 1. Hence your song will be with the church, Psalm cxxxvi. 24, "He remembered us in our low estate; for his mercy endureth for ever." When you was in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity, in the pit wherein there is no water, he delivered by the blood of the covenant.

3. You will see also that it is not by your good works: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but of his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the holy Ghost." Tit. iii. 5. You will know that by grace you are saved, and not by the works of the law.

4. You will see that you are not saved according to your good works; "He hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling; not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began," 2 Tim. i. 9. If you be a child of promise, then you are a special descendant

and offspring of the promise, and not a brat and offspring of the law, the bond-woman: you will see and know that your salvation is neither for works, as the cause; nor in works, as the motive and rise; nor by works, as the mean; nor according to works, as the rule of your justification.

Know, sirs, indeed, that God will judge all the world according to their works, but he will save none in all the world according to their works. God will judge the world to hell according to their works, "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity;" and he will judge the saints, and adjudge them to heaven, for the perfect righteousness of Christ, which they will be clothed with: and whatever good works the faith of that righteousness influences them unto, will be made honourable mention of; and so far they will be judged according to their works: but as none are saved according to their works, but according to his purpose and grace; so all that are the children of promise will be taught this lesson. Whereas, the children of the bondwoman, the Ishmaelites and legalists, are indocible and untractable on this head: though they may compliment grace with the name of their salvation, yet in the reality of the thing, they make their works either the moving cause, or the meritorious cause, or the procuring cause, or the instrumental cause of their salvation. Either they make their works, I say, the moving cause of salvation thinking that their good performances will move God to save them; and so they put their works in the room of free grace, the only moving cause. Or they make their works the meritorious cause of their salvation, thinking their pains and endeavours will make a purchase of heaven for them; and so they put their works in the room and place of Christ's blood and righteousness, the only meritorious cause. Or they make their works the procuring cause of their salvation, saying, Well, though we cannot merit, it is only Christ's merit can save us, yet what was merited by his blood must be procured by our prayers and good duties; if they cannot be whole, they must be half Saviours, by procuring to themselves, by their works, what Christ hath purchased by his blood; and so they put their works in the room and place of Christ's intercession, which is the only procuring cause. Or, finally, they make their works the instrumental cause of their salvation; why, say they, must we not do some good works, that we may be saved by them? And here they put their works in the room of faith, which is the only instrument for receiving Christ, not knowing that there can be no good works be-

fore faith; and that, "Without faith it is impossible to please God;" because, out of Christ, and out of a promise, apprehended by faith, nothing will please him. And, therefore, try if you be the children of promise, by your being the descendants of the promise, the powerful seed and offspring of the free promise and free grace of God, in opposition to the works of the law: since salvation is not of works, but of grace: "By grace ye are saved, through faith." Hence,

3rdly, The Third mark that I give is, they that are the children of promise are the special believers of the promise, and receivers of the promise by faith, Gal. iii. 14. Unbelief and infidelity is the sin of sins; faith and persuasion of the promise is the grace of graces, and the leading mark of the children of promise; for, as none can be saved except they be the children of promise, as Isaac; and as none can be the children of promise, as Isaac, except they become the children of Abraham, Luke xix. 6; so we cannot become the children of Abraham but by walking in the steps of the faith of Abraham, Rom. iv. 11, 12. And the apostle plainly declares, that as many as are of the faith, the same are the children of Abraham, and blessed with faithful Abraham, Gal. iii. 7, 9. Therefore, as we would value the very life of our souls, as well as the glory of God, we would inquire into the description of Abraham's faith, in order to try our faith by.

QUEST. How shall I know if my faith be right, and if I be a special believer of the promise?

ANSW. Try it by the description of Abraham's faith, from the ground, the battle, the victory, and the triumph of it, Rom. iv.

1. Try your faith by the ground and object of it; and the ground and object of it by that of Abraham's. What was the matter whereupon Abraham's faith did rest? It was the promise of God concerning ISAAC, and CHRIST in him, Rom. iv. 16, 17. God promised to him a numerous seed; and Abraham saw and felt, both in himself and in his wife, nothing but barrenness: but yet that was nothing, considering in whom Abraham believed, even the God who quickens the dead, and calls those things that are not, as though they were: even so, the immediate object of faith is God's promise; the word of a powerful God, that can give a being to his word.

2. Try your faith by the battles of it. And what was the battle of Abraham's faith? Why, the order of nature, and sense, and

reason, grounded upon natural causes, did show a flat contrariety to, and impossibility of the matter promised; against which his faith opposed the mere word and power of God that spake. And this battle of faith is expressed, ver. 18, "Against hope he believed in hope—according to that which was spoken." *Against hope*; that is, against the hope which he might conceive by the consideration of natural causes. *He believed in hope*; that is, in the hope which he did conceive by the consideration of the power and promise of God. So, where faith is, there will be a battle of hope against hope; against natural hope, there will be a believing in spiritual and supernatural hope, grounded on God's word.

3. Try it by the victory of faith. And what was the victory of Abraham's faith? It lay in the neglecting of the consideration of, and overlooking the order of nature and natural causes, and all things that, to sense and reason, sight and feeling, show a contrariety and impossibility in the matter promised; and a resting wholly and only upon the word, promise, and power of the God that speaks: whereby visible things, that to reason are contrary to the promise, do become as things of nothing, and as it were having no being; and invisible things, spoken by God, become the only things that have a being and foundation with us. This victory of faith you see expressed, verse 19, "And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb." Thus it is with true faith in the divine promise; whatever the man beholds in and about himself, that is against, and contrary to the accomplishment of God's promise, that he does not consider; but, giving place to the truth and power of God, the man forgets himself, as it were, and withdraws his mind from all things that he sees and feels in himself to be contrary to the promise, be it felt deadness, barrenness, nothingness, emptiness, sin, and guilt, and whatever else, all that is buried in oblivion, and the soul swallowed up in the consideration of nothing but God's promise and power. The man believes things that are impossible to nature, sense, and reason; yea, and contrary thereunto; because he believes the word of that God that quickens the dead; he considers God's word, and drops the consideration of all things else.—See if ever your faith acted thus upon a promise.

4. Try it by the triumph of faith. And now the triumph of Abraham's faith here, is his yielding unto God the glory of his truth and power, verses 20, 21, "He staggered not at the promise of God

through unbelief, but was strong in the faith, giving glory to God. And being fully persuaded that what he had promised, he was able also to perform." And compare this with the account of Sarah's faith, Heb. xi. 11, "Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised." Faith triumphant over all its enemies, does, in spite of sense and feeling, reason, and outward appearance, give God the glory of his truth and faithfulness. Hereupon faith believes things that to nature are impossible, and to carnal reason incredible; it marks what sense and reason say, but scores it by, and believes quite contrary. How? even by removing what they pretend out of sight and mind; as Abraham did the deadness of his body, and the deadness of Sarah's womb, not considering the same, but trusting in the word of God alone, even though God himself, in his providence, seem to speak otherwise than the word, as Christ dealt at first with the woman of Canaan; and though all the creatures speak otherwise than the word speaks; which indeed may make the stoutest believer stumble at the first view, till he mind what God says, and forget what other things say. Thus Sarah stumbled at the first, but at length got the victory over her doubting, by forgetting her barrenness and old age, that pretended impossibility, and by judging him faithful that had promised.

But, to prevent mistakes, there is a fourfold faith, that will not amount to this, which the children of promise have, namely, 1. A natural faith. 2. An opinionative faith. 3. A rational faith. 4. A temporary faith.

(1.) Some have a natural faith, which they brought from the cradle with them. They have always believed, they say; and there is no persuading them but they believe well enough. This faith grows upon a bad soil, even a corrupt, unrenewed nature; it is not a faith of God's planting; it grows of its own accord; it is not a faith of God's watering, nor keeping alive by influences from heaven; it does not hold its life, nor its all of Christ, but carries the soul straightway to God's mercy, without ever owning Christ. Yea, this faith is rooted in gross ignorance of God; and as the tree is, so is the fruit; not the fruit of true holiness, but the fruit of formality and indifferency about salvation, and about the glory of God; fruits that will ripen upon damnation. This natural faith is not the faith of the children of promise.

(2.) There is an opinionative faith; that is, a faith or credit founded upon probability and opinion. Some men have an opinion or probable guess, that the gospel is the sound way to salvation; but this is no laying hold upon the gospel as an infallible truth; yet many snapper into this by-road, making the gospel a probable problem. There is an opinion that is very probable, say they; and there they hold, till another come and contradict it. Why, says the man, indeed that is very probable too; and so he wavers to and fro, carried about with every wind of doctrine. He takes the one end of it this day, and the other end of it the other day; and so he that offers last, carries away the prize. The sceptics, and probable opiniators, are not among the number of believers, nor reckoned in Christ's roll; for the gospel was never fathomed by them as an infallible truth, nor rooted in the heart and month. The gospel to such is not Yea, as the apostle says, 2 Cor. i. 18; but Yea and Nay; the one day Yea, and the next day Nay. "These are clouds without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit wither; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever," Jude 19, if they come not to a solid faith.

(3.) There is a rational faith. The former two take place, especially among the more ignorant sort of people, and this takes place among the learned: they search into the reasons of things, and what they should believe; which is so far well done; they will not receive the truth upon trust from others, but they search into it themselves, that they may give their assent upon rational grounds; and this they take for saving faith; yet they are destitute of the Spirit of faith; this is not the faith of the children of promise; it is at best but a faith founded upon rational grounds, and historical evidence. They seem to take a better grip of the gospel than the former, yet not firm enough for their credit is only grounded upon science, or natural reason; they lay down some suppositions by way of demonstrations, and from thence draw conclusions, which they think cannot but hold their feet. But there is an error in the first building; therefore all that they build becomes ruinous, and cannot but totter when it gets a shake; for, in comes a better speaker, with a syllogism; and, by way of demonstration, overturns the foundation he stood upon, and there lies he; so that he who embraces the gospel by way of scholar-craft or philosophy, quits it again. Natural reason and philosophy brings him to it, and natural reason and

philosophy robs him of it again ; for, whenever the merely rational foundation, on which his faith is built, comes to be shaken and overturned, then his faith built upon it fails ; give such a man an answerable temptation, or a plausible argument, and he will deny even the divinity of Christ, as many are doing at this day, and turn where-away you will ; but divine faith stands upon a divine testimony.

(4.) There is a temporary faith, that goes beyond all the former, and is effected by the common operation of the Spirit of God ; nor is it merely taken up with the truth of the gospel, but also hath some relish of the goodness and sweetness of it ; and hence the stony-ground hearers are said to receive the word with joy, Matth. xiii. 20 ; yet this belief hath no root, no abiding principle ; it is not the faith of the promise that takes place in the children of promise. Here is the most subtle deceit in the matter of faith ; some people may take hold of Christ, as it were, and really get some sap and virtue from him for their refreshment, and yet never get in to him. They are like the ivy that grows up by the tree, and clasps about the tree, and draws sap from the tree, and yet grows upon its own root, and is never one and the same with the tree ; so here, some professors may receive Christ, in the promise, by a temporary faith ; they clasp about him closely, and draw some sap and virtue from him ; but still they are never rooted in Christ, but rooted in the old Adam ; still rooted in the old covenant, were never cut off from the old root, and engrafted into Christ, but only draw virtue from Christ to maintain their old-covenant fruit. I imagine it will be a hard chapter for some here to read, How shall I know but I am one of these that have only that faith which takes hold of Christ, like an ivy to the tree, drawing sap from him, without ever being rooted in him ? I shall offer you but one key for the opening of this difficulty, and you have need to have it opened ; for it is as much as your eternal salvation is worth, to mistake here. If you have no other but that temporary faith, you may believe and be damned with the devil, but cannot believe unto salvation.

The key for opening the matter, then, is this question, What know you of the difference betwixt righteousness IN Christ, and righteousness FROM him ?

Temporary faith may say, FROM the Lord I have righteousness and strength ; but true faith says, " In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." Temporary faith may get many

things from him, but true faith gets all things in him, and is complete in him. Temporary faith, being without root, never rooted in him, hath nothing in him, but from him; but true faith being rooted in Christ, whatever it gets from him, it rests not there, but looks to what is in him, and glories in that: "In him shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." See Isa. xlv. 24, 25, 1 Cor. i. 30, 31. What think you the Popish way of believing unto salvation is? Indeed the refined of them go as far as some professed Protestants; they own there is no salvation but by Christ; and though they do not believe, with application, that they have any righteousness in him, yet they build upon a righteousness from Christ, saying, "It is he that gives a man power to do, and then sprinkles the man's doings with his blood, upon which he merits their life and salvation." So many such Papists amongst us, they believe that Christ only can save them, and they go to him to be saved from sin, and for grace to do better; and if they find power to do better, then they hope they shall be saved; while yet they may be damned, and go to the devil, though they should escape all the pollutions of the world, and that even through the knowledge of Christ, not from their own strength, but from the strength and virtue of the knowledge of Christ, 2 Peter ii. 20. But true faith comes first to Christ for righteousness, and gets a righteousness in him for justification and eternal salvation: and being rooted in Christ, grows up in him, and hath all in him; and hence can rejoice in him, even when it finds nothing but emptiness in itself; for it is the nature of it to go out of itself to Christ in the free promise. Hence also temporary faith receives Christ conditionally, but true faith receives him freely as he is offered. Temporary believers take him for a Saviour: but how? even in this conditional way, if I be a servant to him, he will be a Saviour to me; and so he serves him, and thereupon expects salvation from him: thus he bears the root, and the root bears not him. But true faith receives Christ freely for righteousness and strength both, saying, Even so I take him, both for righteousness, that he may be a Saviour to me; and for strength that he may make me a servant to him, to serve as a son, not as a hireling. Temporary faith and legal faith believes Christ will save me upon condition of my good behaviour for the time to come; in case I serve him, then he will save me: but gospel-faith takes Christ upon gospel terms, as he is exhibit in the gospel promise, saying, O I dare not promise any thing to him, but I take him as

promising all things to me: and, blessed be sovereign grace, that all is in the promise; for, if any thing depended upon my good behaviour and future service, I fear all would be cast loose; therefore I take a Christ for all, and a promise for all: and, O well is me, that he hath promised all, for I can promise nothing; therefore I will rely upon the promise of salvation, I will rely upon the promise of sanctification. And, in this way of taking the promise freely, he comes to be furnished for a better behaviour, than all the legal and conditional believers in the world; for, as he believes the promise, so he lives upon it. And this leads me to another mark of these that are the children of promise; not only are they believers of the promise, but,

4thly, They are livers upon the promise, they are dependants upon the promise; this is called a living by faith on the Son of God, Gal. ii. 20; that is, a living upon the Son of God, as held forth in a promise. As children live upon their mother, and babes upon the breast; so the children of the promise live upon the promise, and suck the milk that is in the breast thereof. They trust to his word; and, being persuaded, will embrace the promise, and hing upon the breast all their days. Some will say, perhaps they believe the promise; well, but do they live upon it? Nay, but if they live not here, it shews they never truly believed. They are good believers; but are they good livers too? No indeed. It is a common word among you, sirs, such a man is a good liver, such a woman is a good liver, if they be sober, and civil, and morally honest. Well, indeed these people are good to live with, and it is sad when there is so little morality among Christians, and that there is more of it among some Pagans; but withal, sirs, consider who are good livers in God's account and reckoning; it is these that live upon the promise, and live by faith.

QUEST. How shall I know if I be one of these that live by faith upon the promise?

ANSW. 1. If you be living by faith on the promise, then you will find the promise to be the mean of exciting faith, as well as it was the mean of creating faith at first, or begetting it. The believer is in every respect a child of promise; his grace of faith is a child of promise, and his life of faith is a child of promise. The faith that believes the promise, is begotten by the power of the promise; and the faith that lives upon the promise, is also begotten by the power and virtue of the promise, and is cast forth out of the

womb thereof. The promise that is the food of faith, on which faith lives, is always the seed of faith, from which faith springs; therefore the gospel is called the word of faith, in which believers are nourished up, 1 Tim. iv. 6, "Thy word hath quickened me," saith the Psalmist: and the gospel is said to be the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believes. The same power that begets faith, is necessary for the increase thereof, and for drawing forth every act thereof: it is always, like Isaac, a child of promise; for it is a faith of God's operation. Grace, and virtue, and fire, come out of the promise, and kindle it. I do not assert that there is constantly a felt virtue coming from the promise, or a sensible power felt at first; for sensible feeling follows believing: but there is a secret, ineffable, insensible power, while the man is perhaps but musing and meditating upon the promise; and thereupon the sensible power and fire follow: "While I was musing the fire burned." Hence the believer finds faith, both in the beginning, and all the actings thereof, to be both the most difficult and the most easy thing: so difficult, that it is just impossible for him to believe, till power and virtue come out of the promise in some secret and insensible manner, while he is stretching forth the withered hand; and yet so easy a thing, that when he is under the powerful influence of the grace of the promise, making him to roll himself upon Christ, as if he were carried on a wave of the sea, or hurled towards him in a chariot paved with love.

2. If you be living by faith on the promise, then you will find your faith maintained by prayer, or in a way of praying, saying, "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief; Lord, increase my faith." This follows upon the former; for these prayers for faith in the increase thereof, say plainly, that no man can believe when he will, and as much as he will: for, if a man may believe when he will, and as much as he will, what needs he go to God in Christ by prayer, for the increase of faith? Nay, "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. Faith is the gift of God," and Christ is the author and finisher of faith; therefore prayer must be made to him for it, and for the increase of it. Yea, this prayer, "Lord, increase our faith," plainly says that they who pray so must have faith; otherwise they but mock God, to seek more of that which they never had. Yet many will say, O my faith is weak, Lord, increase it; while yet they never had knowledge or faith either. Faith is a fire, and prayer is

like a pair of bellows to increase and blow up the fire ; but where there is no fire, the bellows will never blow it up ; but where the grace of faith is, it is usually blown by the prayer of faith. Many believe when they will, even as they can eat, and drink, and sleep, though they pray not for strength to do these things ; but true faith waxes and wanes, according as the Spirit of prayer is up or down ; and they that think they live by faith, and yet their faith not maintained by the means of importunate prayer, it is to be feared that they will be ashamed of their faith ere all be done.

3. If you be living by faith on the promise, then you will find satisfaction to your soul in the milk of the promise, and nowhere else ; even as the child that lives upon the milk of the breast, finds satisfaction therein, and cannot be at rest without it ; yea, the child is not content merely with the breast, unless it can find milk in the breast ; even so the child of promise cannot find soul-satisfaction but in the promise ; nor in the bare promise, unless he find the milk in that breast. What is the milk of the promise ? Indeed it is Christ, and the child of promise lives upon Christ in the promise. It is not the word alone that satisfies him, but Christ in the word ; it is not the ordinance alone, but Christ in the ordinance. The promise is the vessel or cup, Christ is the liquor that is in the cup, the living water that is in the vessel : and when one believes, and lives by faith, he does not take the vessel or cup only in his hand ; nay, that would not satisfy his thirst, nor feed him ; but drinks Christ out of that cup ; he takes the living water out of it ; and thus he is nourished, and refreshed, and satisfied. They that find soul-satisfaction elsewhere are not living on the promise by faith. Some find satisfaction to their hearts in the world, and satisfaction to their conscience in their duties ; but they are strangers to true satisfaction in Christ to heart and conscience both ; but here it is that the child of promise rests satisfied, when out of the gospel-breast he gets the milk of consolation ; Christ, the consolation of Israel, for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

4. They that are living by faith on the promise, are always poor and needy, kept from hand to mouth while here, that they may never cease living on the promise, and Christ in it. Though they get satisfaction here, and nowhere else ; yet as the stomachs which we seem to satisfy just now, as I noticed on another occasion, yet within a few hours they are empty and craving ; so it is with respect to the believer. And as the vessels which we fill to-day,

require a new filling to-morrow ; so the believer's spiritual wants still increase, and renew themselves ; but though the vessel may be dry, yet the fountain is not ; though the vessel may be empty, yet the fountain is full, and still streaming. The goodness of God in Christ is a living fountain, and his promises are a perpetual bond, a perpetual fund for the maintenance of the believer all his lifetime, from the first moment that he is born and brought forth out of the womb of the promise, to the last moment of his age, "Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are born by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb. And even to your old age I am he, and even to hoar-hairs will I carry you ; I have made, I will bear, even I will carry and deliver you," Isa. xlv. 3, 4. They that are full, and rich, and increased with goods, full of self-wisdom, self-righteousness, they live upon themselves, but not upon the promise ; but the child of promise is a poor and needy, empty, hunger-beaten, starving creature, that sees need of depending constantly on a promise, and so receives out of Christ's fulness daily, grace for grace. Try then if you be living on the promise, and laying God's promise and your condition together, studying his promise and your case together ; for they that study their case, without studying the promise, are ready to despair ; but they that study the promise, without studying their case, are ready to presume.

5. They that are the children of promise, are lovers of the promise, lovers of the gospel, and of the word of grace, saying, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, that bring glad tidings of good things !" Rom. x. 15. And again, "How sweet are thy words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth !" They are the posterity of Ishmael that do not love the promise ; all that are, as Isaac, the children of promise, are lovers of the promise. But some may deceive themselves, and think they are lovers, that are yet haters in reality. Therefore,

QUEST. How shall I know if I be a true lover of the promise ?

ANSW. (1.) True lovers of the promise of the gospel are persons that understand the command and threatening of the law, so as to know there is no dealing with God therein ; the law being weak through the flesh, unable to save them, and only able to destroy them.

(2.) The true lovers of the promise, are persons that have seen

God in the promise, by seeing his mercy, grace, and good will through Christ, held forth in the promise, for their ground of hope; and thereupon have been begotten to a lively hope by the means thereof.

(3.) The true lovers of the promise, are true lovers of all the commands of God, as they are a rule of holiness, wrapt up within the bosom of the promise. The command without a promise is terrible to them, it is a covenant of works; but the command within the promise, or the command in Christ is the Lord our righteousness and strength, this is lovely to them: and thus they regard all his commands. Hence,

(4.) The true lovers of the promise are true lovers of Christ: they that love not our Lord Jesus Christ, are cursed; they that love Christ are blessed.

QUEST. How shall I know if I be a lover of Christ?

ANSW. [1.] The true lovers of Christ are pleased with a whole Christ; Christ is in every respect precious to them; not this part of Christ, and that part, but a whole Christ: as a King, as well as a Priest; in his lowest circumstances, as well as the highest; the very cross of Christ; yea, an absent Christ, as well as a present. It is the property of a believer, to be either rejoicing in Christ's presence, or lamenting his absence. Christ's absence is not uneasy to them that love him not, but lovers think the time very long when he absents, Psalm xiii. 1, 2. Four times he cries *How long?* They cannot rest while he is absent. Indeed, there may be a spiritual lethargy that may seize the lovers of Christ: but whenever they are awakened, Oh! they think every minute long till he appear. They love his word and ordinances, and esteem them sometimes more than their ordinary food. Can they that undervalue ordinances, and make little use of the Bible, be lovers of Christ? No, by no means. Inquire what esteem you have of a whole Christ, in all his offices, in all circumstances, in all things that appertain to him.

[2.] The true lovers of Christ will prize his image, wherever they see it, were it in a beggar, as well as a prince; yea, a beggar on the dunghill, that hath Christ's image, will be more prized by such, than a king upon a throne that wants it. Indeed, if you do not love his image, you do not love himself; for, "He that loves not him that begat, how shall he love him that is begotten of him?" Do you reckon the saints the excellent ones of the earth, in whom is

all your delight in this world, even when they are stripped of all earthly things, riches, honours, and even other accomplishments of mind, and considered simply as having the image of God? Why then, "By this you may know you are past from death to life, because you love the brethren."

[3.] True lovers of Christ are haters of his enemies within and without, Psalm cxxxix. 21, 22, especially his enemies within doors, I mean sin; they cannot allow of a competitor with Christ.

[4.] True lovers of Christ will desire and endeavour to recommend Christ to others, that others may love him also; it will be the desire of their heart, that others may behold his glory, and that he may be glorified and magnified in the salvation of others. Christ will be, therefore, much in their mouth, as well as in their heart "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." You will desire to transmit the knowledge of Christ to your posterity after you, and that Christ may be your children's portion, though they should beg their bread. Though you had thousands a year, yet if you have a due esteem of Christ, you would wish your children to be beggars all their lifetime, rather than strangers to Christ; and you will endeavour to bequeath grace to them, rather than the richest earthly inheritance.

[5.] In a word, they that are true lovers of Christ, they are lovers of the place where his honour dwells. Wherever he dwells in earth, they love that place, that person, that society; and where he dwells in heaven, they love heaven, and long to be there. Indeed, they that are not lovers of Christ, they cannot love heaven; they love this earth a thousand times better. It is true, heaven may be considered either privatively, as a place of freedom from wrath; or positively, as it is a place of perfect conformity to God. In the former sense, an unregenerate man may love heaven, because he hates to be damned, though he loves the way that leads to damnation; but in the latter sense, none but saints can love and desire it; no unregenerate man can truly desire heaven as it is a place of perfect holiness. Oh! Christless sinner! you cannot so much as desire to be in heaven, you could not delight in heaven, no more than a swine in a palace, nor a debauchee ranting among his gossips, could delight in a company that are praying, and praising God in the most spiritual manner. What! you may as well kill a carnal man, as confine him to prayer and preaching; he knows not what it is to take real pleasure in spiritual, heavenly work: and

how can he love heaven itself? They that are lovers of the promise cannot but be lovers of Christ, in whom all the promises are Yea and Amen.

6thly, They that are children of promise, are partakers of the promise, and of the virtue thereof, in its powerful effects. Not only are they begotten to a new and lively hope, and brought to live thereby : but their life is maintained by the power and virtue of the promise : not only have they all the promises made over to them in Christ, but they have some of the promises made out to them in the accomplishment thereof. Try then if you are such a partaker of the promise, as hath had the experience of the accomplishment of some substantial promise of the covenant to you, insomuch that you are in case to say, with the psalmist, Psalm xlii. 5, 6, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance. O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar." How dead, and dark, and dull, and discouraged I be at present; yet I remember certain times and places wherein some promises were so accomplished to me, that I met with God, and he met with me; and my mind was enlightened, my heart was enlarged, my soul was comforted, my diseases were healed, my lusts were knocked in the head, my foes were conquered, my fears and doubts were dispelled, and all my bonds were loosed: I was made to run in the way of God's commandments with delight; the love of God was shed abroad upon my heart; a glance of glory was let in upon my soul, that made me merrier than if I had been a monarch on a throne, and more glad than ever the bird that sang upon the bush: for I got the lively faith of the savour of God in Christ; the joy of the Lord was my strength, and the strength of the Lord was my joy, and this drove the bottom out of all my discouragements. They are partakers of the promise, and have had the accomplishment of some special promise of the covenant.

But more particularly, for trying if you be the children of the promise, by the participation of the promise, that I may not miss some of the most substantial promises of the covenant in making this inquiry: examine, if you be a partaker of the promise relating to God, the promise relating to Christ, and the promise relating to the Spirit. And,

1. Try if you be a partaker of the promise relating to GOD;

for they that are the children of promise, they are partakers of the promise, so far as that they are partakers of God by the promise; "Whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature," 2 Pet. i. 4. The children of promise then, have the image of the promising God stamped upon them, having a new divine nature: whereas by virtue of their union with the first Adam, according to the old covenant of works, they did partake of the very nature of the devil, and had the picture of hell upon them: now, by virtue of their union with Christ, the second Adam, who became a partaker of our nature, they are, in some sort, partakers of the divine nature. Now, what know you of this participation of the divine nature by the promise. This is indeed a great matter. I shall explain it to you in a few particulars.

(1.) To partake of the divine nature, is to partake of the divine light; for, "God is light," 1 John i. 5. And if you partake hereof, you are brought from darkness to light; and are children of light; light in the Lord, so as in his light you will see light. It is not the light that beasts have, as well as men; they have the light of the sun; nor such light as men have, who have the light of reason and natural understanding: nay, it is a light wherein God makes a man partaker with himself, so as to see things in God's light; in the light wherein God sees them. Do you thus see the evil of sin, the glory of God, the excellency of the saints, the beauty of holiness, the beauty of God's way and of his work, his word, his ordinances? &c.

(2.) To partake of the divine nature, is to partake of the divine life. It is said of natural persons, that they are alienate from the life of God; what is that, the life of God? who can define that? None but God himself. I shall only say, As God lives in himself, so the believer as far as he partakes of the divine nature, lives in God, "Your life is hid with Christ in God," Colos. iii. 3. And as God lives of himself, and to himself; so they hold their spiritual life of him, as the efficient cause; and it is to him, as the final cause; of him, as the author; and to him as the end: and they find it wholly of him; and that they are not sufficient of themselves to produce a good thought, a good desire, a good affection or action, a good word or work. This sufficiency is of God.

(3.) To partake of the divine nature, is to partake of divine love; for, "God is love, and he that dwells in love, dwells in God,"

1 John iv. 16. God in Christ is all love; and how he manifests his love, you see, ver. 10, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins;" and to be a sacrifice to incensed justice for our sins. Now, as God in Christ is all love to his children, so the believer in Christ is all love to God, and to the children of God, as far as he is a believer, and hath the image of God's love on him. Believers are kindly affectioned one to another; the word imports such a love as the dam hath to her young, and it is a fruit of that love that Christ hath to his children. There are some birds, when there is a muirburn, they will flutter over their young, when they are in hazard of being burnt, even till they burn themselves. O sirs, sin raised a great muirburn, a great fire, the fire of hell, the fire of God's wrath; all the children of promise, as well as the rest of the world, were like to be burnt in that muirburn: Christ came down flying on the wings of love in our flesh, and fluttered over his young, till he was burnt to death in the fire; but, being God as well as man, he rose again, and brought all his children out of the fire with him: and now, all that are actually children of promise, have such an impress of this love stampt on them, that they have some conformity to him in his love. Whatever is the object of God's love, is the object of their love: and the special objects of God's love, are the special objects of their love; particularly the children of God; they are willing to spend, and be spent, to do them service.

(4.) To partake of the divine nature again, is to partake of the divine holiness and righteousness, and to be holy as God is holy; not that the saints on earth are either freed wholly from sin on earth, or from a sense thereof; but they that partake of the divine holiness, are sensible of their own unholiness, and that they have no holiness of their own, but what he imparts to them; they are habitually inclined, and sometimes actually, to every duty of holiness and righteousness, conform to the first and second table of the law; insomuch that it is impossible for a true believer to be an Antinomian; that is, an enemy to the law, as it is a rule of holiness: for the law is written upon his heart, in such a manner, that what the law says, his heart says; what the law commands, his heart commands: what the law forbids, his heart forbids: not in a natural way, as every one hath a natural conscience, accusing and excusing, upon doing good or evil; but in a spiritual evangelical way, and by virtue of a new nature given him of God; for, he is

created in Christ Jesus unto good works: not to be saved and justified thereby, but only to witness, by the effects of thankfulness, that he is saved and justified. In a word,

(5.) To partake of the divine nature, is to partake of divine happiness and rest, as well as of the divine holiness and righteousness. We have a word, Heb. iv. 1, "Let us fear, lest a promise bring left of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short." Believers enter into his rest by faith; and, as perfect holiness hath perfect happiness; and God, being perfectly holy, is perfectly happy; so, according to the measure of holiness in the saints, such will be the measure of happiness; therefore their happiness and rest here is imperfect. But as God is happy in himself, and rests in himself; so they, according to the measure of faith, are happy in him, and rest in him as a holy God. It is true, there is a rest of justification in Christ, as their righteousness; and a rest of sanctification in Christ, as their strength; but both these tend to advance this rest in God, as a holy God. Rest to the conscience in Christ, as our righteousness, is the way to bring in rest to the heart in him as our strength; and the right improvement of Christ for righteousness, is in order to improve him for sanctification; and so in order to win to the enjoyment of God as a holy God, and to rest in him, and thus partake of his happiness.

2. Try if you be a partaker of the promise relating to CHRIST, for the children of promise are also partakers of Christ by the promise: Heb. iii. 14, "For we are partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end," that is, if we be true believers, and live by faith on the promise, we are made partakers of Christ thereby. Try then if you be a partaker of Christ.

(1.) In his death, or in the fellowship of his suffering, Phil. iii. 10. Do you look upon yourself as crucified with Christ; as having satisfied the law and justice in him; and as having nothing to do either with the law as a covenant, or justice as an enemy? I speak of what the believer does as a believer, and when he speaks the language of faith, and not of unbelief; for, when unbelief and the legal heart speak, it is just the reverse of what I am saying. The language of faith is, "I am crucified with Christ, who loved me, and gave himself for me;" and, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ." And what a glory is it to be conformable to his death, who is the Lord of life? Do you suffer with Christ, and share of the virtue of his death and suffering,

by getting sin slain, not only in its condemning power, but also in its commanding power, by the faith of his death and suffering? Do you find the enmity slain, and the flesh crucified, with the lusts and affections? And does the sense of pollution lead you to his blood as your daily laver for cleansing? Again,

(2.) Try if you be a partaker of Christ in his life; I mean, his resurrection, ascension, and sitting at the right hand of God, executing his mediatory office, and communicating of his fulness. Know you what it is to be begotten again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead, who, as he was delivered for our offences, so he was raised again for our justification? Know you what it is to be convinced of righteousness, because he hath ascended to the Father, thereby declaring that everlasting righteousness, for our justification, is wrought out by him to his Father's satisfaction! Know you what it is to be risen with Christ, and to have your affections set on things above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God, and so to share of the drawing virtue of his resurrection, ascension, and intercession? Again,

(3.) Try if you be a partaker of Christ in his righteousness, saying, "Surely in the Lord have I righteousness." It is not in myself, in my duties, nor in my graces, nor in my prayers, nor in my good meanings and intentions; but, "In the LORD have I righteousness." This is what the apostle desires to be more and more found in, not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith. Can you look upon yourself, however vile and polluted in yourself, yet as beautiful and perfectly righteous in Christ; righteous, I say, even in the sight of God, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to you? This is a mystery that none is acquainted with but a believer; none have such an inward sense of corruption as they have; and yet none have such an inward faith, to see that God takes no advantage against them because of it, as they do. Can you put honour upon Christ, so as, even under a sense of sin, wants, weakness, wickedness, and vileness, to wrap yourself in the righteousness of a God-man, and thus covered, to go boldly to the throne of grace? This is a very great honour, done to Christ, to attribute so much to his righteousness, that being clothed therewith, you can boldly break through the fire of God's justice, and all these attributes, when you see them all fully satisfied in Christ: for Christ with his righteousness, could go through the justice of God, having satisfied it to

the full for us : and we being clothed with this his righteousness and satisfaction, may go through too. What know you of this mystery to your experience? Again,

(4.) Try if you be a partaker of Christ in his strength. Can you say, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength" also? Christ's strength, as Mediator, is not only for himself, no more than his righteousness; but all that have union with him by faith, do participate with him of his strength, insomuch that they can say, "I can do all things through Christ strengthening me." Indeed, I can perform no duty, I can bear up under no difficulty, no not the least, any more than the greatest, in my own strength; but seeing his strength is made perfect in my weakness, most gladly, therefore, will I glory in mine infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Again,

(5.) Try if you be a partaker of Christ in his boldness. Christ, as our intercessor in heaven, hath access to his Father with boldness: to his Father, I say, who hears him always: And believers in him have boldness and access with confidence, through the faith of him, Eph. iii. 12. They come boldly to the throne of grace to plead, and they have the same foundation to plead upon: he pleads upon the sacrifice he hath offered and the blood he hath shed; and so believers have boldness to enter into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus. What know you of this bold approach to God, upon the ground of the Mediator's blood and righteousness and all powerful, ever-prevalent intercession?

3. Try if you be a partaker of the promise relating to the SPIRIT, for the children of promise are partakers of the Spirit of promise, Eph. i. 13: and they receive the promise of the Spirit through faith, Gal. iii. 14. Here then is one of the most notable ways for knowing if we be the children of promise, viz., by our partaking of the promise of the Spirit; for all the actual children of promise, they have the Spirit of promise; and, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

QUEST. How shall I know if I have the Spirit of promise?

ANSW. The Spirit is compared to a well of water; and how shall you know a spring-well, but by the bubbling of the water? "The water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up to eternal life." Here I might speak of the various operations of the Spirit. I need not here speak of that dispensation of the Spirit, as a Spirit of bondage; this is supposed in what I

touched at the beginning of this use. I will offer a few properties of the Spirit of promise, where he is.

(1.) Where the Spirit of promise is, he will be a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, Eph. i. 17. Ask your own soul then, Hath he come and glorified Christ, by receiving the things of Christ, and shewing them unto you? Hath he come, now or formerly, and made Christ more glorious to you than all the mountains of prey, more precious than thousands of worlds, more to be esteemed than all things, being the Prince of the kings of the earth, altogether lovely?

(2.) Where the Spirit of promise is, he will be a Spirit of grace, Zech. xii. 10. You read of the graces and fruits of the Spirit, Gal. v. 22, 23. If you be utterly destitute of these, and have nothing of the Spirit of faith, the Spirit of love, the Spirit of repentance, the Spirit of humility, how can you have the Spirit of promise? But, that you may not mistake, I must tell you that the Spirit of faith makes a man see his unbelief; the Spirit of love discovers enmity: the Spirit of repentance discovers hardness and impenitency; the Spirit of humility discovers pride, and humbles the man for the pride of his heart.

(3.) Where the Spirit of promise is, he will be the Spirit of glory, 1 Pet. iv. 14, "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth on you." And where the Spirit of glory is, he will fill with the thoughts of glory, with the hope of glory, with the faith of glory, with the desire of glory, with a longing after glory and perfection, expecting the coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, to destroy this world, and bring his people to glory: yea, the Spirit of glory fills a man with glory, makes him all glorious within.

(4.) Where the Spirit of promise is, he will be the Spirit of prayer and supplication, Rom. viii. 26, "The Spirit helpeth our infirmities with groanings which cannot be uttered." Know you what it is to go beyond words and expressions in your confessions, in your petitions, in your prayers? Know you what it is to have the Spirit as a Spirit of adoption, crying, *ABBA Father*, Rom. viii. 15, Gal. iv. 6? and, with tears of joy, to cry out, *Father Father*?

(5.) Where the Spirit of promise is, he will be a Spirit of consolation; hence so frequently he is called the Comforter, John xiv. and xvi. What know you of the joy of the Holy Ghost? At cer-

tain times, it is true, the stony-ground hearers may receive the word with joy, yet they have no root; but the joy of true faith is joy unspeakable and full of glory, 1 Pet. i. 8. As the groanings of the Spirit are unutterable, so the joys of the Holy Ghost are unutterable; and there is a glory in them surpassing the glory of the sun, moon, and stars; yea, beyond all created glory; for the view of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is the root of it. It is a humbling and strengthening joy; the joy of the Lord is their strength.

(6.) Where the Spirit of promise is, he will be a Spirit of warfare and mortification; Gal. v. 16, "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these two are contrary the one to the other." You will now proclaim war against all Christ's enemies; his friends are your friends, and his enemies your enemies. If the Spirit of Christ be in you, you will, through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body. Let not the man think he hath the Spirit of Christ in him, that is not walking in the Spirit; and let none think they are walking in the Spirit, who are not walking over the belly of their own lusts, and killing sin by the way. Indeed, we need not desire you who are without Christ, and in a state of nature, to war against your lusts, and mortify them; for, though it be your duty, yet you may easier see without eyes, speak without a tongue, work without hands, and walk without feet, than you can mortify one sin without the Spirit: therefore, though it be your duty, yet it is not your immediate duty: your duty, in the first place, is to come to Christ for the Spirit of promise. If you desire your servant go pay such a sum to your creditor, but by the way to go to such a friend to get the money; it is his duty to pay that sum of money to the creditor, and you may blame him if he do it not; yet it is not his immediate duty, he should first go to that friend by the way, that he may lift the money wherewith he may pay your debt: even so here sin is to be mortified, but something is to be done in the first place to enable you thereto. Some are taken up in warring against this or that lust, but in vain, while they never strike at the sinful nature that is in them; but you may beat down the bitter fruit of an ill tree till you be weary; but while the root is never touched, it will bring forth more; if the tree be not made good, the fruit will never be good: it is the good Spirit of God that makes a good tree. Do not think that when you bear down a particular lust for a while, about a sacrament, that you are a morti-

fied man : nay, it is but like making a dam against the water ; it may silence the noise of the stream for the small space of time that the dam is a-gathering, but it increases upon your hand and will come down afterwards with the more violence : so here there will be but little success in subduing particular sins, and mortifying certain individual lusts, while the fountain of all corruption remains unstruck at, and unmortified ; for, though particular sins may be silenced for a time, yet, while the seed of all corruption lies in the heart, it will afterwards flow out with a more forcible eruption. True mortification and warring against sin differ as much from that as the sun painted on a wall differs from the sun in the firmament. The Spirit of warfare is so contrary to the flesh, that he is destructive to the quiet and thriving of the indwelling sin itself ; and he is that fire that burns up the very root of lust. Even though sin prevail sometimes in a child of God, yet the very prevalence of sin, through the Spirit of warfare, is the mean of the destruction of sin : even as the snapper of a horse makes him run the faster, so the very fall of the godly makes him run the faster afterward ; and every defeat that he gets makes him fight the better afterward.

(7.) Where the Spirit of promise is, he will be the Spirit of holiness and sanctification ; not only of privative holiness, in the mortifying of sin. 2 Cor. vii. 1, but positive holiness, in the quickening of grace, and giving the man new life, new power ; “ I will put my Spirit within y u, and cause you to walk in my statutes,” Ezek. xxxvi. 27. Here is not only positive holiness, in the principle of it ; but active holiness : both internal, in the exercise of grace ; and external, in the performance of duty.

(8.) Where the Spirit of promise is, he will be the Spirit of power ; 2 Tim. i. 7, “ For God hath not given you the Spirit of fear, but of power, love, and of a sound mind.” And, indeed, these effects that I have already mentioned, require no less than the power, the almighty power of the eternal Spirit : all attempts to mortify sin, to war and struggle with it, without this power of the Spirit, is like a fly struggling beneath a mountain ; but upon the Spirit’s coming, the mountains flow down at his presence, and melt under his warm influences. Indeed if you know anything at all of religion, you know this, that almighty power must be exerted and let forth for every part of the spiritual exercise. There is no believing without power, no repenting without power, no praying without power, no right hearing without power, no right reading

without power, no right communicating without power. If you think it an easy thing for you to read, and pray, and communicate; believe it, man; in God's name I tell you, you have not learned the art of doing any of these to this day: you have not yet got your finger in the loop of religion; you have not fallen upon the lith to this good hour. As the whole purchase of salvation is by the price of the Mediator's blood, so the whole application of every part of it is by the power of his Spirit. Let Arminians boast of the free will of man, we will boast of the free grace of God, and of the powerful arm of JEHOVAH, without which no soul can have so much as a will to come to Christ; "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." All men's religion is but a kind of forced work, either from some outward excitement, or from a spirit of fear, till the Spirit of power come to make him willing: it is power that begets, and power that complete salvation work; even God's working in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure. What know you, man, of this Spirit of power, and of the promise applied with power, and of the gospel coming not in word only, but in power and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance: and of the need of the constant egress of divine power, and of the finger of God to cast out the devils that are in you, and that the hand of Zerubbabel, that laid the foundation of the spiritual temple, finish it and put the cope-stone thereupon, with shoutings of, Grace, grace unto it?

(9.) Where the Spirit of promise is, he will be a Spirit of praise and gratitude; PRAISE YE THE LORD, is the motto of the gospel spirit. Gratitude and thankfulness is the disposition of these who are under the influence thereof; "This people have I formed for myself, they shall shew forth my praise," Isa. xliii. 21. Gospel service is grateful service; "Offer to the Lord thanksgiving: pay thy vows unto the Most High," Psalm l. 13. Herein lies the mystery of right vowing and true personal covenanting: it is not the act of graceless unregenerate men, vowing against this or that sin; for that is like lopping off the branches, while yet the axe is never laid to the root of the tree. To vow and resolve against sin, without getting first an interest in Christ, and without having his Spirit; it is like a man building a great fabric without taking any care of the foundation; no wonder then, what he build to-day, fall down to-morrow. Some convinced persons go on still in this method: even though they plainly see that what ground they get against sin one day, they lose another; yet still, upon a new con-

viction, they take the same road again, and so fall into the same pit and snare anew. Yea, to put a man upon this exercise is like the driving of the enemy out of the open fields into an impregnable castle, where there is no prevailing against him, no dealing with him for his conviction or conversion. Why, says the man, I hope I am a Christian good enough, for I vow against my sins; and though I break them many times, yet the best of saints have their daily failings, as well as I: and thus he is impregnable and hardened against all the calls to come to Christ; for he is, in his own opinion a Christian already. Thus his vowing against his particular sins is his ruin, while the foundation was never laid.

Well, say you, what would you have unregenerate men to do? Shall they give themselves loose reins, and give their lusts their swing, and not vow against them? Surely, if you call us off from that duty, you are an enemy to holiness. What, man! would you think him an enemy that would call you off from mending a hole in the roof of your house, in order to come down and quench a fire that is consuming the whole building? Your vowing against your particular sins, man, and promising amendment, is but the mending of a hole in the roof of the house, and laying a fagot on it; but there is a fire at the foundation, man, that must be quenched with the blood of Christ; there is a burning furnace of corruption in your nature, that must be extinguished with the flood of the Spirit's influences and operations, otherwise you are undone for ever. Your vowing against this or that particular sin, without considering that you are nothing but sin, is like a being careful about a sore finger that is paining you, without being careful about a hectic fever that is killing you. Your vows and resolutions may give your natural conscience a little ease, but it will not cure your disease, but rather make you slight and neglect the right cure: like a man in a great fever, complaining of a heat in his skin, particularly a heat in his face; he may get a little ease by casting a little cold water on his face, but will that cure the heat of the liver, which is the cause and spring of the outward heat? No, no: the blood must be rectified, and the ill blood let out, either by a natural course, or artificial lance, or some purgative means; even so here, your vows and resolutions against particular sins, it is but a throwing of some cold water upon the face of a burning lust: it may give natural conscience some ease for a little, but, alas! there is a heat in the liver that must be abated; your blood must be rectified by the application of

the blood of Christ, and the operation of the spirit of Christ, otherwise all is vain work.

But the mystery of right vowing and covenanting is here ; it is the business of one that hath an interest in Christ, and that, under the conduct of the Spirit of promise, as a Spirit of praise and gratitude, offering to the Lord thanksgiving, and paying his vow to the Lord ; through grace vowing a grateful service in heart, lip, and life, to the Lord, that hath saved him from the guilt of sin, the wrath of God, and the power of corruption : the man's resolving here upon thankfully to give to the Lord the love of his heart, the calves of his lips, and the obedience of his life. There is here,

[1.] Heart gratitude : the man exalts and extols Christ in his heart, and esteems him to be every way precious, and altogether lovely : he exalts and extols the grace of God in his heart, and hath a high thought of the whole contrivement of salvation. Here is the work of the Spirit of praise and gratitude.

[2.] Lip gratitude : the thankfulness and gratitude of the heart vents itself in words ; " For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." The man hereupon speaks to his glory, and speaks of his glory : " In his temple shall every one speak of his glory."

[3.] Life gratitude : and here comes in the shining conversation, according to that rule, " Let your light so shine before men, that others seeing your good works, may glorify your Father that is in heaven." Indeed, none but these that have God for their Father in Christ, and have some measure of the faith thereof, can engage rightly unto this grateful service.

O sirs, pray that God may graciously covenant with you, otherwise you will never gratefully covenant with him : your covenanting will be vain till he come and discover to you the nature, freedom, and fulness of the covenant of grace, that stands fast with Christ. And let believers themselves remember always, that they never go to confound God's covenant of grace with their covenant of gratitude ; for your covenant of gratitude, even when entered into rightly upon the main, yet may be a thousand times broken ; but, woe would be to you for ever if the covenant of grace could be once broken : nay, but that is impossible ; for it stands betwixt two unchangeable parties—God and Christ. However, as the Spirit of gratitude is necessary before there can be any personal covenant of

gratitude ; so I despair of ever seeing the National Covenant rightly renewed, till the Spirit of praise and gratitude be poured out : therefore, if you would wish for a great reformation day, a covenanting day, O cry for the return of the Spirit of promise, as a Spirit of praise and gratitude ! Though the Lord owned our solemn covenanting days, however many make a jest of them now-a-days, and though some did enter into these Covenants under the influence of the Spirit of gratitude ; yet the general want of this Spirit, even in these that thus covenanted with the Lord, may be one of the causes why our Covenants were afterwards so fearfully broken and burnt.

I knew once a gentleman who, after his first conviction, made a covenant, and wrote it, signed it, and laid it up in his chest ; but afterwards turned more loose than ever, till, casting off all bonds, he went home one day and burnt his covenant with God : whereupon he took loose rein to his lusts for a time, till the Lord accidentally ordered his hearing another sermon ; the minister was directed to speak to the following strain, though he in the meantime was resolved to be hardened against all that the minister should say : Well, but the Lord put these or the like words in the minister's mouth, namely, " Perhaps there is some one here, that under convictions formerly hath made a covenant, and he hath afterwards gone to such a height of wickedness, that he hath burnt his covenant." The poor gentleman knew that none in all the world, but God and his conscience, were privy to that story, and therefore he was obliged to acknowledge it was God himself speaking to him ; then began a second work of conviction, and thereupon a discovery of Christ to his conversion : then he knew how he was to dedicate his life to the Lord, under the conduct of a Spirit of gratitude.

I apply this to the case of Scotland, though it may be applied to all personal cases : Scotland entered into covenant with God, but though the Lord helped some of our forefathers to act honestly, and from a Spirit of gratitude, yet the most part of these generations, as well as their posterity, were strangers to the Spirit of gratitude ; and what came of the covenant ? Behold, it was not only broken, but burnt ; and God is saying to Scotland, O Scotland, Scotland, you have broken the covenant ; you have forgotten the covenant ; you have played the harlot with many lovers ; yea, you have burnt the covenant of your God ! And, till God send the Spirit of conviction discovering our sin, and thereafter the Spirit of gratitude

making us regularly to engage unto duty, like children of promise, that have got the Spirit of promise as a Spirit of gratitude, there is little hope of powerful covenanting-days. O cry for the return of the Spirit for this end.—Meantime, I say, the Spirit of promise will be a Spirit of praise and gratitude.

(10.) Where the Spirit of promise is, he will be a Spirit of liberty, gospel-liberty, 2 Cor. iii. 17; and particularly liberty from the law as a covenant of works, which is the distinguishing mark of the child of promise, as Isaac, or of the free-woman, in opposition to Ishmaelites, the children of the bond-woman; hence the children of promise will have a gospel-spirit, in opposition to a legal spirit. Examine, therefore, what is your frame and disposition of spirit. Have you discovered the glory of the gospel? and are you thereby transformed from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord? Have you not the image of the gospel? are you cast into the mould of the gospel, and so got a gospel-spirit, which is a Spirit of liberty, in opposition to a legal spirit? What is that? even the spirit of bondage, belonging to the children of the bond-woman; the legal spirit is a spirit of slavery, a frightful and a fretful spirit, a terrified and melancholy spirit; a hand and foot-bound disposition, wherein the man hath no heart for God and Christ. But what is a gospel-spirit? It is even a holy gospel-liberty, and free disposition, wherein the man is set at liberty both as to his state and frame; his countenance is lifted up, he comes to have spiritual joy. A gospel spirit is a frank spirit, a joyful spirit, a free spirit: "If the Son make you free, then are you free indeed." It is true, the child of promise, that is married to Christ, and divorced from the law, may sometimes, through unbelief, go to his old husband, by reason of a legal disposition that remains, and is not wholly mortified in him, and then he finds his fetters fast, he cannot stir in the way of duty. But, believer, you will find that whenever your bonds are loosed, it will be in the way of returning unto your first Husband; I mean to the Lord Jesus, held out in the gospel promise; and that you must just come back again where you began. The promise that is the mean of quickening you at first, and of begetting you to a new lively hope, it will be still the door of life, and liberty, and quickening to you; you cannot find it in the law, but in the promise. All that you have wrought upon the loom of the law of works, through a legal unbelieving heart, must be unwrought, and undone, and opened out again, that you may begin anew upon the gospel-loom; for, the

Spirit of liberty is not received by the works of the law, but by the hearing of faith, Gal. iii. 2. Try then if you be free-born, at liberty from the law; not from obedience to it, but from bondage to it, either as to obedience or satisfaction.

[1.] As to obedience. If your obedience to the law be a bondage to you, you are so far acted with a spirit unsuitable to a child of promise, like a child of the bond-woman; but when your obedience to it is no bondage, no grievance, then you are only under the law to Christ, or to God in Christ, whose commands are not grievous. I must tell you, that so far as you are a child of promise, you do not owe the law so much as a grain-weight of grievous, hard, and conditional obedience; for Christ bore all that weight. It is only the law as a covenant of works, that brings in weighty, heavy, grievous, and conditional obedience; but Christ bore all that burden; therefore you owe no obedience to the law but that of love, and love makes it the law of liberty, James ii. 12, and a very light-some yoke. When the law comes to command the believer some heavy duty, he may tell it, I am not obliged to take a lift of it as a burden; for Christ bore all the burdensome and heavy part of it, and left nothing to me but the light and easy part of it; Matt. xi. 30, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light." If you be a believer, you will find it to be so. Sometime, when under the influence of the spirit of liberty, your heart is lifted up in the way of the Lord, and in the duty of praying, hearing, communicating, or wrestling with God alone. O, says the heart of the man then, I am so far from wearying of this work, or thinking it a burden, that it is a burden to me to think of giving it over. Oh! I cannot think of going away from the throne; I cannot think of going back to the vain, filthy world again. The man that is under the law, on the contrary, oh! the sermon is a burden, the sacrament is a burden, long Sabbath, long sermon; when will it be over? If any duty of the law be uneasy to you, it is not Christ's yoke you are bearing, but some of the old-covenant yoke, through the remainder of that covenant in you; but when you are doing duty, not like a conditional task, but in a way of flaming love, making your duty your element, and gratitude the spring, then you are acting so far like a child of promise; your obedience will be child-like, knowing that there is nothing you are obliged to do, but what the promise is engaged to do for you, and in you.—Thus, if you be a child of promise, you will have the spirit of liberty, and be free from the bond-

age of the law, even in respect of obedience; not free from obedience, unless it be the old-covenant heavy obedience, but free to obey, saying, "Truly I am thy servant, thou hast loosed my bonds;" particularly the bond of obligation to all heavy and uneasy obedience, is torn to pieces, that you may serve in a way of love and liberty.

[2.] As to satisfaction and suffering, you are free from bondage to the law, so as you cannot incur the penalty of death and the curse for not obeying. As you who are believers owe not a cup of cold water, as I said before, to the command of the law as a covenant, so you do not owe a drop of warm blood to the threatening of it; not a stroke of vindictive justice or wrath can fall upon you; for it hath fallen by you, and lighted on your Surety with a vengeance, to God's full satisfaction; so that, "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ." Hence, so far as you are under the conduct of a gospel-spirit, or a spirit of liberty, you cannot, you will not serve and obey from a principle of any slavish fear of hell and wrath. You may, indeed, fear your disobedience provoke your Father, and that you suffer fatherly chastisements; this is consistent with your state that art a believer; but if your faults and infirmities, whether more or less gross, fill you with the fear and dread of hell, then you act more like a child of the bond-woman, than a child of promise. Unbelievers ought, indeed, to fear hell, and to fear vindictive wrath, because they are liable to it, being strangers to the covenant of promise; but for you, believer, to fear God's everlasting wrath, as if God would demand satisfaction again of you, which he hath taken to the full off Christ, is dishonourable to the Lord Jesus, as if he were not a complete sacrifice to satisfy divine justice; yea, and an affront to God's justice, by making him unjust to demand more satisfaction than due; justice having got all its due from Christ, to seek more would be injustice. And besides, such a slavish fear would be unlike a child of God, that hath God for his Father; or a child of promise, that hath the promise for his security, and the promise sealed by the justice-satisfying, and hell-quickening, as well as heaven-purchasing, and God-glorifying blood of Christ.

In a word, There are two things that the children of promise, who, having the Spirit of promise as a Spirit of liberty, are set at liberty from, in the course of their walk; by which you may try yourselves. 1. From the legal power of sin. 2. From the legal penance of works.

1. I say, from the legal power of sin. Sin hath a legal power over all that are the children of the bond-woman; sin hath a kind of right to reign and domineer over these that are under the law; the law of works that they are under, is the law of sin and death, Rom. viii. 2; and the motions of sin are by the law, bringing forth fruit unto death, Rom. vii. 5. And hence they are under the dominion of sin, because they are not under grace, but under the law, Rom. vi. 14. But believers are free from this legal power of sin: "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death," Rom. viii. 2. "Sin shall not have dominion over them, because they are not under the law, but under grace," Rom. vi. 14. Though sin therefore, may have sometimes a prevailing power, a tyrannizing power, an usurped power over them; yet it hath no legal rightful power, for they have cast off the authority of sin, and have no king but Christ. Hence the believer complains of sin's usurpation and oppression; and, upon his complaining of it to his righteous God and Father, he finds the actual power of sin gradually broken: for he goes to God, as Bathsheba went to David when Adonijah usurped the kingdom: "My lord, hast thou not said that Solomon shall reign? and behold, Adonijah reigns," 1 Kings i. 17. So says the believer, Lord, hast thou not said that grace shall reign? And hast thou not promised that sin shall not have dominion? And yet, behold! sin usurps the throne. O righteous Lord, see to it! And in this way he gets sin brought down, and grace mounted on the throne.—Thus the believer is free from the legal power of sin. But then again,

2. From the legal penance of works. The believer in Christ is the most busy man about works, and yet the most free in all the world, in so far as he is a believer, and a child of promise, or of the free-woman. There is in the works of the believer something common, and something singular; something common to all that can be called good works, and that is their conformity to the law as a rule; but there is also something singular, and that is their disconformity to the law as a covenant. Hence nothing like penance in them; for, in this respect, so far as they are believers, they have ceased from their own works; you have the expression, Heb. iv. 10, "He that is entered into his rest, hath ceased from his own work, even as God did from his." They that have come to Christ, and so entered into their rest initially, they have ceased from their own work; they are dead to the law, and married to Christ, that they may bring

forth fruit unto God ; not to the law as a covenant, but to their new Husband. And as the Spirit of God says in another case, " Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord ; for they rest from their labour, and their works follow them." So may I say, Blessed are the dead that are dead to the law and married to Christ, for they rest from their legal labours, and their works follow them : for they are created in Christ Jesus unto good works. But they have ceased from their own works ; legal works are our own works, done for our own justification, and done by our own strength ; but gospel-works are not our own. And true believers have ceased from their own works, both in point of justification and sanctification.

(1.) In point of Justification, they have ceased from their own work ; that is, they work none at all, that they may get life and justification and acceptance thereby ; they that work for that end, they work their own woe and damnation, and take Christ's work out of his hand, and frustrate the end of Christ's death to their own destruction ; for, " If righteousness come by the law, Christ is dead in vain, Gal. ii. 21. By the deeds of the law no flesh living can be justified." Justification is to him that worketh not, but believes on him that justifies the ungodly, Rom. iv. 5.

(2.) In point of Sanctification, they have ceased from their own work, in so far that they dare essay nothing in their own strength ; but, having closed with Christ, as their righteousness for justification and acceptance, they close with him also as their strength for sanctification and assistance ; and hence they acknowledge they have no strength of their own, yet they are strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might ; and that they have no grace of their own, but they are strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. They have ceased from their own work, and then they work to purpose, while, coming off from a covenant of works, they come in to Christ, who works in them both to will and to do. Therefore, whatever they have ado, they put it in his hand, without whom they can do nothing, saying, with David, Psalm lii. 2, " I will cry unto God most high, unto God that performs all things for me."

Thus, in the tenor of their walk as children of promise, they are free and at liberty both from the legal power of sin, and the legal penance of works ; here is a great part of their present liberty, who have the Spirit of promise as a Spirit of liberty, which all the children of promise according to their measure have. By these things you may try yourselves.

Some of these marks, perhaps, will be more clear to believers themselves than others, and some of them more cloudy; may be one mark lifts you up, and another mark casts you down; one mark you take to yourself, and another mark you dare not take. Why? this evidence, you think, is what belongs to you, the other is what belongs not to you; and so you remain in a dubiety. Indeed, none ought to be rash in concluding concerning their eternal state; some take what belongs not to them, others reject what belongs to them. I know not how it is with the generality of you; I am a stranger to the case of your souls; but what I have said from God's word to you, I leave it to God's Spirit to make the powerful application, for searching you out, whether you be a child of promise or not.

One reason why unbelievers are ready to mistake, and think they are the children of promise, is, because they are filled with self-conceit; like a man looking through a green glass, all things appear green to him; so the hypocrite looking on himself through the fair spectacles of self-love and self-conceit, he looks upon every thing in himself to be fair; whereas, if the false glass were removed, and that he noticed himself in the true glass of God's word, he would see himself in the gall of bitterness.

One reason also why believers are ready to mistake, and doubt of their being the children of promise, while one mark is clear and another cloudy unto them, is, because they are apt to judge of themselves by their present feeling, the man apprehending these things belong not to him, which he does not find in himself at present; for, as we say of the church universal and invisible, the catholic church, it is not what it is for the present in existence, through the world, but the universal church is that society which hath been, is, and shall be; so, a believer is not to be measured by what he is at present, but what he hath been, is, and shall be. You should try if ever there was a time when you found these things in you, though you find them not at present; or, if there be some of these, and the like marks, that you have found, and others that you have never found, you should leave room for what God is yet to do before you go to heaven; for, if there be one substantial mark of a child of promise, that belongs to you, as being already wrought, another not yet wrought, you may be sure he that hath begun the good work, will complete it; if it be a thing absolutely necessary, it is what he hath promised to work; therefore, bless him for what marks you have, and wait on, in his own way, for what you want; and he

longer you go on in the Lord's way, the more will you come to discern all the marks in the way. If you be going along a way, and taking the marks of the way, perhaps there is at such a part of the way a mountain, at another part of the way there is a water, at a third part of the way there is a bridge, and at another part there is a house, and so on; you take these for the several marks of the way. Well, suppose a man sets out to the way with these marks given him, and he comes accordingly first to the mountain, and then to the water-side, and so far he judges he is in the way; but shall he stand still, and doubt if he be in the way, because he is not yet come to the bridge, and to the house? Nay, he goes forward, and then he comes to these also; so here, in the examining the state of your souls, though you should be in some suspense in applying to yourselves some of the characters assigned of the people of God; yet neither give way to desponding fears, nor slacken diligence in the way of commanded duty; go forward, and you will come to the rest of the marks in due time. Meantime if you have no substantial mark at all as yet, of your being a child of promise, you have no right to a communion-table which is for sealing of the covenant of promise.—May the Lord give you understanding in all things. Pray to him to search and try you; for no mark will find you out to purpose, unless the Lord himself apply it powerfully to you.¹

Use 3. I come to a cautionary use and application of this doctrine; and it may be followed forth in the short resolution of some cases, which the children of promise may be exercised with, concerning the right use, improvement and application of the promise.

FIRST CASE. Whether or not SINNERS as sinners, have any right to the promise? and what sort of right they have thereto? This is a case frequently exercising even to the children of promise; for, though they be saints, they are always looking upon themselves as sinners, and the chief of sinners, and thereupon are ready to exclude themselves from the benefit of the promise, through their unbelief.

ANSW. The promise is just a door of hope to a sinner; the gospel is the good news of Christ coming to save sinners; now, the gospel and the promise, is one and the same thing; the promise of pardon respects guilty sinners; the promise of cleansing and purifying, respects filthy and polluted sinners; the promise of taking away the heart of stone, concerns hard-hearted sinners. Hence the

(1) It is probable this is the end of the Sermon preached on the Saturday.

sinner may conceive hope ; it is the like of me that the promise looks to ; therefore I will look to the promise, and lay stress upon it, and upon a God that promises. Then is faith wrought by the mean of the promise ; and the man becomes a child of promise, being begotten thereby to a lively hope.—Hence the promises are declared to belong to a visible church, Rom. ix. 14. And Peter, in his sermon to the crucifiers of Christ, says, Acts ii. 39, “The promise is to you and to your children, and to as many as the Lord our God shall call.” Even so say I, the promise is to you, man ; to you, woman ; to you, sinner ; be who you will, you have such a right of access thereto, that it is lawful and warrantable for you to embrace the promise ; yea, you are commanded to believe it unto your salvation.

SECOND CASE. Are not the promises only made to BELIEVERS and SAINTS ? Therefore I may have no right to meddle with them.

ANSW. These that are actual believers and saints, they have a right of actual possession of the promise ; but their right is not privative, excluding the right of access and warrant to believe and embrace the promise, that unbelievers and ungodly persons have, who hear the gospel, and have the promise set before them as the door of hope, and the ground of faith. Believers have the promise already in its begun accomplishment ; yea, in Christ they have all the promises, and all that is promised ; and so the promise cannot be so properly said to be to them, for then it would be to promise them what they have already ; but more properly the promise of any thing is made to the man that wants it, and as he is a wanter. They who have all their wants supplied, have no need of a promise, such as the saints in heaven ; and believers on earth would have no need of a promise, if they were not partial wanters in themselves, though they have all in Christ. But, as a Saviour and a sinner are relatives, insomuch, that there would be no need of a Saviour, if there were no sinners ; so a promise and a wanter are relatives ; insomuch, that there would be no need of a promise, if there were no wanters. The great promise, “I will be thy God,” relates to these that want God, as we do all by nature ; the promise of Christ, relates to them that want Christ ; the promise of the Spirit relates to these that want the Spirit ; the promise of making a people willing, relates to them that want a will ; the promise of faith relates to them that want faith, and are unbelievers ;

the promise of repentance relates to them that want repentance, and are impenitent ; the promise of forgiveness relates to the guilty ; the promise of holiness relates to them that are unholy, and ungodly, or that want holiness. Let sinners, then, as sinners, be who they will, put in for a share of this grace.

THIRD CASE. If the promises are made to sinners, as such, then it must be to ELECT sinners, to whom only God intends to give what is promised : and I know not if I be an elect, therefore I cannot believe.

ANSW. That the elect only shall obtain is true ; and that as many as were ordained to eternal life shall believe and embrace the promise is also certain : but that is so far from being a ground of discouragement from believing, that it is rather an argument to believe the promise, that thus your election may be sure. Know, sirs, that your election is not the first object of faith ; nay, you are discharged to meddle with it, because it is a secret thing that belongs to God : the ground and object of your faith is the promise, or the gospel declaration. Know that the design of the Promiser is one thing, and the design of the promise is another : whatever be the design, end, and intention of the Promiser with respect to some, an inhibition is served, discharging you to meddle with that : but the end and design of the promise and gospel declaration, which respects all sinners, this you are concerned with, and all that hear this gospel, by virtue of the divine command, to believe the gospel with particular application ; namely, that Jesus Christ came to save sinners. Glorious is that wisdom of God, that brings about the design of his particular election, by such a general offer and invitation, so that none shall have any to blame for their perdition but themselves and their own wilful enmity in rejecting the Saviour, and salvation offered through him ; for whosoever will are warranted to come, and take of the waters of life freely. May we not say with the apostle, “ O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ; how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out ! ” Rom. xi. 33. And since Christ hath declared that as all that the Father hath given him shall come to him, so “ Him that comes he will in no wise cast out : ” and that he gathers his elect by this gospel trumpet ; then put your election out of doubt, by coming to Christ, and laying hold on the promise at his call.

FOURTH CASE. But what if I have not the inward call of the

Spirit in my heart? May I come to the promise, and rely on it, before it come to me with power? If so, then I fear I will presume, and believe in my own strength.

ANSW. 1. The rule of faith is God speaking in the word, and not in the heart; the object of your faith is the gospel declaration, and not the Spirit's operation.

2. You are carefully to distinguish betwixt your warrant to believe, and power to believe; your right and warrant to believe, is grounded on the gospel-offer and promise, together with God's command to you to believe, which constitutes your duty to believe, and makes unbelief your sin; but power to believe, is indeed from the Spirit of God, in his saving operation; therefore you ought to cry for the Spirit of power, to accompany the dispensation of the word.

3. Though you do not feel this power exerted, yet that not being your warrant, but the word itself, you ought at the call of God to essay believing, and stretch forth the withered hand; and, in the act of so doing, you may find power at hand for strengthening you; but while you wait for the feeling of his power, you delay the believing of his word, which is dangerous. Feeling is not believing; a feeling of his power is not a believing of his promise; and there is much deceit in saying you will not believe his promise till you feel his power; for though divine power be necessary to believing, yet the feeling of his power is not necessary. Therefore,

4. Distinguish carefully betwixt real power and felt power. If, upon the call of God, you be determined in heart to embrace the promise, and accordingly essay it, there is real power, though not felt till afterwards; as it was with the woman with the bloody issue, of which before.

As to the fear of presuming in this matter; why, it is no presumption to do what God bids you, and to take what God gives you; and he gives Christ and the promise to be taken. It is indeed presumption to think of believing the promise in your own strength: and therefore it is one act of presumption, among others, that you are not aware of, for you to delay believing, till you find you have strength in yourself to believe; because that you will never find; for when a man is enabled to believe, his faith never says, Now I have strength in myself, therefore I will go and believe in this strength received; nay, but it rather says, Oh! I have no strength,

any more than I have righteousness ; therefore I will go out of myself, and take God's word of promise, and Christ therein, for strength and righteousness both : I will take hold of his strength promised, and go in the strength of the Lord.

FIFTH CASE, concerning the promise with which the children of promise may be exercised is, Whether the ABSOLUTE promise that is presented to sinners to be believed, does presuppose the CONDITION of faith ? and if faith itself be promised, how shall the faithfulness of God be cleared, in not accomplishing the promise unto all sinners that hear the gospel ?

ANSW. 1. Faith itself is absolutely promised, in that word, " When I am lifted up, I will draw all men after me : They shall look to me whom they have pierced, and mourn : They shall be willing in the day of thy power : " yea, and the promises of giving a new heart and a new spirit, are promises of faith ; and seeing faith is absolutely promised, it cannot be the condition of the absolute promise. Nay, the grand condition of all the promises, and of that promise of faith among the rest, and upon which it is to be obtained is Christ's obedience and satisfaction, 2 Pet. i. 1. There precious faith is said to be obtained through the righteousness of God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ.

2. These absolute promises, as given forth in the gospel dispensation, are general and indefinite, unto ALL ; not particular and definite, unto ANY : it is a blank bond, or an indefinite obligation to blank persons ; whosoever will, may come and sign, by giving the cordial assent of faith thereunto. Thus it is a standing claim to all sinners of mankind to whom it comes, and warrants their believing. In this respect it is given forth generally and indefinitely : but here sinners in general are only named : no person's name in particular is inserted therein, unless they sign the blank bond, and fill up their name by the cordial assent of faith ; then the bond gives right to that person in particular ; and then, and not till then, is the faithfulness of God obliged to accomplish to that person all that is contained in the bond of the promise.

Why, then, say you, still faith is the condition.

I answer, No ; for faith gives no right to what is in the bond, but only takes the right which the bond freely conveys, and takes the promise which God freely gives, *He that believes shall be saved.* Why ? not because faith gives a right and title to that promised salvation, but only it takes that salvation which God freely gives

in the promise of the gospel; and to which he gives a right and title through the righteousness of Christ. Therefore, although it be true, that till the man believe, he hath no actual right to the thing promised, yet it is no proper condition of that promised thing, because it does not give any right thereunto by way of moral conditionality, but only takes the right thereunto by way of physical instrumentality. If you should promise a man a great estate, which you are able to give him, or give him your bond; if he accept, your credit is obliged to make it out: but if he will not take your promise or bond, you are under no obligation to make it out, notwithstanding that your promise and bond remains still free and absolute: even so it is here, they that will not take what God is giving them in the promise, cannot charge God with unfaithfulness, in not making out what he hath said. If they take his word, truly, then, his faithfulness is engaged; but if not, he is engaged on the contrary, to destroy them, because, through unbelief they make him a liar, 1 John v. 10. However, the promise is presented to them generally for a warrant of faith, only it is not applied to them particularly and powerfully for the creating of faith: this God does, when and to whom he pleases.

SIXTH CASE. If the promise be not PARTICULARLY to me, what the better am I of the general indefinite promise, which God is not obliged to make out to every one? What advantage have I thereby?

I answer, with Paul, Rom iii. 2, "Much every way," because you have a claim and warrant to believe and take possession of the promise, which, in itself, is a great mercy; yea, even though not yet particularly applied to you by the Spirit in a day of power. Yea, a general promise of sinners presented to you, with a particular command obliging you to take it to yourself, is as much as if it were particular, running in your very name. Besides, you cannot be wronged here, for if you will have what God is offering, you shall have it; "Whosoever will, let him come;" but if you will not have what he offers, then your sinful refusal ruins you, you wrong yourself: "Why will you die?"

But, say you, God can conquer me, and make me willing.

ANSW. 1. Indeed so he can, though he be not obliged by any law but his own sovereign will and grace, which will make him conquer and make willing all whom he hath appointed unto life. But,

2. As he is not obliged to make you willing, so, if he shall not do it, surely you have no cause to complain; seeing while you are unwilling, you despise his goodness, and care not for his grace.

3. Seeing none are willing to take the promise in Christ, till God make them so, he thus makes it evident, that all who are damned, are damned by an act of holy justice, and their damnation is of themselves: so all that are saved, are saved by an act of mercy in Christ, and their salvation is of grace.

4. If you be one that would desire to be made willing, the case alters; there is some will there already, and the power of God is at hand to further the work: only put employment in God's hand of power, saying, "O draw! draw me, and I will run after thee."

SEVENTH CASE. Whether a promise may be applied that is given OBJECTIVELY in the WORD, and not given SUBJECTIVELY and powerfully by the SPIRIT? If the promise, for example, be only presented to the memory, in reading, hearing, praying, meditating, without coming in with any power, may it be applied to any usefulness?

ANSW. 1. If the question be, whether a man ought to apply it in that case, and take it home with particular application? No doubt he ought, for the word of God should be believed; if it be a word of salvation to a sinner, it ought to be welcomed and entertained by faith. But,

2. If the question be, whether a man can apply it in such a case, without power attending it? To be sure he cannot: yet he ought to essay it, as I said before, though he feel not the power; not knowing but power will accompany the essay.

3. The word of promise may be presented to the mind barely in reading or thinking, and it may be only a simple act of the memory that is first exercised about it; yet, through the Lord's blessing, our meditation may be improved to a lively acting of faith upon it; "While I was musing, the fire burned," says the psalmist.

4. A word suitable to our need and case, when it is impressed upon the memory, ought not to be despised, because it may be a messenger from heaven for our spiritual advantage; for the Spirit is called the Remembrancer, for bringing the word to mind, John xiv. 26. This is one of the ways of his teaching; "He shall teach you all things." How? "He shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." Never cast out with a suitable and seasonable word, because it came only to your mind, as it were, in a seeming overly manner, but give it entertainment; it will, perhaps, make more room for itself, and sanctify your memory,

“Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.”

EIGHTH CASE. If a word of promise come in to the heart with any power and life, how shall I know whether it be from **GOD**, or from **SATAN**, transforming himself into an angel of light?

ANSW. 1. God sends his word upon the heart sometimes in such a manner, as carries its own evidence that it is from the Lord, insomuch that there is no questioning of it at the time wherein it comes, no more than one can question whether the sun shines at mid-day, it hath such a stamp of divine glory and majesty upon it; but afterwards, when clouds and desertion recur, the soul may be tempted to doubt whether it was a delusion or not. Therefore,

2. It is meet, in such a case, that the man reflect upon the impression that the word of power made upon him. Ask a man, when it is a dark night, How do you know that ever you saw the natural sun? May be you was but dreaming, and in a delusion; it was nothing but a strong imagination. Why, says the man, I am sure I saw it, because mine eyes were dazzled with the light of it; and I was warmed with the heat of it; and I saw to work by it; and, in the light of it, I saw every thing about me; and I was delighted with it; and the like: so may you say, when in the dark night of desertion, tempted to think that the word you got was a delusion; you may reflect how it was with you when the word came from heaven with power and divine light; and when, together with it, the Sun of righteousness shined in your soul; were not your eyes enlightened, your heart warmed, your soul cheered, and your spirit quickened to the Lord's work?

3. Satan may, indeed, send in words of scripture; he spoke Bible dialect to Christ when he tempted him, and so he may do to you; but it is always out of some ill design: as he tempted Christ to deny his Sonship, to destroy himself, and the like; so the words that come from the devil, tend to some wicked effects, either to make the soul secure, or desperate; either to depress it too much towards despair, or to elevate it too much to presumption. It tends to disturb and distract, and discompose the soul; or else to fill it with false peace, and to make it rest in itself, and drive it off from its true resting place. In a word,

4. A word from the devil bears the devil's image, but a word from God bears God's image. The devil's image is pride and un-

holiness ; and a word from him tends to make a man proud and carnal ; whereas a word from the Lord tends to make a man holy and humble. A promise from the Lord is always a glass wherein somewhat of the glory of the Lord appears, whereupon the soul is changed from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord. Though sin may afterwards prevail, yet the power of it is more weakened.

Finally, If it come in a time of need, and exactly suitable to the soul's case, and while it is pouring out itself before the Lord in prayer, it looks well ; " For this I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me : and he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee ; for my strength is made perfect in thy weakness," 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9.

NINTH CASE, How shall I know, when I get a promise sent in to my heart, whether or not I mistake the SENSE of the promise, and the END and DESIGN thereof? For example, a child of promise gets a promise borne in upon him ; How shall he know that he does not mistake the mind of God in it?

ANSW. 1. When God gives a word, he gives it in a suitable-ness to the design and scope of his HOLY SPIRIT, in that text of scripture. If the sense you put upon it, be not suitable to the sense of the Spirit of God therein, then certainly you are under some mistake therein. But,

2. The Spirit of God is an Interpreter, one among a thousand ; and readily, when he gives in a word, he makes the sense appear better than all the ministers in the world can explain it : and the soul will see some gospel-mystery, some hidden glory in the word, that no interpreter, but the Spirit of God, can shew and manifest.

3. You can hardly mistake the sense of the word, if the Spirit testify of Christ therein ; for Christ says of the whole scriptures, that they testify of him, John v. 39.

4. You can hardly mistake the end and design of God in the word that you get, if it lead you in to Christ, and draw you to him ; for the language of the Spirit, in every word of scripture is, Come to Christ ; " The Spirit and the bride say, come." By these generals you may guess, whether or not you hit upon the sense of the promise given you.

TENTH CASE, that a child of promise may be exercised about, is, When I am concerned before the Lord in prayer for a friend in

affliction, or in dying circumstances, be it a relation, a child, a husband, a wife, or a near intimate acquaintance, and I get a promise let in to my heart suitable to my concern. How shall I know if the promise relates to *myself*, or to the *person* I am concerned about? and how shall I judge whether I *misapply* the promise relating to them?

ANSW. 1. As to that part of the question, whether it relates to yourself, or the person you are concerned about; It is, indeed, possible to mistake in this matter: and I do not understand any other way of your being sure that it relates to your friend, except it be by some spiritual instinct and secret impression, that cannot well be explained: only, the Lord, who presents the promise to you, will readily present the person also that you are concerned about, and lay the load of his affliction, as it were, upon your spirit, which you carry to the Lord, and cast down at his feet, till he please to whisper into your ear, as it were, or rather into your heart, some account of his design relating to that person.

2. As to that part of the question, How to judge, whether you mistake or misapply the promise that relates to them?

(1.) Perhaps it is a general promise applied to a particular case, such as that, "Fear not, I will help, I will save;" and you are ready to mistake a temporal salvation for a spiritual; or a spiritual and eternal salvation, for a bodily and temporal one. Or,

(2.) Perhaps it is a more particular promise, such as that, John iv. 50, "Go thy way, thy son lives;" or that, "This sickness is not unto death, but to the glory of God," John xi. 4. You are ready to mistake the design of the word, and of the Lord's giving it; and so to apply it amiss. Which may be done especially in two cases.

[1.] When you limit the Lord to your side of the question; then you are in danger of being left to mistake the promise.

[2.] When the natural sway of your affections and inclinations is made the STANDARD of explaining the word: or when you are determined, as it were, before hand with respect to what you would have, and then interpret the promise in favour of your own inclination, more than in a suitableness to what is most agreeable to God's word, or needful for the party you are concerned about. We are ready to mistake a promise, and influences from heaven, as if the design of them were just to humour our present

apprehension and judgment; whereas after experience may discover that we were mistaken. Job's friends were under a special influence from heaven in all that they spoke concerning Job; but that influence they were under, came to them when they were under a very gross misapprehension concerning Job, as if he had been a hypocrite; and accordingly they misapplied that influence they were under, to their present misapprehension: and so went on in their mistake, accusing Job, till the Lord discovered their error. So people may get promises, and adapt them to their misapprehension, whether for or against these they are exercised about, making God's word to bear a sense that most favours their own present sway, inclination, or apprehension; hence many of the Lord's people have found themselves brought under very melancholy disappointments, through their inadvertency this way. Which should learn us sobriety, and wisdom, and holy circumspection, in applying promises of this sort, that Satan get no advantage, to the weakening of faith, and razing the foundation thereof with respect to other promises.

ELEVENTH CASE. How shall I judge of a promise that I have got, when the quite contrary to what I thought was promised to me, hath fallen out in providence? How shall I maintain honourable thoughts of the divine faithfulness in that case?

ANSW. 1. "Let God be true, and every man a liar." You ought to take with ignorance and error in applying and using the promise; and, at the same time, give God the glory of his faithfulness, believing that he will be true to his word, however providence seem to contradict the promise.

2. Perhaps you did not know at that time what God was saying to you. As Christ said to Peter, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter;" so he may say to some, What I speak, thou understandest not now, but thou shalt understand hereafter.

3. Perhaps you have not given God his day, by waiting till the time that he designed for the accomplishment; may be it is coming; or, if you have given him his day, you have not given him his due, by being fully persuaded that he that hath promised was able to perform; and by believing against hope.

4. Perhaps you mistake the way and manner wherein God designed to make good the promise to you; "His way is in the deep, and his footsteps in the mighty waters." He makes the promise of

heaven run, as it were, through hell before the accomplishment thereof, that so the trial of faith may be precious. He accomplishes the promise of glory, through misery; the promise of liberty, through bondage and calamity. Judge not of his faithfulness by outward appearances, otherwise you will never believe his word. If you get a bright promise, you may get a dark cloud upon the back of it, to keep you humble, and to try if your faith be the evidence of things not seen, or if it can see invisible things through visible impediments, as Abraham's faith did. There was much invisible glory and excellency held forth in that promise that was made to Mary the mother of Jesus, Luke i. 30, 33. No doubt, Mary thought she would be a happy woman while she lived; and that her Son, our Lord Jesus, would be a great man, even in worldly respects; for we see how the apostles themselves dreamed of a temporal earthly kingdom that Christ should have, as the rest of the Jews did: no doubt, I say, she thought much temporal happiness, splendour, and grandeur to her Son, even here; but, that she might not live in that mistake, see how the Lord directed old Simeon to speak to her when he had the child JESUS in his arms, Luke ii. 34, 35. Thus you see here promises, and God's way of accomplishing them, may be mistaken. O sirs, see his way to be glorious and honourable.

TWELFTH CASE. Whether may one conclude himself to be a child of promise, that never found ANY PROMISE come in with power to his soul? "Why, says one, I am in no danger of mistaking the promise that way you was alleging; for I get no promise in that manner borne home upon me, and this makes me many times doubt whether or not I can be a child of promise: I hear of some getting promises with life and power set home upon them, but I know nothing of that; and therefore I would know if this be consistent with a believing state."

ANSW. The dispensation of grace towards the children of promise is various: I cannot say they have all the same experience of words of promise darted in, as it were, from heaven upon their hearts; but this I will say of all the children of promise, that there is some word of grace or other, whatever way they get it, on which they were made to hope; for they are begotten again to a lively hope by the word of the gospel; and can in some measure say, "Lord, remember the word on which thou hast caused me to hope." If all the promises of the Bible be alike to you, and you was never begotten to a lively hope, by one of them more than another, how

can you be a child of promise, when the promise hath never opened its womb to bring you forth any faith or hope in your heart?

THIRTEENTH CASE. Whether may a man take a promise that is not given him, or apply a promise that God does not allow him to apply?

ANSW. 1. All the promises are given in the gospel-offer, to be received; and it is the sin of gospel-hearers, that they do not take and apply what God gives, but rather put away Christ and the promise from themselves, and live in unbelief.

2. People may take and apply a promise amiss, and ruin themselves in their way of taking, when they take the promise to themselves, not by faith, but by fancy and strong imagination; and indeed the faith of many is nothing but a strong fancy and opinion; a damnable faith.

3. People may take and apply the promise amiss, to their own ruin, when they take it, but not out of God's hand, and upon his authority; whereas true faith receives the word, not as the word of man, but as it is in truth the word of God, which effectually worketh in them that believe, 1 Thess. ii. 13.

4. People may take and apply the promise amiss, and may be said to take what is not given, when they take it, but not as given, and for the end and design for which it is given. The promise is given to make you holy, as well as to make you happy; but if you take it to make you secure, and to give you a latitude and liberty in sin, and so to abuse the grace of God unto licentiousness, then you are but despising the goodness of God, and treasuring up to yourself wrath against the day of wrath; but if you take the promise by faith, believing and applying it to yourself; if you take it out of God's hand, and take it as given, and for the holy ends for which it is given, then you need not fear that you take what is not given you; God allows and commands you thus to take.

FOURTEENTH CASE. How may the promise be improved, that, in all probability, will not be fulfilled in our day?

ANSW. (1) We are to live and die in the faith of them, Heb. xi. 13. (2) We ought to search the periods of time wherein they are to be accomplished, Dan. ix. 2, compared with 1 Pet. i. 10, 11. (3) We ought, with patience, to expect the accomplishment, Heb. x. 35, 36. (4) We must not judge of the accomplishment by seemingly contradictory providences; for, "The Lord is not slack con-

cerning his promise," but he will take his own time and way, which is sometimes very mysterious.

FIFTEENTH CASE. Whether may a child of promise have God speaking to him in a promise savingly, and yet he not know it?

ANSW. I doubt not but there may be young children of promise, like young Samuel, to whom the Lord spake again and again, and he thought it was Eli: so the Lord may be speaking to some, and speaking to their heart, and they may be so little acquainted with the Lord, as to think it is but the minister that is speaking. However, these whom the Lord begins to speak graciously and powerfully unto, he will make them know his voice, and bring them to more acquaintance with him. But, in case any hereupon presume they are children of promise, though they do not know it; there are these things they will know something of, who are the children of promise. They know that, by nature, they are strangers to the covenant of promise; and that, instead of the promise, they are under the threatening of the law by nature; and under the apprehension thereof, they have fled to Christ and the promise. They know, that all the spiritual life they have, is by virtue of the promise, or the grace of God in Christ; the promise hath given life to their faith, life to their hope, life to their desire, life to their repentance and mortification; "Having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, &c. Thy word hath quickened me." They know that the promise of God is good security for heaven and eternal life; and they take it as such. They know that the security of the promise depends upon the blood of Christ; they are all Yea and Amen in Christ, and upon the faithfulness of God, the oath of God; therefore their dependence is thereupon. In a word, they are prizors of the promise, and pleaders of the promise, appliers of the promise; and have communion with God, in Christ, by the means of the promise.¹

Use 4. I come now to an Use of Exhortation, which may be directed, 1. To unbelievers, who have no faith, and consequently no special actual interest in the promise. 2. To believers that are the actual children of promise. 3. To all in general.

First, To unbelievers, that are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise. O seek to be the

(1.) It is probable this ends the Sermon preached on the Sabbath.

children of promise, as Isaac ; I mean, to have it made evident to you that you are so. Some motives and some directions I would here offer to you.

1st, For Motives, I shall only propose that you consider whose children you are, while you are not the children of promise ; particularly, whose children you are by nature and whose children you are by nation, and so by remote or immediate parentage.

[1.] Consider whose children you are by nature. (1.) You are the children of the devil, 1 John iii. 10 ; even the race of the apostate Adam : Children of the wicked one, Matt. xiii. 38, “ Ye are of your father the devil,” John viii. 44. (2) You are the children of iniquity, Hosea x. 9. (3) You are the children of disobedience, Eph. ii. 2, and v. 6. (4) You are the children of wrath, Eph. ii. 3. (5) The children of the curse, cursed children, 2 Pet. ii. 14. (6) You are the children of the night and of darkness, 1 Thess. v. 5. (7) You are the children of perdition, John xvii. 12. (8) You are the children of hell, Matt. xiii. 15. (9) Children of the flesh, Rom. ix. 8. (10) The children of the bond-woman, as in the context. From these epithets, given to these in our state in Scripture, you may gather what a sad and doleful condition you are into, that are not the children of promise.

[2] Consider whose children you are by nation, and that whether by remote national descent, or by immediate parentage.

(1) By remote national descent, as Scotsmen and Scotswomen. Though this be what concerns you all in common, I suppose, who hear me in this place : yet some affecting considerations may be drawn therefrom, for inducing you to be restless till you get some evidence of your being the children of promise. Why, by virtue of your Scottish birth, more remotely considered,

You are the children of Pagans, a heathen brood. It may be truly said of us, “ Thy birth and thy nativity was of the land of Canaan ; thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite,” Ezek. xvi. 3. For, before the gospel came first to be published in Scotland, if we look a thousand and some hundred of years backward, we will find we are nothing but a Pagan brood ; the children of as blind and brutish idolators as ever were in the world. Owen, in his *Theologamena* (besides what historians relate) discovers the cursed idolatory of Britain, that our forefathers were drowned into : their gods were many : and, among the rest, these from whom we derive to this day the ordinary names we give to the days of the week, as

Sunday, that was dedicate to the Sun ; and Monday, to the Moon ; Tuesday, to Twisco ; Wednesday, to Woden ; Thursday, to Thor ; Friday, to Friga, or Venus ; and Saturday, to Saturn. They offered human sacrifices to their imaginary deities, in the most cruel manner, which I cannot here enlarge upon. However, we are of a Pagan extract, an idolatrous brood : we have no claim to Abraham as our father ; we are not, by birth, of Shem's family, the family of the faithful ; and never had we been in a better condition, had not the Lord persuaded Japhet to dwell in the tents of Shem.

2. You are the children of Papists to come a little nearer hand. We, as Scots, are of the lineage of Antichrist, a Popish brood ; for, after gross Paganism was abolished by the gospel-light, that God sent to Scotland, a cloud of Popery and Antichristian darkness, idolatry, and superstition, overspread the land, for several hundred years before the Reformation, wherein the Lord brought out of that mystical Babylon ; however, when we look back to these dark times, we may see ourselves to be but a generation of Babylonish brats. It is hardly two hundred years since our forefathers were all black Egyptians, and many in Scotland are not yet brought out of that popish Egypt to this day ; many never had their hearts truly brought out of it, and are longing to be back again to it.

3. You are, even as Scots, children of apostates, a perjured brood ; the offspring of covenant-breakers ; a perfidious race. We, in our forefathers, have been guilty of the most gross and vile abominations of swearing and forswearing, even since our reformation from Popery : oaths upon oaths have been taken ; and some oaths contradictory to the former. I speak not only of private and personal, customary and bloody oaths, which abound among all ranks ; but even of public oaths imposed by law. What nation under heaven have changed their religion so often, and the government of the church so frequently, as Scotland ? May not the Lord say of us, as he said of Israel, " My people have committed two great evils, they have forsaken me the fountain of living water, and digged to themselves broken cisterns that can hold no water ?" May he not bid us " Pass over to Chittim, and to Heathenish nations, and see if they have changed their gods, their glory for that which doth not profit ?" Jer. ii. 10, 11, 13. But especially was there ever a nation entered more solemnly into covenant with God ? And was there ever any nation that not only broke, but burnt the covenant of their God, and cried it up for a sin of rebellion to own and plead for the

covenant of their God, as Scotland hath done? Was there ever any nation ashamed of their glory as we have been?

4. We, as the people of Scotland, are the children of an unthankful nation, and an ungrateful blood, that have sinned against old and late mercies. 1. Against old mercies. God hath an old kindness for Scotland; and we are a race that have sinned against very ancient love: God sent the gospel very early to Scotland, even a few years after the ascension of Christ; though Christianity was not established by law, till about the two hundred and third year of our LORD, in the reign of Donald the first, yet it was received by many in Scotland, before the second of the ten primitive persecutions; for, as historians tell us, and even the Roman history confirms it, many eminent Christians fled from that persecution even unto Scotland, because they were assured that the gospel was received there; and that persecution being about the sixty-ninth year of Christ, the gospel-light that shined in Scotland before that time, behoved to have made a very early entrance here; which, as some tell us, was occasioned by the persecution that the Jews raised against the apostles and disciples of Christ, who thereupon leaving Jerusalem and Judea, went up and down the world, speaking to every people in their own language; and that these who came to our northern parts, were the disciples of the apostle John. However this may be, yet it is generally owned that we were among the very first fruits of the Gentiles brought in to the Lord Jesus; therefore, I say, we are a people that have sinned against very ancient love, early kindness, and old mercies. 2. Against late mercies. Need I here mention the glorious Reformation from Popery, the merciful Revolution, and manifold deliverances from Prelacy, and arbitrary power? These things are of later date, and better known; together with the great gospel-light, and innumerable mercies of this kind, that we have sinned against, insomuch as we have sinned away many national mercies, and are become bond-slaves; having so far sold ourselves, that our posterity may say, we are the children of slaves. And have we not sinned away many spiritual mercies, many gospel-privileges, and sacred liberties? How is gospel-light darkened, gospel-truth adulterate and sophisticate with legal mixture?

(2.) Consider whose children you are by immediate parentage. Let none boast of their birth and pedigree; even as they are children of the present generation, every one hath reason to say, with David, "What am I? and what is my father's house?" The Lord

gives the Jews a black name, Isa. lvii. 3, "The sons of sorcerers, the seed of the adulterer and whore;" because their immediate parents were idolators, they are called the children of whoredoms; so perhaps, it may be said of many here, that some are of a bastard brood, the children of whoremongers and adulterers; some are of a thievish brood, a race of robbers and thieves; some are of a graceless pedigree, descended of wicked parents, that never knew any thing of God; some of a malignant race, the children of these that were enemies to God, and the work of God, and the power of godliness; some of a viperish brood, of whom it may be said, as John the Baptist to the Jews, "O generation of vipers," haters of God, and bitter enemies to the cross of Christ, "who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" Oh! how far from and unlike to the children of promise are such? Or, if any here be the children of gracious and religious parents, yet considering what even they were by nature, as well as others, have you not reason to say, as it is, Deut. xxvi. 5, "A Syrian ready to perish was my father." Whether your immediate parents were good or bad, you have matter of humiliation; if they were good, then it may be humbling unto you, that you have not walked in their imitable footsteps, nor followed their faith and holiness; and you are their children and offspring, merely as they were sinners, not as they were saints; if they were bad, then without controversy, it is a humbling consideration, they begat you after their own likeness, and you remain children of wrath and disobedience, like them, and so you are their rightful and immediate heirs, heirs to all the curses and threatenings that they were under.

Now, should not this stir you up to be restless till you know that you are among the children of promise, to consider whose children you are by nature, by nation, and by immediate parentage? especially when it is also considered what a wrathful heritage you have, by being of such a Syrian brood; for, by reason of your native pedigree, you are under dreadful plagues, particularly the plague of sin's pollution, and the plague of God's curse.

1. Under the plague of sin's pollution; not only destitute of God's image, which man had in his primitive innocent state; but polluted and defiled throughout the whole man, like children cast orth to the open field, to the loathing of thy person; not salted at all, nor swaddled at all: Not washed with water, but lying in their

blood, Ezek. xvi. 4, 5, every finger of your hand, every bit of your flesh and bones is but a clod of corruption ; every member of the body, every faculty of the soul, is but a heap of pollution and filthiness ; “ Altogether become filthy,” Psalm xiv. 3.

2. Under the plague of God’s curse, under the sentence of the law ; the curse thereof is against us as soon as we are born, “ Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them,” Gal. iii. 10. And so, while you are not children of promise, you are nothing but children of the threatening, and heirs of damnation, “ Aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise ; having no hope, and without God in the world,” Eph. ii. 12. Is it not sad to be such plagued and cursed children.

Again, as you would consider whose children you are, and consequently what a sad state you are in, while you are not the children of promise ; so consider also, for your excitation and upstirring in this matter, whose children you would be, if your were the children of promise ; and how happily they are stated that are so. Why, these that are the children of promise, (1.) They are the children of God, Gal. iii. 26, of the living God, Rom. ix. 36. (2.) They are the children of the kingdom, in that sense mentioned, Mat. xiii. 38. (3.) They are the true children of Zion, Ps. cxlix. 2. (4.) The children of Jerusalem, which is above, Gal. iv. 26. (5.) They are the children of light, Luke xvi. 8. (6.) The children of wisdom, Mat. xi. 19. (7.) They are the children of Abraham, in a true spiritual sense, Gal. iii. 7. (8.) They are the children of liberty and of the free woman, Gal. iv. 31. (9.) The children of the resurrection, Luke xx. 30. (10.) The children of grace and glory ; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, Rom. viii. 17. These are not bare names they have ; no, they import the unspeakable happiness here, and especially hereafter, that belong to the children of promise.

2dly, For direction. If you would put in for a share among the children of promise, I offer you these three or four advices.

1. O sinner, see, and know, and believe your relation, by nature, to the threatening, and seek the Spirit of God to convince you thereof. The Spirit of God, as a Spirit of bondage, must bind your conscience and the threatening together, and apply the law-threatening before ever you will have any due concern about being the children of promise. If you know not God as a threatening God,

you will have little care about knowing him as a promising God. Till the soul be brought to say, "Ah! nothing but the threatening of hell and damnation belongs to me; I am a child of wrath," never will it value the privilege of being a child of promise. What measure of conviction, or legal humiliation is necessary, I determine not; but if, in some measure, you do not see yourselves under the sentence of the law, how can you ever relish the promise of the gospel, and see your need thereof? but then, having seen your need,

2. See your concern in the promise, and your claim thereto, as members of the visible church. Though, by natural generation, you have no part in it, yet by Heaven's gracious dispensation you have a claim to it; "The promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call," Acts ii. 39. The promise is left to the gospel-church, Heb. iv. 1, and belongs to them no less than it did to the Church of the Jews, Rom. ix. 4. The promise is a letter from heaven, backed for you, sinner: take, and open, and read it, with application to yourselves; for, "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, declaring that Jesus Christ came to save sinners." Though you have no possession of the thing promised till you believe; yet you have as good a right to take possession by believing, as the command of God and the call of the gospel can give you: and this right was sealed to you in baptism. See your claim.

3. Plead this claim, as you may see the Lord calls you to do, Ezek. xxxvi. 37. Where, after the covenant of promise is opened and laid before you, the Lord says: "For this will I be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." Plead then, that a sovereign Lord, who shews mercy on whom he will shew mercy, would give you the new heart there promised, the new spirit, the heart of flesh, and put his Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in his statutes, and be your God, and make you his people, according to the promise. Plead, that he, who hath given you a promise to plead, may give you the grace of the promise; which when you get, then shall you have evidence of your being children of the promise. And in this way,

4. Be restless till the promise be powerfully applied, and till you feel the virtue thereof. Cry for power to accompany the gospel dispensation, that so the promise may have strength to bring forth children, and to bring forth you particularly, as a child of promise,

begotten to a lively hope thereby, of his own sovereign will, James i. 18; and of his free mercy, Titus iii. 5. You can, indeed, no more contribute to your own regeneration by the word, or to your becoming a child of promise, than a child can contribute to its own production, or a creature to its own creation. The new creature is the product of God's almighty efficacious power allenary: yet as this power works upon the rational faculties, when God begins the good work; so he calls us, as rational creatures, to use the means and ordinances of his appointment, and to be found in that way wherein his power and grace uses to ride prosperously. Therefore, seeing the ordinances are the golden pipes, Zech. iv. 12, through which the oil of grace runs, attend upon them; and seeing the promises of God are the vessels whereby God conveys and infuses his grace into us, apply yourselves unto them; for these exceeding great and precious promises are given us, that by these we might be partakers of the divine nature, 2 Pet. i. 4. Now, seeing the promise is but the vessel, and Christ is the fountain of grace, in whom all the promises are Yea and Amen; therefore, in using that promise, bring the promise to Christ, as a man would bring a vessel to the fountain, and see to get the vessel filled with grace and power and virtue there that out of his fulness you may receive grace for grace, John i. 16. Then shall you appear to be the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and as the children of promise.

5. In a word, Pray the Lord to enable you to cast out the bond-woman, to give up with the law, and renounce it, not as a rule of obedience, but as a rule of acceptance, and as a covenant of works, and condition of life; having no expectation of life by the deeds of the law, or by any personal righteousness of your own, but resting allenary upon the free promise of God in Christ, for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, according to the gospel method; that in this way, under the conduct of the Spirit of promise, you may become the children of promise, and be the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, Gal. iii. 27; and the children of the free-woman, Gal. iv. 31. Be restless in the use of means, till God put power and virtue in the promise, for these ends.

Secondly, The second branch of our exhortation proposed was to believers, that are actually the children of promise; and our exhortation to them is, that being so, they would live upon the promise by faith. And, here again I would offer some motives: and then some directions, in order to the believer's living by faith upon the promise.

1st, For motives. O believer in Christ and child of the promise, "Take heed lest there be in you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God;" and see that your life be a life of faith upon the promise. And there are especially two considerations I would urge, for exciting you to this life, namely, 1. The excellency of the promises. 2. The excellency of the life of faith thereupon.

[1.] Consider the excellency of the promises. The apostle says, 2 Pet. i. 4, they are exceeding great and precious promises. Some things may be great, and yet not precious; but the promises are both great and precious; and not only so, but exceeding great and exceeding precious. "There is a treasure here, exceeding what tongue can utter, or heart conceive." You may consider the excellency of the promises in these following respects, namely,

1. The promises are excellent and precious, in respect of their author, which is God; "All the promises of God are in him Yea, and in him Amen, to the glory of God by us," 2 Cor. i. 20. Where God is declared to be the author, for they are the promises of God; and God is the end of them, they are to the glory of God. If you look into the promise, you will find all the attributes, and all the names of God there; such as, the love of God: O how does his love, mercy, and grace appear, in making the promise! It is free love that makes him a Promiser, and thereupon a debtor to us. Again, the power of God is manifested, in making good the promise; God said, that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent: and God hath been obliged to shew his power to make it good in Christ Jesus, to the seed of Abraham by miracles, and to the children of Israel by wonders; it hath cost many marvellous operations to make good his word in several ages to his people. Again, his faithfulness is here displayed: in this is the security of the promise; "Though we believe not, yet he abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself," 2 Tim. ii. 13. Again, His wisdom comes in, to give forth these promised mercies in time of need, and in a suitableness to our wants. You have a remarkable word, Psal. cxxxviii. 2, "I will worship towards thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy loving-kindness, and for thy truth; for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name:" *Super omne nomen*, above every name. God is pleased to make his word above every name; and all his names carry his word upon

their shoulders. And, are not these then precious and excellent promises, that are thus enamelled with love, mercy, grace, power, faithfulness, wisdom, and all the other names of God? And shall such a treasure lie by us without being improved?

2. The promises are excellent and precious, in respect of their object, or the person to whom they are made, namely, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Mediator and Redeemer; not to the elect immediately, but to Christ for them: "Now to Abraham and his seed was the promises made. He says not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one; And to thy seed, which is Christ," Gal. iii. 16. Had the promise been made to man, then it had been made to seeds; that is to diverse; as to one of the Jews, and to one of the Gentiles; as of divers kinds; but it was to one; that is, both to Jews and Gentiles, which are both but one seed in Christ Jesus. All the promises are in him, 2 Cor. i. 20; that is, in Christ; and with him, for the sake of the redeemed. The promises are so precious, that God would not trust them in the hands of men; nay, nor in the hands of angels; but only in the hands of the angel of the covenant, Jesus Christ.

3. They are excellent and precious in respect of their price. We use to value things according to the price that they cost us. Now, the price of the promise was the blood of the Son of God; hence it is said, 1 Pet. i. 18, 19, "We are redeemed not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish, and without spot." Would we not think that thing dearly bought, that should cost us the blood of one son, or of one daughter, nay, of one only son? How precious, then, is the purchase that cost the blood of God's only Son. Let this stir us up highly to prize the promise.

4. They are excellent and precious, in regard of the reality of them. The promises are not vain toys or empty notions; nay, all the promises are so many pardons, so many blessings, so many bounties, so many substances of the greatest reality that can be imagined. Gold is counted the heaviest metal; and the purer the gold is, the weightier it is. And all the promises are as gold seven times tried, and purified in the fire. You read, Heb. xi. 1, that "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." How so? Because faith does see the substance afar off laid up in the promise. The believer sees and weighs them in the balance of faith, and finds them substantial; and therefore, ver. 13,

“The worthies died in the faith, not having received the promises ; but having seen them afar off, they were persuaded of them, and embraced them.” The stars are of a vast wonderful bigness ; but they seem not to be so, because they are at such a vast wonderful distance from us, even many millions of miles ; so thus the saints saw the promises afar off, as many great luminaries and lights, and embraced or saluted them ; and, did they embrace shadows ? No ; they were solid things. That must be a reality with a witness, that hath the attributes of God to fill it up ; every creature hath so much weight as it hath of God in it ; every promise is filled up with God’s love, with his mercy, power, faithfulness, and all the names of God ; they have a whole God to fill them up. “Take heed, therefore, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God,” by neglecting to live upon the promise.

5. The promises are excellent and precious, in regard of their certainty and immutability. Riches have wings, and flee away ; honours have wings, and flee away ; frames have wings, and flee away ; but God may as soon cease to be God, as not to be true to his word, and sure in his promise ; learn, therefore, to be sure of the promise, that you may have something that will bide by you, and stick close ; surely they shall not fail. “Though all men forsake thee,” says Peter, “yet will not I ;” but the promise says more. Surely and certainly, though all men forsake thee, yet will not I ; though friends and relations, health and strength, and life forsake thee, yet will not I ; though frames, enlargements, and enjoyments fail thee, yet will not I. “All flesh is grass, and the goodness thereof as the flower of the field ; the grass withereth, and the flower fadeth, but the word of the Lord abideth for ever,” Isa. xl. 6, 7, 8. You will take the word of a great man, because his word is his honour ; but God hath done more than passed his word ; for he hath added his oath, Heb. vi. 17, “Therefore God willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath ; that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation.” O what a happy people are you, for whose sake he is willing to swear ? And, on the contrary, How must they be among the worst of men, that will not trust God with his word and oath ! Is not his honour concerned to make good the same ? If the promises were to be made good by angels, we might question them ; but God being the Promiser, and so obliging himself to be the Performer, how

can you question them? They are sure: "Though my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, well ordered in all things and sure; this is all my salvation, and all my desire," 2 Sam. xxiii. 6. Hence I shall add,

6. The promises are excellent and precious, in regard of their fulness. All your salvation lies there, according to that word just now cited; what can you desire that is not in the promise? What salvation do you need, that is not here? The promise contains salvation from sin, from the guilt of sin, from the filth of sin, from the power of sin, from the sting of sin, from the stain of sin, from the fruit of sin, from the fountain of sin, and from the very being of sin at length. Here are promises of salvation from wrath, from the law, from justice, from death, from hell, from the world, and from the devil and unreasonable men; salvation from troubles, and reproaches, and fears, and doubts, and faintings; salvation from desertion and despondency, from wants and weakness, from wrongs and injuries done to your names or otherwise; salvation from all woes and weariness; salvation from backsliding and apostacy; salvation from plagues and all imperfections; innumerable positive salvations and mercies; pardoning mercy, sin-subduing mercy, healing mercy, conquering mercy, comforting mercy, upholding mercy, grace increasing mercy, and perfecting mercy; sanctifying mercy, to sanctify all providences, all crosses, all relations; defending mercy, strengthening mercy, helping mercy, following mercy, enlightening, enlivening, enlarging mercy; mercy for supplying your wants, dispelling your fears, covering your infirmities, hearing your prayers, ordering all things for your good; and salvation to everlasting life, glory, and immortality.—I have in these few words named as good as fifty pieces of salvation contained in the promise of the new covenant; but though I should go on to mention a thousand, yet the text will say more: "This is all my salvation." There are promises here for all sorts of men; for kings and subjects; for noble and ignoble; for parent and child; for master and servant; for ministers and people; for husband and wife; for married and unmarried; for them that have children, and them that are barren; for these that are whole, and these that are sick; for them that are prisoners, and them that are in debt; for the blind, and the lame, and the diseased; for the soldier and the seaman; for the living and for the dying. O the infinite variety that lies in the promise! What an infinite treasure is here, that cannot be exhausted!

There can be none poor that have a promise ; there can be none rich that want a promise ; and none so rich as these that have the promises. " Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come," 1 Tim. iv. 8. Some will say of a monied man, O ! he is worth God knows what. Indeed, it is an idle way of speaking. Why, what do they mean ? Such an one is worth even a bellyfull of earth, and a back-load of thick clay : " Lord, deliver me (says David), from the men of the world, which have their portion in this life, whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure," Psalm xvii. 14. Only believers have a true fulness ; and only God knows what they are worth ; the promise is full of God ; and God only knows what is God's worth ; he that fills the pipe with the spring, only knows what a believer is worth. As it was said of Jacob, " Who can count the dust of Jacob ?" so, who can count the treasure of the believer ? As the heaven is full of stars, so the Bible is full of promises, and the promise full of blessings, suiting all cases and conditions. Oh then ! that there should be such a treasure, and we should not know it, nor be acquaint with it ; no, not one of twenty. Let this be matter of humiliation, and let the believer be more careful to live upon the promises, seeing they are so excellent and precious.—So much for the excellency of the promise.

[2.] Consider the excellency of the life of faith upon the promise, for moving you to live upon the same by faith ; and the excellency thereof may be viewed in these particulars following, besides many others that might be added.

1. The life of faith upon the promise is a most quiet and peaceable life : " Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth on thee," Isa. xxviii. 3. Men would live at ease and quiet, but they seek this life among the creatures, where it is not to be found ; they that seek it there, will find themselves deceived. Greatness and honour in this world, is mixed with gall and vinegar, instead of sweetness. A life of true peace and contentment is not to be had in the creature : all things in this world cannot put us in such a peaceable condition as we would desire, and that because the creature is a mixed thing, and a mutable thing.

(1.) It is a mixed thing. The best life here below hath some sweet, and some bitter ; some good, and some bad ; some rest, and some trouble ; and it does not fall out so by accident, but by divine

ordination. There is not all quietness to be had in meat and drink, nor all rest to be had in the bed; the best of counsels are not all good, nor the best of armies all strength; nay, it is a mixed contentment that is here below.

(2.) It is a mutable thing, as well as mixed. All creatures have their changes: like the moon, sometimes increasing, and sometimes decreasing; and like the sea, now ebbing, and now flowing. Sometimes we are in a high and honourable, anon in a poor and miserable condition; merry to-day and sad to-morrow; therefore, says Christ, "Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils." The creature is both mutable and momentary; it vanisheth, and cannot give any content; "Your fathers, where are they?" Where is your husband, woman? Why, this day in the warm bed, to-morrow in the cold grave. Where is your wife, man? To-day in the bosom of the husband, to-morrow in the bosom of a coffin. The very quintessence of all the creatures cannot yield the least drop of happiness, nor a grain-weight of solid peace: it is only a God in Christ that can give satisfaction to the soul; therefore he says, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." If beauty, riches, honour, should promise any such things, they would be liars; "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. They are like the troubled sea, that cannot rest, but still cast forth mire and dirt." Whether the waters of the sea ebb or flow, they are never at rest, whether they run north or south, they are still in motion; so the wicked, which way soever they turn, they are never at rest. But now, soul, come here, and you may have the life you desire to live; true rest and quiet is in the life of faith, and nowhere else. It is by faith on the promise that a happy event is secured; you need not trouble yourself here, but only use the means, and leave the event to the Lord, as Jacob, Gen. xliii., he must starve, or send his beloved Son Benjamin away: well, says Jacob, "If it must needs be so, take now your brother, and arise, and go again, and take money with you:" he uses the mean, and then he puts all into the hand of God; "God almighty give you favour before the man," ver. 14. To this purpose, "Paul goes bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall him: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, that bonds and afflictions abide him; but none of these things trouble me, says he; neither count I my life dear to me," Acts xx. 22, 23, 23, 24. Faith is a casting the burden upon the Lord, on which the soul is easy; Cast thy burden on

the Lord, and he will sustain thee," Psalm lv. 22. Whatever care it hath, it resolves it on the Lord, and so keeps no anxious care behind, and hath its warrant from the Lord; "Be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, make your request known to God," Phil. iv. 6. There is nothing here ado, but to pray and give thanks, and to leave it on God to make answer for all. Men that live by sense cannot do so; but as the creature fails and changes, so do their hope and trust fail and change: but faith answers all doubts and objections, dissolves all fears, and has happiness bound up in God's glory: "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep; for thou, Lord, only makest me to dwell in safety," Psalm iv. 8.

3. The life of faith on the promise, or upon Christ by the promise, is the most free and independent life that the creature can live here in this world, while others live but a base servile life, even while they think that they are free.—I name two pieces of freedom that the believer hath, besides many that might be mentioned.

(1.) It is a free life, in opposition to the law, as a covenant, both in the command and curse of it.—On the one hand he is free from the command of the law, as a covenant of works; he is no more obliged to do, that he may live: he is not under the law, but under grace, Rom. vi. 14. Though he be more than ever under the obligation of the law, as a rule of obedience, for the love of Christ constrains him thereunto, and to testify his gratitude, to glorify his Lord and his God; yet he is under no obligation to it as a rule of acceptance: nay, he does not owe it a farthing, as it is a condition of life; he holds his title to life another way, even by Christ's obedience unto death.—Hence also, on the other hand, he is free from the curse of the law: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, Gal. iii. 13. Being a child of promise, and living upon it, he is no more a child of the threatening, nor of the curse, but delivered from all liableness and obligation to vindictive wrath. This is an article of our faith, however debated by some¹; an article which, I think, is worth the contending for, and that for several reasons.

¹ Our Author here has probably his eye on the conduct of the General Assembly, Annis 1720 and 1722, in their condemning, simpliciter, six propositions called by them Antinomian Paradoxes. Whoever inclines may see this affair set in its proper light, in the Associate Presbytery's Act concerning the Doctrine of Grace, pages 53—67.

1. Because it is an article of the Bible, declaring that there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ, Rom. viii. 1. : and that the law hath nothing to lay to their charge, because they are free from it, ver 2, and are not under it.

2. It is an article of our Confession of Faith, founded on the scripture, and to which we are solemnly bound by National Covenants, "That the believer is not under the law as a covenant of works, to be thereby either justified or condemned¹;" and if the law cannot condemn them, how can they ever be liable to that vindictive wrath, which is nothing else but law condemnation.

3. To assert this obligation of the believer, and liableness to hell, is inconsistent with the perfection of justification; for which our Larger Catechism says, in point of justification, "That the believer is freed from the "revenging wrath of God, and that perfectly in this life."²

4. To bring the believer under this obligation, by his new sins, is derogatory from the perfection of that glorious righteousness, that law-fulfilling, justice satisfying, and wrath-appeasing righteousness of Christ, with which the believer is invested. This robe of righteousness is put upon him, and it shall never be taken off him again: for, "The righteousness of God, which is by the faith of Jesus Christ, is unto all, and upon all that believe." Rom. iii. 22. It is upon him for ever, without any intermission or interruption, so long as his union with Christ remains firm; and, behold, he is betrothed unto him for ever. It is true, the believer's sins deserve hell; and I think, they deserve it more than the sins of others, because they sin against more love and light; and the more their sins are, the more are they liable to fatherly wrath and chastisements, as our Confession declares:³ but from the desert of sin, to infer an obligation to hell, or vindictive wrath, which is all one, were to destroy the very nature of pardon, which removes the obligation to wrath, but cannot remove the desert of sin. The intrinsical demerit of sin flows from the very nature of sin, and cannot be separate therefrom; whereas obligation and liableness to hell flows from the threatening of the law, which being fully execute upon the Surety, justice itself would be injustice, to demand or bind over the believer to another satisfaction, or threaten him with wrath, though the threatening should never be execute. "For, say some, it is sure as to the event,

¹ Confession of Faith, chap. xix., sect. 6. ² Larger Catechism, quest. 77.

³ Chap. v., sect. 5; and chap. vi., sect 6.

that believer's will never go to hell, though yet their sins make them liable to it." This is very weak, in my opinion : for it was sure as to the event, that he should never go to hell, before ever he was a believer ; the decree of God, and the death of Christ in his behalf, secured that matter before ever he was born ; but now, upon the imputation of Christ's righteousness, he is not only secured as to the event, but secured from the obligation to everlasting death. As by Christ's active obedience, the believer is entitled to heaven ; so, by his passive obedience, a believer is secured from obligation to hell ; his freedom from obligation to death and hell stand as firm upon Christ's dying, as his title to life upon his doing. And as the imputation of Christ's active righteousness, not only secures the event that the believer shall go to heaven, but gives him an actual title thereto ; so the imputation of Christ's satisfaction, and passive obedience, not only secures the event that he shall not go to hell, but secures his freedom from all obligation thereto. And now, how the believer, that remains still entitled to eternal life, should notwithstanding be liable to eternal death, is what I do not think any shall be able to make me understand. If a believer's new sins make him liable to eternal death, then they would also destroy his title to eternal life ; and so both parts of his justification would be at once overturned.

Whatever contradiction this doctrine meet with, I little regard it, unless these and the like arguments can be solidly answered, which I gladly despair ever to hear. Believers are not the children of a law-threatening, let be children of wrath, as they were before union to Christ ; nay, they are the children of promise, not the children of the bond-woman, but of the free, as Isaac ; and the more faith, the more of this freedom is discerned. And therefore the life of faith, I say, is a free life, in opposition to the bondage of the law.

(2.) It is a free life in opposition to the bondage of sin. And this follows of consequence from the former freedom : because they are free from the law, therefore they are from the dominion and slavery of sin : " Sin shall not have dominion over you ; for you are not under the law, but under grace, Rom. vi. 14. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death," Rom. viii. 2 ; that is, the covenant of works, called the law of sin and death, because it binds sin and death upon us, till Christ set us free ; so it is explained in that little tract annexed to our Confession and Catechisms, intitled, *The Practical Use of Saving Knowledge*. It is the believer only that is free from the servi-

tude of sin, while the rest of the world are servants and slaves thereunto, however they imagine themselves to be free. The rich man thinks his riches serve him, when, in very deed, he serves them, and is a slave to them; the ambitious man thinks his honour serves him, while yet he is a slave to it; the carnal man thinks his lusts and pleasures serve him, while yet he is nothing but a slave to them, "For we ourselves also were foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures," Tit. iii. 3. The wicked are the devil's drudges, their chains rattle at their heels; faith only gives liberty, and makes a man live a free and independent life, insomuch that he depends upon none but God only: "My soul, wait thou only upon God," says David. The world is mightily mistaken in the choice of their condition; they desire to live an independent life, and to be beholden to none, and servants to none; but they seek this life among the creatures, where it is not to be found: it is only attained by the believer, who lives by faith upon a promising God.

3. The life of faith upon Christ in the promise is the most fixed and unchangeable life that a soul can live in this world; it is not liable to such mutations and changes as the life of sense is. He that lives in the changeable creature, as oft as the creature changes and dies, so oft does he, and live a restless life; as Nabal's heart died away; so the life of unbelievers is up to-day, and down to morrow; but faith lives upon a living God, and it is a living faith: the more of this life, the more of fixedness; "My heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord," Psalm cxii. 7. And then is the man more in case to serve the Lord without distraction, and to glorify him: "My heart is fixed, I will sing and give praise," Psalm lvii. 7, and cviii. 1.

4. The life of faith on the promise is a most spacious life; whereas the opposite is but a narrow and strait life, and hath hardly room to turn; for we may soon come to an end of all perfection amongst the creatures; as of the beauty of Absalom; the wisdom of Abitophel; for there is not enough in the creature; "The eye cannot be satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing," Ec. i. 8. We still cry Give more, though we have never so much. Alexander wanted elbow-room when he wanted another world to conquer.—There is room enough for the body on earth, but not for the soul: because the soul is a vast thing, a noble spirit. But now faith hath heaven and earth to walk in at pleasure; it hath its turns with God; yea, God and all his perfections to walk in; "I will walk at liberty,

for I seek thy precepts ;” or, as it is in the Hebrew, I will walk at LARGE, Psalm cxix. 45.

5. The life of faith is a most social life. If a wicked man would live this life, he must indeed forsake his bad company, but he will have better : yea, as we say of the society of some people, they are no company ; ill company is worse than no company ; but, by faith we converse with God, and Christ, and the Spirit ; with a glorious Trinity, three in one, Eph. ii. 18, and iii. 12. Hence may the believer, that lives by faith, say, as Christ said, John viii. 16, “ I am not alone ;” why ? the Father was with him : so the believer is not alone, the whole glorious Trinity is with him : and he is never left alone, for God says to him, “ I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,” Heb. xiii. 5. Yea, by faith he enters upon a society with a heavenly company : see Heb. xii. 22, 23. Hence,

6. The life of faith is a most honourable life. To live upon the promise is very honourable, and that both subjectively, with respect to the believer ; and objectively, with respect to God.

(1.) View it subjectively with respect to the believer. What an honourable life is that of faith ? It is to live above the world ; and this is the honour of all saints ; while these that are soaked in sense do lie among the clay, and eat the dust like the serpent ; the believer lives a glorious life, having little or nothing ado with the creatures : “ Our life is hid with Christ in God,” Col. iii. 3. They have a heaven before their time, while by faith they will what God wills, and are swallowed up in God. O what an honourable life, to live in God, and upon him !

(2.) View it objectively with respect to God, it is honourable ; for it brings honour and glory to him : “ Abraham staggered not at the promise through unbelief, but was strong in the faith, giving glory to God,” Rom. iv. 20 ; he gave honour to God by believing. God is more beholden, so to speak, to the poor believer that lives by faith, than to the greatest potentate in the world that lives not this life of faith.

QUEST. What glory does faith bring to God ?

ANSW. Even glory to all his attributes and perfections : his mercy in making the promise, his faithfulness in fulfilling the promise, his power in doing, notwithstanding all difficulties in the way, his wisdom in ordering the fittest time and ways of accomplishment, his all-sufficiency in filling the promise with all needful succour.

QUEST. What way does faith glorify God?

ANSW. Faith glorifies God, both by dependence and by returns.

1. By its dependence upon a promising God, when the believer does stay, and rest, and rely wholly upon the Lord; this the carnal man cannot do. Faith can say, I have a God whom I dare trust, and that is able to keep that which I have committed to him. They that mistrust God do dishonour him; but they that trust him highly honour him. The believer trusts him, and intrusts himself to him: according to Psalm xxxvii. 5, "Commit thy way to the Lord, trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass." The more we trust him with all our concerns, with our justification, sanctification, salvation, and all according to the promise, the more we honour him.

2. By its returns it does honour and glorify God; for the language of faith is, "Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but to thy name we give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake," Psalm cxv. 1. And the believer's design is to study to return praise to God for all his goodness and mercy, saying, "I will extol thee, O Lord, for thou hast lifted me up," Psalm xxx. 1. O! hast thou extolled and lifted up me? And shall I not extol thee, and lift up my heart to praise thy name? What an excellent life is that, which thus extols God, and gives him glory in the highest? I might here tell you what a pleasant life the life of faith is, O but "Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness!" And what a profitable life it is: what rich incomes there are this way, while out of Christ's fulness the believer receives grace for grace: what a happy and holy life it is, and how a living by faith makes way for dying in the faith. But let these motives mentioned suffice. What I have said may make you see what an unspeakable loss you are at, if you be estranged from this life of faith on Christ by the promises.

2ndly, I would now offer some directions, some means or helps, in order to the children of promise their living on the promise by faith. And,

[1.] If you would, as children of promise, live by faith on the promise, then be convinced of and afflicted for your unbelief. And are there not too many witnesses to bear testimony that your life is rather a life of unbelief than faith? Consider for your conviction herein, these and the like witnesses against you.

1. The first witness is the power and prevalence of sin. Does

not this prove that your faith is small, and your unbelief great? For the more faith the more victory over sin.

2. The second witness is the strength of worldly-mindedness. Where this prevails, it argues little faith: "For this is the victory whereby we overcome the world, even our faith;" and the more faith, the more is the heart determined to count all but loss and dung for Christ.

3. The third witness is your fears and discouragements in the day of adversity; "For if thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small," Prov. xxiv. 10.

4. The fourth witness, to prove your having little of the life of faith, is your easy and frequent falling before every temptation and motion towards sin. No sooner are you tempted but conquered: corruption is so strong that you need not be tempted; you are ready to yield without a temptation, or with a very small one.

5. The fifth witness, to prove your unbelief, is soul-barrenness and unfruitfulness, and soul-leanness: "I said, My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me," Isa. xxiv. 16.

6. The sixth witness is sloth and carelessness in spiritual duties, and in these duties that are most internal, such as self-examination, self-resignation, self-judging, self-loathing, praying in the Spirit, watching over the heart, applying the blood of Christ, the death of Christ, the love of Christ, the word of Christ, to your own soul. Faith acts especially in these, and such like duties; and the neglect of these argues little faith, and little of the life thereof.

7. The seventh witness of your unbelief is the little growth in grace, and going from strength to strength: little pressing towards the mark. No doubt, true grace may have its ebbing and flowing, its waxing and waning, and may, like the sun, be under a cloud; but still it runs its race and now and then breaks out from under a cloud further advanced. However, does not your small advance in the Lord's way discover either the want or the weakness of faith? Together with,

8. Your low esteem of Christ, and improvement of him as the Lord your righteousness and strength; seldom triumphing and saying, as it is, Isa. xlv. 24, "Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength."

If I should bring forth all the witnesses that would prove against you, that your unbelief is great, and your faith small, they would be too many. If you were living by faith, then,

(1.) What means your ignorance of, and little acquaintance with the promises? God hath given you great and rare promises, and you are a great stranger to them. But how can there be a fire without fuel? The promises are the fuel of the life of faith.

(2.) What means that sinking of spirit that sometimes takes place? Out of which David raised himself by faith: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall yet praise him." Does not your sinking spirit argue that you are living as much upon the creature as upon God? As if one should have one foot upon firm ground, and the other upon quicksand, certainly he would sink into the quicksand; so a man having one foot upon God, and another upon the creature, he is most subject to fall to the creature.

(3.) What means the little comfort you have in the word, if you be living by faith? "This is my comfort in my affliction, said David, thy word hath quickened me." This argued his life of faith; whereas, where there is little comfort from the word, it argues little faith.

(4.) What means your heart-distractions about the events and success of your affairs? Surely a life of faith would destroy that life of carking care. Oh! what if my trade should fail me? what if such a debt be lost? what if such a debtor should break? what would I do?

(5.) What means your self-confidence? Does not that discover much unbelief? "The true circumcision rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh." But how soon are you swelled with an opinion of yourself, when you do or say anything that you judge the world may think commendable? O! "Is not this great Babel that I have built?" May not I be famed for wisdom and parts? Alas! faith humbles the man that hath it, and says with the church, Isaiah xxvi. 12, "Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us; for thou hast wrought all our works in us," and *for us*, as it is in the margin

(6.) And especially, what means your estrangement from Christ "To them that believe, he is precious," 1 Pet. ii. 7. But your little esteem of him, and great estrangement from him, shews little of the life of faith. The more faith, the more high thoughts of Christ; beholding the glory of God shining in his face.

If ever, then, you will live the life of faith, labour to find out the unbelief that lurks in your bosom. Search out your infidelity,

and say with yourself, "Lord I believe, help thou my unbelief." Go and lament your unbelief before the Lord, in a corner or closet, and say, Oh! what an unbelieving creature am I. How ready am I to sink with Peter, by reason of the weakness of faith? How little do I see and admire the beauty of Christ. How many witnesses are there against me of my unbelief? Shame yourself for it before the Lord, and consider what a poor, mean, base life you have for want of faith, and how soon you lie in the bottom of the mire and dirt, when you might live above, even with Jesus Christ. Till you be convicted of unbelief, you will just remain among the creatures, and think it is good to be there. Again,

[2.] If you would, as children of promise, live by faith on the promise, then labour to be well acquainted with the promise. It is one thing to talk of the promises, and another thing to be acquainted with them. How will you love the promises, or live on them, if you do not know them? Therefore study a due acquaintance with them; and to help you in this, there are four things relating to them, that would be a profitable study, namely, 1. The worth of them. 2. The distinction of them. 3. Your interest in them. 4. The law of the accomplishment of them.

1. Study the worth of the promise, as exceeding great and precious, in all the six respects that I have formerly taught.—See them to be an invaluable treasure: none but God knows the riches of them, in their Author, subject, price, reality, immutability, variety and fulness. And see that you study these things well, not contenting yourself with the hearing of them, but by serious meditation of the preciousness of the promise. O believer, learn to know what you are born to; for, didst thou know the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, live by the promise, and what a godly inheritance the promises are, surely you would be more taken up in asking of the Lord Jesus, "And he would give you living water out of these wells of salvation," John iv. 10.

2. Study the distinction of the promises, and the variety of them, that you may be able to find out, on all occasions, promises suitable to your necessity, and seasonable. A believer cannot be in that condition, wherein he may not have recourse to a promise fitted for him to serve him in his need, if he be acquainted with them distinctly; but for a child of God to live in the midst of promises, and yet not know where they lie, he is like a wounded, sick, or diseased man, that is in the midst of an apothecary's shop, and knows not

where the boxes or glasses with the salves, or ointment, or cordials are, that should help him ; he is as ready to fall upon the thing that would hurt and harm him, as upon the thing that would help and heal him ; he is, as it were, in a wilderness. Believers should have the promises, in a manner, at their finger-ends ; yea, treasured up in their hearts : “ Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.”

It were good, I think, and profitable for a believer's advancing in a life of faith, to make a catalogue of the promises, as they travel through the scriptures morning and evening. Gather together the promises that relate to the softening of the hard heart ; then the promises that relate to the subduing of corruption ; next the promise that relates to the healing of backslidings, and so on ; taking a list of the promises, and seeing all the promises are Yea and Amen in Christ ; and Christ is called the Covenant of the people. Notice how the promises are in him, and belong to him, and his several offices ; reduce the promise of Christ to the offices of Christ ; for example, his threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King.

(1.) There are promises of wisdom, and knowledge, counsel, conduct, direction, and resolution of doubts ; these belong to Christ, as a Prophet, and are to be reduced thereunto.

(2.) There are promises of pardon, justification, peace, joy, acceptance with God ; these belong to Christ, as a Priest, and are to be reduced to that office.

(3.) There are promises of victory over sin, subduing iniquity, supplying of wants, protection and defence ; these belong to Christ as a King, and are to be reduced to that office.

Could you thus, were it with a pen, or by whatever other means you can, reduce the promise to the offices of Christ, it would be a ready way to have recourse to them in time of need ; and also it would help in the right manner of pleading the promises. How desirable and pleasant would it be, to go to such an office, and plead such a promise there, saying, Lord, does not this belong to thee as a Prophet to do so and so, as a Priest to fulfil such and such a word, and as a King to accomplish such and such a promise ! Could you bring Christ and the promise together, and then the promise and the office together, it would be a mighty advantage, especially to these that know not where to have a promise, nor how to plead the promise. Therefore study in this manner the distinction of the promises.

3. Study your interest in the promise. If you should know of never such a fair and rich inheritance, while yet you know of no right and title you have to it, what would it avail you? Endeavour, therefore, to clear your title. People give no rest to themselves, with respect to their earthly inheritance, till they have settled their title; and so should you do in this, and much more; otherwise you will discover your unbelief, instead of faith, if you take more care for your inheritance and title in earthly things, than you do in heavenly. The outward call of the word of grace, and gospel-dispensation, clear your general title and claim to the promise, so as to encourage and warrant your fleeing to it, believing it, and embracing it by faith. But moreover, believer, you have a special title to, and interest in the promise, that unbelievers want; seek to have the Spirit of the Lord clearing that up to you, that you may live by faith joyfully; and the joy of the Lord may be your strength. The more you know your interest in it, the more freely will you betake yourself to it, and make improvement of it, to the glory of God, and your own spiritual good.

4. Study the law of the accomplishment of the promises, and that here God keeps a reserve in his own hand, as to the time, as to the mean, as to the method, and as to the measure of accomplishing the same: "The vision is for an appointed time; but at the end it shall speak, and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry, Hab. ii. 3. The Lord is a God of judgment, and blessed are all they that wait for him," Isa. xxx. 18. The Lord will accomplish his word; but it may be through fire and water that he will bring you to a wealthy land; it may be through many difficulties, and in such a manner as you did not expect; but fear not, only believe; and if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God. However, he that believes, makes not haste; but waits the Lord's time and way of coming.

[3.] In order to your living by faith in the promise, as being a child of promise, study always your case and the promise together, and endeavour to adapt the promise to the case, and the case to the promise; be it an afflicted case, or a deserted case, or a backsliding case, or whatever sort of case it is, study the case and promise together; for if you study the case without the promise, you are in danger of despairing; and if you study the promise without studying your case, you are in danger of presuming. Therefore, for your ignorant case, study the promise that relates to Christ as a Prophet,

and lay the case and the promise together; for your guilty case, study the promise that relates to Christ as a Priest; and lay the case and the promise together: for your captivated case, when overpowered by your enemies, study the promise that relates to Christ as a King; and compare the case and the promise together. Also, amidst the distresses of saints, study Christ in the promise as the King of saints; amidst distresses of nations, study Christ in the promise as the King of nations; amidst distresses of the church, study Christ in the promise as the Head of the body the church. And whatever your need be, believer, know that in the promise there is your provision; you are a child of the family, and God hath said, "He that provides not for his family is worse than an infidel." And now, O believer, think on this, will not God provide for his family? will you make him worse than an infidel? Oh! beware of that blasphemy! Confide in him for your provision, and be not anxious, though you have very little in hand, you have a great stock upon bond; the greatest part of your estate now, O believer, lies in bills and bonds; and it is kept for you in your Father's hand. If you study your case and the promise together, it is the way to improve the promise in every case; and this is what you are called to. Improve the promise as an antidote, against all temptations; as a cordial, under all your tribulations; as a spur to all your duties. If the love of God and Christ in the promise constrain you to duty and service, it is a gospel-walk. O let the love and grace of the promise influence you to love, so as you may be able to say, O it is love brings me to hear; it is love makes me read; and love makes me pray: and love makes me meditate; and love makes me go about my duty, and wait on ordinances! Again, improve the promise for the encouragement of others that are believers. There is a promise, "Where two or three are met together in my name, I will be with them;" Therefore let the saints gather together, keep together, converse together, pray together, and encourage one another in the Lord's way, forasmuch as you see the day approaching. Yea, improve the promise for an encouragement to your graceless friends: tell them, on all fit occasions, O there is a promise that did me good; the Lord thereby opened my heart, and killed my corruption, and quickened my soul. What know you but you may be an instrument of gaining their souls, and engaging them to seek after the Lord? In a word, improve the promise in every case: in darkness, improve the promise of light; in weakness, the promise of strength: when under the

power of corruption, the promise of sanctification ; when under a sense of guilt, improve the promise of pardon ; when in bondage, the promise of liberty : when in straits, the promise of supply ; when in danger, the promise of protection : when in confusion, the promise of direction ; when tempted, the promise of support ; when dejected, the promise of comfort ; and when deserted, the promise of the Lord's return.

[4.] In order to live by faith on the promise, O believer, that art a child of promise ; see that you neglect not the use of means and ordinances of God's appointment. Though the promise is free and absolute, yet the use of the means does not detract from the freedom and sovereignty of the grace of God manifested in the promise. You are to wait on him in his own way, otherwise you tempt God, and throw away the promise and all. See the direction given Luke xxiv. 49, "Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you ; but tarry ye at Jerusalem, till ye be endowed with power from on high." The promise will be accomplished, but tarry ye at Jerusalem, and wait in the use of means ; as the mariner does at the harbour, when his ship is upon ground : he does not fall a dragging and pulling at the ship ; no, he knows his own power will not do it, but waits at the shore till the water return, and the wind blow, and then he makes his way : he hath no command of the water or wind, nay, the God of providence orders the return of these as he pleases ; but he waits at the water-side till providence order matters unto his mind ; so, believer, you can do nothing of yourself ; you are perhaps standing aground, it is vain for you to think of pulling and dragging at your own heart ; it is not in the power of your dead heart to live and believe, nor have you the ordering of the floods of the Spirit and the wind of Heaven's influences ; but wait you at the shore, in the use of means, till the Lord himself return, and till you be endowed with power from on high ; then shall you make way heaven-ward.

QUEST. What MEANS shall I use, in order to the living on the promise by faith ?

ANSW. There are some of these means I have already mentioned ; and, besides these, there are both outward and inward means of faith, and the increase thereof. And, besides these outward means of waiting on the word and sacraments, and all the instituted ordinances of God, I shall mention these following means further for the increase of faith in the promise ; and they are partly outward, and partly inward means.

1. Pray for what is promised ; for it it is in the way of prayer that the promise is accomplished. Thus you see the psalmist exercised, Psalm exix. 49, "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope;" and thus were the disciples exercised, saying, "Lord increase our faith."

2. Look to the promise for all the grace you need ; and expect not qualifications in you, till you get all out of the promise ; "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" Can dry ground produce water of itself? Nay, the promise must first water the dry ground ; "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground," Isa. xlv. 3. Our hearts are like dry ground, a dry pump. You know, the pump of a ship will draw up no water, if it be altogether dry, till once some water be poured into it, and then it will bring up water ; even so it is here ; you may pump at your hearts till you break them, before you can draw up one drop of grace ; so dry are they, that they can yield none, unless Christ himself be first poured in by his Spirit, according to the promise. Stay not away from taking hold of the promise, because your hands are defiled, and must first be washed : nay, though your hands be never so polluted, stay not on the pretence of wiping them first, but take Christ as thou art, that he may wash and make thee clean himself ; when he sees thee polluted in thy blood, he says unto thee, Live.

3. Look after Christ in the promise. The promise is the vessel, Christ the treasure ; the promise the cup, Christ the liquor ; be not satisfied with the cup, or with the taking it by the handle ; but make application, drink out of that cup.

4. See the reason of your believing, as well as the greatness of the promise to be believed, lest you think it too good news to be true ; therefore, still know the reason of your faith ; that is, the faithfulness and power of God ; give him the glory of his faithfulness, Heb. xi. 11.

5. Consider the promises already made out, (1) To Christ the Head. His head is lifted up, after he hath drunk in the brook ; according to the promise. This is a pledge that all will be made out to his people. (2) To the members of his body. The promise fulfilled to one is an argument for faith to another ; as the promise made to Joshua, belongs to all believers, Heb. xiii. 5.

6. Consider your experience compared with the promise, and say, "He hath delivered, and doth deliver ; and in him we trust

that he will deliver." The experiences of others may be useful also for the increase of faith in the promise, Psalm xxxiv. 5, 6.

7. Let the children of promise be fruitful in bringing forth children; I mean in bringing forth the fruits of holiness and righteousness, as children of promise, in an evangelical manner. And thus grow in grace upon the tree of promise, which hath brought them forth as branches thereof; this is the way to grow in the knowledge and faith of the gospel-promise, John vii. 17. And the more again of the gospel you know, the more fruitful will you grow.

Perhaps some believer may object. Oh! I think I was better long ago than I am now, notwithstanding that I dare not deny but the Lord hath given me some further knowledge of the gospel.

I answer, That the Christian may grow evangelically, when he does not grow morally. For clearing of this, know that the believer hath two roots, out of which he brings forth fruit. There is a legal root, or principle, so long as there is any remainder of the covenant of works in him, which will be to his dying day; and this presses him to duty upon moral and legal grounds, from legal rewards and threatenings, fears and hopes; and this root may bring forth some fruits of tenderness and obedience, but this bond-woman must be cast out with her children and her fruit, as the apostle says in the context, Gal. iv. 30. There is also an evangelical root, or principle, which is Christ in the believer, or the new covenant, when through faith the man brings forth fruit to the new Husband, Rom. vii. 4. Now, at the first conversion, both these principles do remarkably concur, a mixture of law and gospel both, as it were; and hence a great deal of fruit, a great deal of prayers and tears; but though there be much fruit, yet it is of a mixed nature; partly legal partly evangelical. Now, when the legal principle, or the dominion of the first husband, the law, dies and languishes, and little remains but the gospel-principle, the fruits may indeed appear less bulky, but they may be better in their kind. Some indeed may leave their first love, and turn more legal and carnal; but I speak of what may and ought to take place, and will do so in a growing believer; the second covenant gets place, and draws him to duty; and his work may be less, but yet better than formerly. As it is with a young apprentice to a carpenter or wright; he hacks and cuts more, and casts many more chips; but, when he hath learned the trade better, he casts not so many chips, but he makes bet-

ter work ; so, believer, perhaps you prayed more formerly, when the law was concurring ; and, perhaps, you was always in bondage, except when you was upon your knees, while the law was pressing you on ; you then seemed more tender and sedulous ; but now you pray better, and with more faith and love ; you cleave closer to Christ, depend more on him, and draw more out of this fountain. Let your growth be evangelical ; and if it be so, it will, by no means, encourage sloth, but will advance a holy gospel liberty, and diligent activity in the ways of God.

8. Keep alive a pregnant sense of your want : for the promises are the supply of want ; and wants are for the honour of the promises. Wants and promises are co-relatives. A gospel-sense of want, and of nothingness and unworthiness, encourages faith in the promise ; as it was with the apostle, Rom. vii. 24, 25. There is a legal sense of want, that discourages believing, when the sense of corruption weakens faith, and discourages faith ; when a man would have something in him to boast of, or glory in, and whereby he may bribe the free grace of God. Some believers are so legal, they would indeed swim in the water of the promise, but they would have some bladders of their own to be under their arm-pits to bear them up, and cannot trust to the free grace of God in the promise to hold up their head. A child of promise, that is born of the promise, is borne up by the promise too ; but you would have something in yourself. Nay, you must be content to say, It is not in me, it is not in me, but, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." But there is a gospel-sense of want, that encourages faith, and furthers it. The apostle laments that sin dwells in him, and cries out, "O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this sin and death !" yet it does not damp his faith ; he cries out also, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." The psalmist also says, "Iniquities prevail against me : " but it did not damp his faith ; "As for our iniquities thou wilt purge them away." Again, says the psalmist, "I am poor and needy ;" yea, but he immediately adds, "The Lord thinks upon me." The right sense of sin and want does not damp believing, but forces the man to Christ and the promise ; it drives him out of himself, and his own righteousness and strength. Happy the man that sees nothing but Christ left him, nothing but a promise, and that hath nothing else to rely on, Isa. xl. 29, 30, 31, "He gives power to the faint, and to them that hath no might he increaseth strength : " them that have nothing else

to confide in ; but see what follows, " Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fail." These that have strength of their own, and stand by their own strength, they will fail : " But they that wait on the Lord, shall renew their strength," they that have no dependence but on the Lord, they shall CHANGE their strength ; for so is the Hebrew word ; and it is borrowed from them that have change of garments for every day : some have a garment for the house, and a garment for the field ; a garment for work, and a garment for travel ; a garment for the Sabbath-day, and a garment for the week-day ; a garment for their several pieces of business, walking or working ; so, " They that wait on the Lord, shall renew their strength ;" they shall CHANGE their strength according as they need it. If they need a little strength, for some lesser work, they shall have it ; they shall renew and change their strength ; they shall have flying strength, running strength, walking strength, according as they need ; for so it follows, " They shall mount upon wings as eagles, they shall run and not weary, and walk and not faint."

Thirdly, the third branch of the exhortation, that I promised, was to all in general, namely, that they would improve the promises, whereof believers are the children, in order to their first or further believing and laying hold upon Christ, as held forth to them in the gospel promise ; and that they would apply the promise, so as to apply Christ therein.

If it be asked, What connexion is there betwixt applying the promise, and applying Christ ? or, how is Christ in the promise, and the promise in Christ, so as I may know that in dealing with the promise, I deal with Christ ; and in applying the promise, I apply Christ ?

ANSW. Though Christ be in heaven, and we upon the earth ; yet the promise is the means of communication betwixt Christ and us, as the apostle explains it, Rom. x. 6, 7, 8, " Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven, to bring Christ down ? or descend into the depths, to bring up Christ ? but the word is nigh, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart ; that is the word of faith which we preach." Christ is brought near to us by the promise, as a fountain of water is brought near to a city by pipes and conduits ; perhaps the fountain is several miles distant from the city, yet the pipes convey the water of it, so near, that you may put your mouth to the pipe and drink, or your empty pitcher to it and fill it ; and

thus you apply, improve, and make use of the water of the fountain, though at a great distance, by the means of the pipe that is at hand; so it is here, Christ is the fountain, in whom is all the fulness of the Godhead: the promise is the pipe: though the fountain-head be in heaven, yet the pipe is at your hand, at your mouth; yea, "In your mouth, and in your heart," says the apostle. Is not that word of his, namely, the gospel, and the promise of it, called the word of faith? because it is both the object of faith, the word which we are to believe; and the means of faith, by which we believe: "For faith comes by the hearing of it." Is not the word of promise in your mouth, when we are speaking it, and you reading it? and in your heart, when either you are, or should be thinking of it? What remains but that we put the mouth of faith to the pipe, and then we take in the water of life? O for the Spirit of faith, in opposition to that legal spirit, which the apostle is here discovering! ver. 3. He is telling that the law requires doing for life, ver. 5; and that the gospel requires no doing at all, but he exhibits Christ doing in our room, which we are to believe he hath done. You need not be anxious, might the apostle say, about ascending to heaven to bring Christ down to do all for us, he hath descended for that end already; nor about descending to the grave to bring Christ up, why, he hath already risen and ascended, as a token that he hath finished the work; so that there is no more doing for life necessary; Christ hath done all: and this word concerning Christ the great doer in our room is nigh: the promise is nigh. He left this pipe when he ascended to heaven, and appointed ministers to turn the cock of the pipe, and let out the water, saying, "Preach the gospel to every creature," and he promised that his Spirit should run through that pipe till he came back again, saying, "Lo, I am with you always, to the end of the world." How? the pipe is as long as to reach from heaven to earth, from Christ's heart to your heart, as well as from his mouth to your mouth, Isaiah lix. 21. Now, Christ is in the promise, while this pipe conveys Christ and his Spirit to us; and the promise in Christ, while the pipe is fixed into his heart, all the promises being in him Yea and Amen; YEA, in point of affirmation, he having affirmed them in his veracity; and AMEN, in point of confirmation, he having confirmed them by his death. Even as the pipes or conduits, may be said to be in the water, and the water is in the pipe: so Christ is in the promise, and the promise is in Christ, and to take the promise in Christ, or Christ in the promise,

comes much to the same thing. Only, now Christ in the promise is come down, and he is as nigh to you, as your mouth and your heart, is nigh to you. The gospel is the great pipe, and all the promises are like so many branches and lesser pipes for conducting the water to this, or that part of the city, and even to private houses, for the benefit of particular persons, according as the contrivance is ordered. Behold, here is a contrivance of infinite wisdom, from the conduit of the covenant that stands fast in Christ Jesus: there are many pipes full of water, for refreshing: full of wine, for cheering: full of milk for nourishing souls, Isaiah lv. 1. And we are come to set the pipe to your mouth; "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters: he that hath no money, come; buy wine and milk without money, and without price."

Now here is a pipe for every mouth, by which you may draw in Christ to your heart, though he be in heaven, and you on earth. Is there any blind and bewildered soul here, that needs a drink of instructing grace out of Christ's fulness? Behold there is a pipe for your mouth; I will lead the blind in a way they know not, and in paths which they have not trode." Is there any guilty soul here that needs a drink of pardoning grace? there is a pipe for your mouth, in that promise; "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, for my name's sake, and will remember thy sins no more." Is there any filthy and unclean soul here, that needs a drink of sanctifying and purifying grace? why there is a pipe for your mouth: "I will sprinkle clean water on you; and from all your filthiness and idols will I cleanse you." Is there any bound, fettered soul here, that cannot believe, cannot repent, cannot pray, and whom Satan hath bound for many years, and needs a drink thus to your soul of bond-loosing, Satan conquering grace? why, there is a pipe for your mouth; the Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, says Christ, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." Is there any backsliding souls here, that cannot keep a word that they say to God, whose heart hath beguiled them a hundred times, a thousand times, and needs a drink of healing grace, healing water, to cure the disease of backsliding, so far, as that you shall never fall back into perdition? here is a pipe for your mouth, "Return, backsliding children, I will heal your backslidings, I will love you freely." Is there any dead soul here, that needs a drink of quickening grace? there is a pipe for your mouth; "I am the resurrection and the life; the hour cometh,

and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and they that hear shall live." Is there any deserted soul here, that needs a drink of never-leaving nor forsaking grace ; there is a pipe for your mouth, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." Is there any dispirited, weak, fainting soul here, that needs a drink of strengthening grace ? there is a pipe for your mouth, "My grace shall be sufficient for thee ; my strength shall be made perfect in thy weakness. He gives power to the faint, and increaseth strength to them that have no might." Is there any dejected soul here, that needs a drink of comforting grace ? there is a pipe for your mouth ; "I will send the Comforter, and he shall testify of me, who am the Consolation of Israel." Is there any over-mastered soul here, that hath been long led captive by the power of some strong corruption, and needs a drink of sin-conquering grace ? here is a pipe for your mouth ; "He will subdue our iniquity, and cast all our sins into the depths of the sea." Is there any tempted soul here, that needs a drink of devil-vanquishing grace ? here is a pipe for your mouth ; "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent. The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Is there any backward soul here, that needs a drink of drawing grace ? here is a pipe for your mouth ; "When I am lifted up, I will draw all men after me." Is there any death-frighted soul here, that is afraid for the king of terrors, and needs a drink of death-conquering grace ? here is a pipe for your mouth ; "Death shall be swallowed up in victory ; O death, I will be thy plagues : O grave, I will be thy destruction." Is there any secure, stupid soul here, whose conscience is scared as with a hot iron, and that needs a drink of awakening and convincing grace ? here is a pipe to your mouth ; "I will send the Spirit, and he shall convince the world of sin." Is there any awakened conscience here, who, under a sense of sin, are under fears of damnation, and need a drink of hell-conquering grace ? here is a pipe for your mouth ; "The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin : Deliver his soul from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom." Yea, is there any heaven-daring, atheistical, prayerless, graceless, ungodly wretch here, that hath been living without God, and without thoughts of eternity to this day ; and that, whether they see their need or not, yet need to be plucked as brands out of the burning, and need a drink of saving and converting grace ? behold there is a pipe for your mouth ; "There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob."

Old sinner, young sinner, man, wife, and child, that is capable to understand what I am saying; whatever grace you stand in need of, the pipe of the promise for conveying that grace from Christ to you, is at your very mouth; yea, saith the apostle, the promise is near, "The word is near, in thy mouth, and in thy heart." Is not the Lord beating at every door of your hearts by these words of grace? And, Oh! woe and misery! will you let all this grace fall by you? Will you spit it out of your mouth, and let the devil run away with it out of your heart, saying, O such a word is not to you, it is not to the like of you? Why, the devil is a liar; and, because he is so, he is perhaps tempting you, through unbelief, to make God a liar. God says, "To you is the word of salvation sent; the promise is to you and to your children, and to all that are afar off;" it is to you to be received and believed by you; and, will you say it is not to you? What! will you put away the grace of God from you? Wherefore came I to this place, but to tell you that this grace is tendered to you, to every one of you? And I tell you it in his name, who hath given me a charge to go and preach the gospel to every creature; Christ is seeking entrance into your heart by the means of this word; and so near is he come to you by this long pipe of the promise, that you cannot miss Christ and salvation with him this day, without shutting him out at the door of your heart and mouth both. Oh! will you open your mouth wide, and he will fill it; and cry to him, saying, Lord, come and open my heart; open the everlasting doors, and come in, O King of glory? Welcome him, and welcome his word of grace, and take him at his word, saying, Lord, "Be it to me according to thy word," according to thy promise of pardoning and purifying grace, saving and sanctifying grace.

O sinner, sinner! the promise of pardon concerns you, guilty you; the promise of purifying concerns you, filthy you; you shall not have it to say that you wanted grace, and knew not where to get it; for the God of all grace is come near to you, with a promise and proffer of all grace in Christ. If death, judgment, and eternity were as near to your view, as this promise of grace is come this day, you would give all the world for a promise; and will you now thrust it out of your heart, and eject it out of your mouth? What can you expect in this case, but that God will spue you out of his mouth, and thrust you out of his presence, and cast you in among devils and damned spirits to all eternity? What! will you prefer

a black devil, a base world, a brutish lust, before Christ, and all his promises of grace and glory! O God forbid. Fy for shame! will you reject the word of grace, the promise of mercy that God is putting into your mouth by this glorious gospel? O better choose to die upon the spot, than lose such a sweet morsel, a taste of grace, and a foretaste of glory. However it be, though you would reject this grace, as I fear the most part will do, yet I must tell you, that the kingdom of God is come unto you, and you shall not have it to say, that you came to Glendovan such a day, and got nothing; for I take you all witnesses, and heaven and earth to witness, that you have got an offer of grace, of Christ, and a promise that is worth ten thousand worlds.

May a promising God set it home upon you, that, being begotten to a lively hope, by the virtue of the promise, it may be said of you, that, "Now, brethren, as Isaac was, you are the children of promise."

SERMON CXVI.—CXIX.

THE SAVING SIGHT; OR, A VIEW OF GOD IN CHRIST.¹

"He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father."—JOHN xiv. 6.

MY dear friends, the great, glorious, and invisible God hath been, this day, condescending to make himself visible to us, notwithstanding of the great distance betwixt him and us. There is a threefold distance that mars our sight; there is a natural distance, that hinders the sight of the natural understanding; there is a local distance, that mars bodily sight; and there is a moral distance, that impedes spiritual sight; all these, in certain respects, takes place here. In respect of the infinite being of God, there is an infinite natural distance betwixt him and us, who are but finite creatures, insomuch that we cannot see him. In respect of the manhood of Christ, now ascended into heaven, there is a vast local distance betwixt him and us, that puts him out of our view, who are on the earth. In respect

(1) This piece appears to be the substance of four sermons. The first was preached on the Sabbath evening, immediately after the celebration of the Lord's Supper, at Dunfermline, May 21st, 1727; and the rest at the same place, after the solemnity.

of the infinite holiness of God, there is an infinite moral distance betwixt him and us, that we cannot perceive him through the dark clouds of sin and corruption that overcast our souls. But such is the condescending mercy of our God, that he is pleased to come near to us in such ways as tend to remove these impediments out of the way of our seeing of him ; and, therefore, that the infinite natural distance betwixt him and us may not impede our seeing of him, he is pleased to come near to us in a natural way ; I mean, by assuming our nature, that we may see him there ; and that the vast local distance betwixt God, Christ, and us, may not interrupt our seeing of him, he is pleased to come near in a sacramental way, that we may see him mystically and sacramentally there ; and that the moral distance betwixt him and us, may not impede our seeing of him, he comes near in a spiritual way, by his Spirit and grace, enlightening the eyes of sinners, and scattering the clouds of sin and corruption.

My friends, it is our infinite mercy, that we have other ways of seeing God, than the blinded nations that want the gospel. The way in which they may see God, so as to leave them inexcusable, is common to them and us both. It is now some more than five thousand years since the great and invisible God erected the pillars of heaven and earth, that the invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, might be clearly seen and understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, Rom. i. 20 ; but because no sinner can, in this glass, get a saving sight of God, he hath been pleased to set other glasses before our eyes. It is now more than seventeen hundred years since the same invisible God, in the person of the eternal Word, came down in the likeness of flesh and blood, that his glory might be made visible to us through the glass and vail of our nature ; “The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory,” John i. 14. But after his work on earth was finished, by his doing, dying, and rising again, he ascended into heaven, far out of our view ; therefore the same invisible and eternal God, in such a wonderful and stupendous manner, does farther obscure his glory, to make it evident to our dull apprehension, and visible even to our earthly senses, that he hath, this day, come down in the likeness of bread and wine, that he might accommodate himself both to our nature and necessities ; and that being thus though spiritually, yet sacramentally and visibly present, we might see and apprehend his invisible glory, love, grace, and mercy,

under these visible elements, insomuch, that henceforth we need not be at a loss to resolve that seeming contradiction and wonderful mystery, namely, that the infinite mercy of God in Christ is so deep, that no thought can fathom it, and yet so obvious, that every eye may see it, nor at a loss to read Moses' riddle, Heb. xi. 27, for now it is easy, especially to the believer, whose faith is the evidence of things not seen, to explain how one may see him that is invisible.

This gospel-sacrament, we have been celebrating, is a glass wherein we see Christ; Christ is a glass, wherein we see God; if our eyes therefore have been opened by the Spirit of God, we have seen a great sight this day. May I ask you, then, where you have been, and what you have seen about this solemnity? Have you been at Jerusalem, and seen the King's face? If you have seen the sacramental elements, I ask, what have you seen there? If you saw no more but bread and wine, surely you have been blind: for Christ was there evidently set forth crucified before you. But, if you have seen Christ there, then I ask again, What have you seen? It may be you do not know what you have seen; for, as you that have got no sight of Christ, are at a greater loss than you are capable to know and understand; because, having missed a sight of Christ, you have missed a sight of God, and seen nothing worth the seeing: so you that have got a saving sight of Christ, you have got a greater sight than readily you are aware of. Perhaps you have seen Christ, and yet, with Philip here in the text, do not know that you have seen the Father. Perhaps God hath been in this place, and you know it not; but if you have got a sight of Christ, and yet do not know how much, and how far you have seen, or whether it be the true Christ you have seen, then be informed of this matter out of his own blessed lips, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." O! what an happy solemnity might we say this hath been, if it could be said of a multitude here, as it was said of the nobles of Israel, Exod. xxiv. 11, "They saw God, and did eat and drink;" or, that their eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts! I doubt not but there are many here come to Dunfermline with a design that they might see the King in his beauty, at this sacramental occasion, and to see the glory of God. Well, the brightest glass that ever God's glory was seen in, hath been, and is yet set before you. The great sacramental sight is, in a spiritual manner, as well as with bodily eyes, to see the sacramental elements, so as

in the elements to see Christ, and in Christ to see the Father : and though the sacramental table be drawn, yet while Christ is presented to you in this gospel, the glass is not yet withdrawn. You have a new occasion to see him again ; and not only to see him, but also to see whether you have seen him formerly, yea or not ; and to see what you have seen in him ; for, " He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father."

Having, before this solemnity, spoken to the preceding part of the verse, and so to the connexion of this text with the context, I have the less ado this way ; only, Christ having, ver. 6, 7, discovered himself as the only way to the Father, and as the Father's great representative, insomuch, that as there is no coming to the Father but by him, nor seeing of the Father but in him ; so there is none that come to him can miss the Father, or fail of winning to the Father by him ; and none that look to him can lose a sight of the Father in him ; notwithstanding this sweet doctrine, Philip having said, " Shew us the Father," ver. 8, the Lord Jesus here speaks to him both by way of reproof and instruction ; he meekly reproves him, saying, " Have I been so long with thee, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip ?" that you should talk so ignorantly, after I have taught you so plainly, that, in knowing me, you know the Father : but our Lord, who is such a meek reprove, is also an indefatigable instructor ; and therefore again he kindly instructs him in the words of the text, saying, " He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." As it is an ignorant, so it is a needless petition for you, Philip, to ask of me, saying, " Shew us the Father." since I have told you, that there is no way of knowing the Father savingly, but by knowing me ; and if you knew me more, you would know the Father more : let me, therefore, again tell you, Philip, and, in you, all my disciples to the end of the world, " He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father."

In which words you have the believer's fiducial vision, which is much the same specifically with the beatific vision that he will have in heaven for ever, notwithstanding of whatever gradual difference there will be betwixt them. Particularly,

1. You have the act of this vision, it is called a **SEEING** : and being expressed by sight, it imports a clear and distinct knowledge.

2. You have the immediate object of this vision, namely, **CHRIST**, who is here speaking, " He that hath seen me ; not only **ME**, as God co-essential with the Father ; **ME**, as the Son of God,

the second person of the glorious Trinity ; but also ME, as God-man, Mediator betwixt God and man ; ME, as the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person.

3. You have the ultimate object of this vision, namely, the Father ; he hath seen the Father ; that is, either the Father essentially considered, as God ; one God with the Son and the Holy Ghost ; or personally considered, as the first person of the glorious Trinity, and as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And here is the farthest sight of faith's prospect in time, the far end of faith's view, even to see the Father in Christ.

4. You have here the connexion betwixt the act of seeing the immediate object, with the act of seeing the ultimate object, flowing from the essential oneness betwixt the Father and the Son, notwithstanding of their personal distinction ; " He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Of this mysterious oneness as the foundation of this connexion betwixt seeing him and seeing the Father, the Lord Jesus insists, ver. 10, saying, " I am in the Father, and the Father in me. And again, ver. 11, I am in the Father, and the Father in me." Hence the doctrine I incline to treat of, for explaining this purpose more fully, is this :

DOCT. That such is the oneness betwixt Christ and the Father that he that hath seen Christ hath seen the Father.

Though believers, who have seen, and see but through a glass darkly, may not distinctly know that they have seen the Father, when they have seen Christ, as the context clears ; yet such is the mysterious unity and oneness betwixt glorious Christ and his glorious Father, that a saving sight of Christ does necessarily carry in it a saving sight of the Father, as Christ declares, " He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father."

And now, my friends, so great is the subject I am proposing to speak of, that frequently I have had thoughts of giving it over, as too sublime and glorious for me to handle. It is such, that if we could speak aright about it, not only elect sinners, but elect angels, who pry into the gospel-mystery, might be edified by it. If we should essay to speak of the heaven of heavens, and all the glory of it, it would not be such a great subject as to speak of seeing Christ and of seeing the Father in him. They are blind that do not see the need we have of the assistance of the eternal Spirit, who pro-

ceeds from the Father and the Son, when we are thus essaying to speak of seeing the Father in the Son. Therefore, O endeavour, with your hearts, to lift up a prayer, for the conduct and help of the Spirit of God and of glory, that in speaking and hearing of such a subject, we may see the glory of Christ, and the glory of the Father in him.

The method I propose to follow in clearing and illustrating this doctrine, as the Lord shall be pleased to assist, is this,

- I. To speak of that ONENESS that is betwixt the Father and the Son.
- II. To offer some thoughts, or remarks, concerning a saving sight of Christ.
- III. To shew in what respects it is, that they who see Christ see the Father.
- IV. How, and in what manner the Father is seen in Christ.
- V. Offer some grounds of the doctrine, shewing whence it is, that they that see Christ do see the Father.
- VI. Draw some inferences from the whole, for application thereof.

I. The First thing proposed is, to speak of the ONENESS that is betwixt the Father and the Son. This oneness is declared by our Lord Jesus; and, indeed, it is a mystery of pure revelation, and what we could not otherwise know; and it is what we cannot fully comprehend; yet it is the object of our faith, ver. 10, 11, "Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in me?" It is what our Lord Jesus tells his disciples, they shall more fully know afterwards, ver. 20, "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father; and you in me, and I in you." Our Lord Jesus expressly asserts this oneness, John x. 30, "I and my Father are one." He makes it the ground of all Christian unity, John xvii. 21, "That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be ONE in us." Hence also our Lord Jesus, much in the same manner as in the words of the text, John xii. 44, 45, "He that believeth on me, believeth on him that sent me. He that seeth me, seeth him that sent me." Such then is the oneness betwixt the Father and the Son, that he who hath seen Christ, hath seen the Father. But to explain this oneness a little more particularly, we must consider,

1st, Negatively, that we are not to understand this oneness in respect of personality ; the Father and the Son are not one person, but two persons : the Father is one person, and the Son is another person of the adorable Trinity. They are distinct in respect of personal properties, namely, it is proper to the Father to beget the Son, and to the Son to be begotten of the Father, even as it is to the Holy Ghost to proceed from the Father and the Son, from all eternity. I hope I need not stand to enlarge upon this to you that make use of our Catechisms with the scripture proofs ; only carry still along with you this personal distinction, the Father is not the Son, nor the Son the Father ; the Father was not incarnate, nor did humble himself and die for sinners, as Christ did ; the Father sent the Son. Neither are you to understand this oneness betwixt Christ and the Father in respect of Christ's humanity ; the two natures of Christ must not be confounded ; the humanity of Christ is not one with God ; the humanity is united to Christ the Son, not to the Father ; it is Christ who is Mediator, God-man in one person. Hence, when Christ says, John xiv. 28, " My Father is greater than I," it must be understood of Christ's humanity, and of Christ in the form of a servant ; who yet, in regard of his divine nature, is in the form of God, and thinks it no robbery to be equal with God, Phil. ii. 6, 7. Therefore,

2ndly, And positively, we are to view this oneness betwixt the Father and the Son in these following respects.

1. There is an oneness in point of nature and essence betwixt them : Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are but one God : " Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is ONE JEHOVAH," Deut. vi. 4. There are three that bear witness in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit, and these three are ONE, 1 John v. 7. Hence it is said, " In our Lord dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," Col. ii. 9. The Father and the Son, then, are one in essence and being with the Holy Ghost ; " These three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory."

2. There is an oneness betwixt the Father and the Son in point of essential properties and attributes ; Christ is, together with the Father and Holy Ghost, one Spirit, infinite, eternal, unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. Is the Father omnipotent ? so is the Son ; he is the mighty God, Isa. ix. 6. Is the Father omnipresent ? so is the Son ; " Lo, I am with you always to the end of the world," Matth. xxviii. 20 ;

and, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Is the Father omniscient? so is the Son; "Thou that knowest all things, knowest that I love thee," John xxi. 17. Christ said to Nathaniel, "When thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee." Here was a token that none in the world knew but Nathaniel himself, upon which he was convinced of the deity of Christ, which made him say, "Truly thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel." Is the Father eternal? so is Christ; "Before Abraham was, I am." Is the Father immortal? so is Christ; "The King eternal and immortal." Is the Father immutable? so is Christ; "The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, and without all variableness or shadow of turning."

3. There is an oneness betwixt them in point of work: the works that are proper only to God are ascribed to Christ. I cannot stand upon all the scriptures that are cited by orthodox divines on these subjects. In short, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," says Christ. The work of creation is ascribed unto him, "All things were made by him," John i. 3. "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thine hands," Heb. i. 10. The work of preservation also, and the sustentation of the world; "Upholding all things by the word of his power," Heb. i. 3. The work of redemption, Acts xx. 28, "Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." The donation of the Spirit is his work; "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me," John xv. 26; and, "I will send him unto you." The raising of the dead out of their graves is his work, and that both in a spiritual and corporal sense; "The hour comes when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live," John v. 25. The government of the world, and the judging of the world at the last day is his work; "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son," John v. 22, and he will judge the world in righteousness. The institution of ordinances and offices in the church is his work, Matth. xxviii. 19, "Go ye and teach all nations." See Eph. iv. 11.

4. There is an oneness betwixt the Father and the Son in point of worship and honour; and therefore all men are called to honour the Son even as they honour the Father, John v. 23, "He that ho-

nours not the Son, honours not the Father which sent him." All manner of worship due to the Father is due to the Son; therefore, says Christ, John xiv. 1, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." And Ps. ii. 12, "Kiss the Son lest he be angry." See Rev. v. 12, 13, and vii. 10, 11.

5. There is an oneness betwixt them in point of will. Though as man he hath a will distinct from his will as God, and so distinct from the Father's will, yet subject to the divine will in everything; "Not my will, but thine be done." But as God his will is one and the same with the Father's will, and therefore what the Father wills Christ wills; John iv. 34, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me:" and again, "I delight to do thy will, O my God: lo, I come to do thy will."

6. There is an oneness of happiness and felicity betwixt them, Rom. ix. 5, speaking of the Jews, "Of whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever." Christ was from all eternity, and is the ever-blessed God. There was a time, indeed, when the Son was humbled and made a curse for us; but his essential glory and happiness was never diminished, however it was eclipsed: as God, he was as happy on the cross and in the grave, as ever he was.

7. There is an oneness betwixt them in point of interest; John xvii. 10, "All thine are mine, and mine are thine, and I am glorified in them." This says that they are both one in essence, and one in interest: there is no separate or divided interest betwixt them. O happy souls that are interested in Christ! for the Father's interest and his are one and the same.

8. There is an oneness of affection betwixt them: the objects of the Father's love are the object's of Christ's love, and the objects of Christ's love are the objects of the Father's love: 2 Thess. ii. 16, "Our Lord Jesus Christ and God, even our Father, which hath loved us." John xvi. 21, "He that loves me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him." Hence Christ says to his beloved friends, John xvi. 27, "The Father himself loves you." Was it only Christ's love that brought him to die and suffer for sinners? nay, it was the Father's love also that sent him on that errand. See 1 John iv. 9, 10.

9. There is an oneness of dignity and authority betwixt them. Christ is the angel of the covenant, of whom the Father says, Exod. xxiii. 21, "Beware of him, and obey his voice, for my name is in

him ;” *i.e.*, my authority is in him. His essential dignity and authority is the same with the Father’s ; he thinks it no robbery to be equal with God : he does not rob the Father of his authority when he makes himself equal with him : for, as God, the dignity and authority of both is one and the same ; and, as Mediator, he hath a donative right to all the power and sovereignty ; “All power in heaven and in earth is given unto me,” Mat. xxviii. 18.

10. There is an oneness betwixt them in point of supreme Deity, self-existence, self-sufficiency, and independency : hence the supreme throne is called the throne of God and of the Lamb, Rev. xxii. 1. Hence says the Father to him, Psalm xlv. 6, compared with Heb. i. 8, “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.” And hence says he of himself, Isa. xlv. 21, 22, “There is no God else besides me, a just God and a Saviour ; and there is none beside me. Look to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth : for I am God, and there is none else.” Hence his name is JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU, Jer. xxiii. 6, “The Lord our righteousness.” Hence also called JEHOVAH, Mal. iii. 1, and elsewhere. Hence Paul says, “He is God over all,” in the fore-cited Rom. ix. 5. And the apostle John, 1 John v. 20, “This is the true God, and eternal Life.” Hence also, these that get a saving manifestation of him, cry out with Thomas, “My Lord and my God,” John xx. 28, as seeing that in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily : though, indeed, in point of personality, the Father is the first person ; yet in point of essence, or essentially considered, Christ is the same, supreme, self-existent, self-sufficient, independent, invisible, and eternal God with the Father and the Holy Ghost. But I must not enlarge upon this point, that I may overtake the rest. Only thus much shall suffice for a touch at that oneness that is betwixt the Father and the Son, that lays the foundation for the other part of the doctrine of Christ here, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”

II. The Second Thing proposed was, To offer some thoughts concerning the seeing of Christ, especially a saving sight of him in whom the Father is seen. What I would say on this head may be laid open in the following remarks, for giving you a view of this matter, namely, Seeing of Christ.

1. Remark, That there are several ways wherein natural men may see Christ to little advantage. There is a bodily sight of Christ, that many got when he was upon the earth ; they saw him

who was God, though yet they did not see God in Christ, nor believe in him, "Ye have seen me, and believe not," John vi. 56.—There is a mental sight of Christ, and a rational view of God, that natural men may have when they apprehend the invisible things of God in the works of creation, Rom. i. 20. They may see it was an infinite power that made these visible heavens, sun, moon, and stars; and hence it is said of the heathen, "They knew God, yet glorified him not as God," ver. 21. There is a spiritual kind of sight of Christ that natural men may have by the common illumination of the Spirit. Thus Balaam had his eyes strangely opened, and saw the visions of the Almighty. Thus the apostates, Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6, were enlightened, and some are said, through the knowledge of Christ, to escape the pollutions of the world; yet afterwards are so entangled therein, that their latter end is worse than the beginning, 2 Peter ii. 20.—Besides, there is a wrathful sight of Christ, that all the wicked world will have at the day of judgment; for, "Behold, he comes with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him, and all nations shall wail because of him." None of these are the sight of Christ here to be understood: it is a saving sight of Christ we speak of.

2. Remark, "That there is a gospel-sight of Christ, that is either more common to the visible church, or more special to the invisible." The more common is that which the whole visible church have, beyond the outfield of the heathen world, Tit. ii. 11, "The grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men;" *i.e.* to all the visible church that have the gospel preached to them; they have so far the objective revelation and discovery of Christ, and the glory of God's grace in him set before them. Like Chorazin and Bethsaida, they are lifted up to heaven, and highly exalted with gospel-privileges, gospel-ordinances, gospel-offers, gospel-sacraments, the misimprovement whereof brings them down to hell.—The more special sight of Christ, that is peculiar to the church invisible, is that which results from the subjective, internal, saving, and powerful revelation of Christ into the heart: "He revealed his Son in me," says Paul, Gal. i. 16. Hence,

3. A third Remark I offer is, "That the light wherein Christ is savingly seen, is his own divine light, Psal. xxxvi. 9, "In thy light shall we see light." As we cannot see the natural sun, but in his own light, so we cannot see the Sun of righteousness, till he himself arise with healing under his wings; and this divine light

wherein we savingly see Christ is common to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. It is in the Father's light we see the Son; in the Son's light we see the Father; and in the Spirit's light we see both the Father and the Son. Hence the Father is said to discover Christ. "No man can come to me, except the Father draw him. It is written in the prophets, they shall be all taught of God; every man therefore that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me," John vi. 4, 5. The Father discovers the excellency of Christ to the soul; and the soul sees him such an excellent person, that it would give a world for him, not knowing all this time that it is the Father of Christ that is discovering him: "It pleased God to reveal his Son in me," says Paul; and again, "God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our heart, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. iv. 6. Again, the Son is said to discover the Father. As the father comes and courts a bride for his son, so when the match is drawn up, then the bridegroom shews to the bride her friends, and particularly the Father, of which more afterwards: "No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, that is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him," John i. 18. And then, further, it is the Spirit that discovers both the Father and the Son; as he is both the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, he shews the Father in the Son, and hence is called the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, Eph. i. 17, "He shall glorify me (says Christ), for he shall receive of mine and shew it unto you," John xvi. 14.

4. Remark, "That the eye whereby Christ is seen, is the eye of faith." As before saving illumination we are dark, and without light; so, before saving faith, we are blind and without sight; therefore, as Christ, when he discovers himself, does, with the one hand, reveal his glory, so, with the other, he gives the eye to see his glory. All men are born blind, and remain so till Christ open their eyes, and give faith; for, he is the author and finisher thereof. This faith is the only eye whereby Christ is now seen; he cannot be savingly seen otherwise; faith is therefore called the evidence of things not seen, Heb. xi. 1; and thereby we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen, 2 Cor. iv. 18. Thereby we see and behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, 2 Cor. iii. 18. It is true, the glory of Christ did once pass before man's bodily eyes, but yet none saw it but believers by faith, "The

Word was made flesh, and we beheld his glory," John i. 14. It is true also, that the glory of Christ will appear gloriously at the great day of his appearance; but then there will be no faith either on Christ's right or left hand, such as now we see him by. The redeemed will have no faith, nor any use for such faith as now; for then, sight and love will put an end to faith. The damned, on the other hand, though they shall be no more unbelievers, for sight and fear will put an end to their unbelief; yet their faith will be no saving faith then, but only such as the devils now have, that believe and tremble; but from Christ's ascending to heaven, till his coming again to judgment, faith is the only eye that can savingly see Christ. Hence,

5. Remark I offer is, "That there are several periods wherein Christ hath been, and is to be seen by faith, particularly these four." First period was before his coming in the flesh; thus Abraham saw him afar off; thus Isaiah saw his glory; yea, and all the Old Testament saints, by faith, saw him in the promise and prophecy at a distance, Heb. xi. 13.—Second period was after his coming, and before his death and suffering on the cross; thus old Simeon saw him by faith, Luke ii. 30, "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation." It was a great blessing to see Christ in the flesh; but many did so, that yet did not see him believingly, as his true disciples did, John i. 14. Third period was after his death, before his ascension; thus all the disciples of Christ saw him, and were glad when they saw the Lord. Indeed, while he was yet lying in the grave, their faith was like to give up the ghost; also, "We trusted that it had been he that should have redeemed Israel, but now he is crucified, dead and buried;" they were at a loss to know whether they should repent of their faith or of their unbelief. Indeed the eye of faith was much tried, when Christ, the object of it, was brought so low; their faith had difficulties to grapple with, which ours want now, when we see him crowned with glory and honour. Therefore the fourth period is after his ascension to heaven, till his second coming; and in this period we, and all other believers, to the end of the world, remain while here; and the farther he is removed from the view of the eye of the body, the more properly is he the object of the eye of faith, which can behold him through the clouds, though he be in heaven, and we on the earth.

6. Remark I offer is, "That there are certain seasons wherein Christ, in a special manner, is seen; particularly the day of conver-

sion is a day wherein Christ is first seen. When Paul was converted, God revealed his Son in him. If you be a believer, and would know when you was first converted, it was even when you had the first view of Christ and his glory. It is by the power of this discovery of Christ, that faith is wrought, while the gospel comes not in word only to the soul, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. But again, sometimes the discovery he makes of himself afterwards may be more sensible and remarkable, when, perhaps, on the back of a long desertion, he returns, and says, "I remember the kindness of thy youth, and the love of thine espousals. I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and vowedst the vow unto me." Sometimes to shew his holiness and goodness, as being the rewarder of them that diligently seek him, he is pleased to shew himself after a course of spiritual diligence. Thus Moses prays and cries, saying, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory;" and accordingly, the Lord makes all his goodness pass before him, Exod. xxxiii. 18, 19. Indeed, if there were more of Moses' spirit, it would be better with us. We receive not, because we ask not. Sometimes again, to shew his sovereignty, and the freedom of his grace, he gives a sight of himself to a backsliding child, and courts him back with kindness, saying, "Thou hast not called on me, O Jacob; thou hast been weary of me, O Israel: thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, and wearied me with thine iniquities; yet I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins," Isa. xliii. 24, 25. It is indeed, an amazing condescension, that the Lord should please to give a glance of himself, even upon the back of heinous provocations; yet thus he is pleased many times to give them occasion to say, "It is the voice of my Beloved; behold he cometh skipping on the mountains, and leaping upon the hills;" making all the hills and mountains of sin, guilt and separation, to melt down before him. And indeed, nothing melts their hard heart so much as to see him thus coming. Sometimes their suffering season is his time of shewing himself, and of their seeing him: "If you be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are you; for the Spirit of God and of glory resteth on you," 1 Pet. iv. 14. Sometimes a dying season is another time of their seeing him; thus Stephen, when they were stoning him to death, he looked up, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. There are, I say, certain seasons of their seeing Christ. But I proceed,

7. Remark I offer is, "That there are various respects and various degrees wherein persons may be said to see Christ savingly," particularly when he manifests himself to them, as he does not manifest himself to the world; See John xiv. 21, 22, 23. His people may be said to see him, when he makes them sensible of his gracious presence with them, and sensible of his special love towards them, and puts them in a condition to say, "He loved me, and gave himself for me;" and when, by this deep impression of his gracious presence, and sweet persuasion of his special love, through the powerful breathing of his Spirit upon them, he draws forth their graces to a lively exercise; lifts up the light of his countenance upon them; and makes them sit down under his shadow with great delight; when he clears up their interest in his love, saying, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with everlasting loving-kindness have I drawn thee." In a word, one may be said to have seen Christ, when he comes with a word of grace, and work of power, and opens the locked heart, and melts the hard heart, and fixes the wandering heart, and humbles the proud heart, and heals the plagued heart, and draws the backward heart, and frees the fettered heart, spiritualizes the carnal heart, raises the drooping heart, helps and curbs the unbelieving heart, and comforts the dejected heart; and when he is pleased to give his convincing, quickening, strengthening, sanctifying, and directing presence; but these things I cannot enlarge upon, only there are various degrees of seeing Christ, in whatever respect his people may be said to see him. Some have more, and some less of this sight. Some are brought to the banquetting-house to get a full meal; others receive but a crumb that falls from the table; and particular believers have not always, and at all times, the like measure and degree of the outletting of his favour. Sometimes the soul may be brought to the suburbs of glory, and get such a discovery of Christ, that he would be content the valley of vision were his burial-place, saying, with Simeon, "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." At other times the view and discovery is of a lower degree, when faith is not riding so triumphantly, but fighting its way through many doubts and fears, trials and temptations, and sensible presence much withdrawn.

8. Remark is, "That there are several properties of a saving sight of Christ, that tend to give light concerning it." For instance, this sight of Christ is but imperfect here, and partial, in re-

gard of what it will be hereafter, 1 Cor. xiii. 9, "Now we know in part;" and ver. 12, "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face." Indeed their sight is like a not-seeing, in comparison to what one day it will be. Again, this seeing of Christ, though imperfect, yet it is unspeakable. Indeed, the joy that results from a sight of Christ is unspeakable: "In whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." Who then can utter or express the glory of Christ, the sight whereof raises that unspeakable joy?

This sight of Christ is supernatural. "How is the glory of the Lord seen, but by the Spirit of the Lord?" 2 Cor. iii. 18. It is God that must bestow this blessing; flesh and blood cannot reveal Christ to a man: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned; but God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit," 1 Cor. ii. 10, 14.—This sight of Christ is an amiable sight; for, "He is altogether lovely." This makes his tabernacles amiable, because they see the glory of God there; and every thing in God that they see is amiable; yea, you are not to think that the children of God see only one side of God, as it were, and not another. Though the Lord shews but part of himself at once, now a lesser and then a greater part of himself, yet it is not to be thought as if they saw but one side of God and not another, or if he shewed his amiable side and concealed his terrible side; no, that which is most terrible in God to wicked men, that is also most amiable and lovely in the eyes of the saints; for a God in Christ is all amiable. His power, greatness, and justice, which the wicked abhor, appear to them in excellent glory.—Again, the sight of Christ here is frequently interrupted, it is only in heaven that the saints have the uninterrupted vision and fruition of God, without any cloud to darken their day; but here, no sooner does the heart begin to open to Christ some time, than alas! he is gone: "I opened to my Beloved, but my Beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone."—Again, this sight of Christ, however short and inconstant, yet it is always sweet and satisfying, sweet and ravishing: "His mouth is most sweet," says the Church; "O how sweet and satisfying are the smiles of his mouth! it is enough to make a heaven in the soul. How sweet are the words of his mouth! sweeter than the honey and the honeycomb." When he manifests himself in a word of grace, the sweetness is such, that all sweetness

is but bitterness in comparison thereof. How sweet and satisfying is it when the day-spring from on high visits the soul, especially after a long dark night of temptation, desertion, and despondency, wherein the soul thought that God had forgotten to be gracious, and would never return. When the Sun of righteousness breaks out below the black clouds, even of sin and provocation, when the soul now sees the power and glory of God in the sanctuary, how is it satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and the mouth praises him with joyful lips! Again, this sight of Christ is convincing, powerfully convincing; it carries so much evidence in it, as makes the soul cry out with Thomas, "My Lord and my God; He that believeth, hath the witness in himself." Surely we do not see Christ sleeping; nay, it is with open eyes and an open face: "All we with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord." According to the measure and degree of the manifestation, it will have some evidence, even as a man seeing the sun, carries its own evidence along with it; though the sight be dark in comparison of what it will be, yet it is convincing in itself.—And as it is convincing, so it is affecting. O! a sight of Christ is most affecting when it is a saving sight; it affects with reverence, therefore it is said of the disciples, when they saw him they worshipped him. It affects with joy: "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." It affects with holy fear: "When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead." It affects with wonder, and makes the soul cry out, "RABBONI, who is a God like unto thee?" It affects with self-abhorrence: "Now mine eyes see thee, wherefore I abhor myself." It affects with self-abasement: "O what am I, and what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" It affects with penitency and godly sorrow: "They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn." It affects with new vigour and courage: "They looked to him, and were enlightened, and their faces were not ashamed."

9. Remark is, "That there are many means whereby, and glasses wherein we may see Christ." Sometimes he is seen in the glass of his outward works, the visible creation shews forth his divine glory; the very heavens declare it, says the psalmist; and the spiritual eye will see Christ in the creatures, though his glory is above the earth and heaven, Psal. cxlviii. 13; yet his glory is in the earth and heaven, and in all his works, small and great, inso-much, that though they cannot savingly discover him, yet these that

have got a saving discovery of him, may see more and more of his glory, wheresoever they cast their eyes, were it but on a creeping insect, or a grass pile.

Again, sometimes he is seen in the glass of his inward works, more especially when he works effectually upon the heart, implanting the graces of his Spirit there, or afterwards making grace to grow, both in the root, by the increase of a holy and spiritual disposition; and in the fruit, by a suitable gospel-walk and conversation. When he works any wonderful change upon the soul, whether it be yourselves or others, and that you see he hath taken a gracious dealing with such or such an one, why, then you see there the finger of God; and that the Lord is near, his wondrous works declare.—Sometimes he is seen in the glass of his providences; common providences are common glasses, where he may be seen, whether they are judgment or mercy. As the Lord is known by the judgment that he executes, and by the mercy that he renews every moment, so his people will see him in a rod; they will see him in a deliverance; yea, the spiritual man will see more of the Lord in an ordinary meal, than the hypocrite ever saw at a communion-table. But there are also signal providences, wherein they get more signal views of him. When Abraham's knife was at his son's throat, he met with a notable providence; behold a ram caught in a thicket by the horns, ready for him to sacrifice in room of Isaac. O! how much of God's glory did Abraham see in that providence! therefore he calls the name of the place JEHOVAH-JIREH, "In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen." The Lord will provide remarkable provision, remarkable protection; and this or that remarkable providence hath been sometimes the vehicle of a remarkable manifestation of the Lord's glory.—Again, he is to be seen sometimes in the glass of the word; 2 Cor. iii. 18; Rom. x. 6; John v. 39, "Search the scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they that testify of me." Here then we may see him in the types, in the prophecies, in the promises, in the doctrines of the word, as the Antitype of all the types, the substance of all the shadows, the truth of all prophecies, the fulness of all the promises, the centre of all the truths and lines of the word. In the precept, we see his holiness; in the promise, we see his goodness; his justice, in the threatenings; his wisdom, in the revelations of the word. Here a believer will sometimes see Christ in a title or designation given him in the word. O the glory that is to be seen

in that name JESUS, in that name IMMANUEL, in that name, KING of SAINTS, KING of KINGS!—Sometimes in a resemblance or simile; while he is resembled to a rose, for beauty; to a rock, for strength; to a treasure, for bounty; to a rising sun, for glory. In this glass, the soul will see him infinitely beyond all resemblances. However, when any light from heaven is shining, you have no more ado, as it were, but to open your Bible, and there see Christ.—Again, he is to be seen in the glass of his ordinances, whether public, or private, or secret; hence his people many times see him in a duty, they see him in meditation, they see him in prayer; sometimes they see him in a sermon; while the minister is opening the word, the Lord is opening their understanding to discern Christ there, while they are hearing a sermon; yea, sometimes while they are reading a gospel-sermon, they will have Christ in their hand, as it were, Christ in their mouth, Christ in their eye; yea, Christ in their heart.—Finally, in the sacrament Christ is to be seen; for, in baptism he is represented by the water, and the spiritual eye may see him there; and in the august ordinance of the supper, he is represented by the bread and wine; there he may be seen and known in the breaking of bread. All the believing views of Christ and sights of him here-away are mediate, through the intervention of means and ordinances; not immediate, as they shall be above: “Now we see through a glass darkly;” but the time comes, when the glasses shall be broken, and believers shall see him face to face, and see him as he is. Rev. xxi. 22, “I saw no temple there; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.”

The 10th and last remark is, “That Christ himself, who is the object of this sight, is a most glorious, full, and extensive object.” There is more to be seen in Christ than all the angels in heaven can tell. This is a larger field than we shall be able to travel over through all eternity. O what glory is to be seen in his natures and person, as God-man in one person. To see him in his mission and commission, as the Sent and Sealed of the Father; to see him in his offices, relations, and excellencies; in his doing, suffering, dying, rising, ascending, sitting at the right hand of God, interceding, and coming again to judgment; to see him in his furniture for his work as Mediator betwixt God and man, as standing so well affected to both parties and their interests, namely, his Father’s honour and his people’s happiness both, and in whom both parties may confide; accordingly the Father trusts him with all the concerns of his glory;

and well may his people trust him with all the concerns of their salvation; yea, so furnished, that he is able to bring both parties together, and to decide the difference betwixt them, such is his interest with God, and power with man. To see him in his fitness for us, as being a Prophet, to teach; a Priest to save; a King to subdue; a Physician to heal; a Friend to help in all cases; as having merit to justify; Spirit to sanctify; blood to wash; grace to pardon; fulness to supply; sweetness to endear; and beauty to allure. O how sweet is it to see him fitted of infinite wisdom to your need! And, do you not need him when you are in the dark, to enlighten you; when dead, to quicken you; when dull, to revive you; when in doubts, to resolve you; when in fears, to encourage you; when you stagger, to establish you; when you fall, to raise you; when you are tempted, to succour you; when weak, to strengthen you; when wandering, to restore you; in duties, to assist you; in difficulties, to guide you; in dangers, to guard you; when under bondage, to loose you; when under burdens, to relieve you! None but Christ can do all this, and a thousand times more; and if you were always looking to Christ, when you stand in need of him, your eyes would seldom be off him, for you are still needing him in these respects. But it is the special design of the sacrament to shew him forth in his death and suffering; there we see him as a crucified Christ, and we are to view his death and suffering, (1.) In the cause thereof: the procuring cause was sin, "He was wounded for our transgressions;" the instrumental cause was the devil and his instruments; the moving and impulsive cause was love: "He loved me, and gave himself for me;" the efficient or effective cause was God: "It pleased the Lord to bruise him;" the final cause, or the fruit and effect, was God's glory, and our eternal redemption (2.) In the severity thereof, while he drank the cup of the Father's wrath to the bottom. (3.) In the sufficiency thereof, for paying all the debt that was owing to the law and justice of God. (4.) In the acceptableness thereof, for it was a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour unto God.—In a word, the principal glory to be seen in Christ, is, that he that sees him, sees the Father. And this leads me to,

III. The Third head proposed, namely, to shew in what respects they that see Christ, see the Father: "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." I have shewed the oneness that is betwixt the Father and him in nature, properties, will, affection,

authority, supremacy, and other ways ; and therefore he that sees Christ, must see the Father in all these respects wherein he is one with him. There is no need of Philip's prayer here, " Lord, shew us the Father ;" for having seen Christ, we have seen the Father. It is Christ and he alone that declares, represents, and makes known to us the essential glory of the invisible God ; and without him our understanding could make no approach to his divine excellency. It is in the face of Christ that we see the glory of God, 2 Cor. iv. 6. And now, if any would know whether they have got a saving sight of Christ, here is the great diagnostic and infallible evidence thereof, namely, if you have seen the Father in him ; and, indeed, as there is no seeing of the Father, but in the Son, so there is no saving sight of the Son, without seeing the Father in him ; here is the excellency of the glory of Christ that faith sees ; here is the very foundation of our holy religion, and the ground of all our hope of life and immortality, God in Christ reconciling the world to himself ; here is the sum of the gospel, viz. the glory of God represented to us in the person and office of Christ as God-man, Mediator betwixt God and us. To see this glory, is saving faith ; not to see it, is damnable unbelief.

But to come more directly to the question, to shew in what respect they that see Christ, do see the Father, it is needful we consider,

1st, More generally in what capacity CHRIST is to be considered, when we see the Father in him ; and in what capacity the FATHER is to be considered when we see him in Christ.

As to the former, viz. in what capacity CHRIST is to be considered, when we see the Father in him : why, in short, he is to be considered,

1. As God the SON, the second person of the ever-blessed and ever-adorable Trinity.

2. As MAN, or God incarnate ; God-man in one person, clothed with the offices of Mediator, Redeemer, Saviour, and Surety for a number of lost sinners.

As to the latter, viz. in what capacity the FATHER is to be considered when we see him in Christ.

1. When Christ is considered as GOD, then the Father is to be considered personally, for the first person of the glorious Trinity.

2. When Christ is considered as MAN, then the Father is to be considered essentially ; including Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one in essence.

In both these respects Christ and the Father are spoken of in the text, as the context shews; for, in the following context, Christ is said to be in the Father, and the Father in him, in the unity of the same divine essence, verse 10; in which respect, Christ being considered as GOD, the Father is taken personally; so, in the preceding context, Christ is said to be the way to the Father: "Ye believe in God, believe also in me: I am the way, no man cometh to the Father but by me," ver. 1, 6. In which respect, Christ being considered as MAN, or God-man, the Father is to be taken essentially; for, as God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, essentially considered, did constitute Christ personally considered, and so clothed with our flesh to be the way to God, and the representative of the divine glory, namely, his own glory, as God, equally with the Father's, which are essentially the same; so Christ, the second person, considered as man, is the way to God essentially considered; nor does it involve any contradiction, that thus he should be the way to himself, as well as to the Father; seeing it is as man, that he is the way to himself as God; and in him as man, we see his essential glory as well as the Father's; for, as personally considered, he is the eternal Son of the eternal Father; so essentially, he is the everlasting Father, one in number with the first person; Isaiah ix. 6, "The mighty God, the everlasting Father;" compared with Deut. vi. 4, "The Lord our God is one Lord."

However, though the text allows us not to exclude the consideration of Christ personally, as GOD the SON; yet it is especially as MAN that he is to be viewed by us, or in his incarnation, for therein he becomes the representative of God to the church, 2 Cor. iv. 6.—And without him, under this consideration, we cannot either see him or his Father; for Christ's divine person, absolutely considered, is equally invisible and inaccessible to us as the Father is; in him, therefore, as man, we see the Father; *i.e.*, we see God in him, he being the image of the invisible God, and the great representative of God unto us. But,

2dly, And more particularly, I proceed to shew in what respects they who see Christ do see the Father; in the utmost latitude that the text allows, it will import the following particulars:—

1. That they who see Christ will see the Father's nature and essence in him; for, when the glory of the Godhead is discovered, then he is seen in whom dwells the fulness of the undivided essence of the Godhead bodily, Col. ii. 9.

2. They who see Christ will see the Father's personality in him ; for, when he is truly seen, he is seen to be the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, Heb. i. 3. Therefore, though the Father and the Son are not one person ; yet, when the Son is seen, we see the Father's person in him as the image thereof.

3. They who see Christ see the Father's relations in him ; I mean his relation both to Christ and to us in Christ. When Christ is seen, then the Father's relations to Christ are seen ; that is, not only his relation to Christ by nature, as Christ is the only eternally begotten of the Father ; but also by office, as Christ is the sent and sealed of the Father to the mediatorial work. Yea, when Christ is seen, then the Father's relations to us in Christ are seen, particularly as he is our God and Father in Christ : " I ascend to my Father and your Father ; to my God and your God," John xx. 17. They who see Christ, or God in Christ, they cannot see him any other way than a reconciled God and Father in him. To see God out of Christ is to see him as a consuming fire, a Judge, and an Avenger ; but to see him in Christ is to see him as a Friend and Father.

4. They who see Christ see the Father's face in him ; " The God who commanded light to shine out of darkness hath shined into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. iv. 6. Christ is the fair face of God : and as we see nothing of the body of a man, that is all clothed but his face : so God is clothed with such robes of terrible majesty, that we can see nothing of him but his face ; and happy are they who see his face by seeing him in Christ, for as the best sight of a man is to see his face, so the best sight of God is in Christ ; his brightest beauty and greatest glory is to be seen there. Hence the saints in Scripture, when they sought to see God, they still sought for a sight of his face, as Psalm lxxx. 3, 7, 19, " Cause thy face to shine, and we shall be safe." The seed of Jacob are called the seekers of his face : and where is the face and favour of God but in Christ ?

5. They who see Christ, they see the Father's heart in him. To see a man's heart is to know his mind and see his secret thoughts that none but God and he know ; and to see this were little worth the seeing, since all hearts by nature are wicked ; and the heart of the wicked is little worth : but to see God's heart is a vast matter ;

and yet, when the believer sees Christ's, he sees God's heart, and some secrets there, that none know but God and the believer himself that is looking to Christ; Psalm xxv. 14, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant;" or, as it may be read, and is accordingly translated in the margin, HIS COVENANT, TO MAKE THEM KNOW IT. You may conceive it thus: Christ is given for the Covenant of the people; this covenant is given to make them know the secret of the Lord, the Father's heart, mind, and will; and his glorious counsels are seen when Christ is seen. He lies in the bosom of the Father, John i. 18; therefore, they who see Christ cannot but see into his bosom: and, O they see far that see there! Some look to God, but never look to his heart and bosom; some look to his hands, in the work of creation; some look to his feet, in the ways of his providence; some look to his head, as it were, in his unsearchable decrees; but they lose the right sight of him who do not look into his heart and bosom. This is another sort of a place than that which the angel spake of concerning the dead and buried body of the Lord Jesus, "Come see the place where the Lord lay," Matth. xxviii. 6. I may, in allusion to it, say a greater word, Come, see the place where the Lord lay from all eternity; where he lies to this day, and will do for ever; that is, the Father's bosom. What! can that be seen? Yes; when you see Christ, you cannot miss a sight of the place where he lies.

6. They who see Christ, they see the Father's properties and perfections in him; and here to speak of these would be to speak for ever. I shall only name some of these glorious perfections, excellencies, and the properties of the divine majesty that are seen in Christ, in such a manner as they cannot be seen anywhere else. I pass over the infinity, immensity, and other such excellencies of God, which yet are to be seen in Christ, that I may confine myself to some of these attributes of God, that are ordinarily more obvious to the believing eye of the soul, that gets a saving sight of Christ.

(1.) He that hath seen Christ hath seen the infinite wisdom of the Father in him, and in the work of redemption by him. We do not extenuate the displays that are made of the divine wisdom in the works of creation and providence; when taking a comparative view thereof, we set them vastly inferior to the discoveries that are made of the manifold wisdom of God, in and through Jesus Christ,

Eph. iii. 9, 10, whose name is "Christ, the Wisdom of God," 1 Cor. i. 24; and in whom are hid all the treasures of divine wisdom, Col. ii. 3. If the question then be, as it is expressed, Job xxviii. 12, "Where shall wisdom be found? and what is the place of understanding! The deep says, It is not in me; the sea says, It is not in me." But behold, here it is, even in him who says, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." As this wisdom is in itself an eternal, essential property of the divine nature, we can have no comprehension of it, it stands at such an infinite distance from us, but in and by Christ, and in him alone is manifested this manifold wisdom of God. O the many foldings of wisdom that are here! Christ is a vast volume, a great book, wherein we may see and read the wisdom of God in a mystery. This book is open to us in the gospel, and if the Spirit of faith be allowed, we have no more ado but to turn over the leaves, and in every page we will see written in capital letters, WISDOM, WISDOM, WISDOM: INFINITE WISDOM. Wisdom in contriving such a salvation of sinners as should redound to the greatest glory of God. Wisdom in choosing such a person to be the Saviour and Redeemer, even the fittest person of all the three glorious persons of the adorable Trinity, the middle person to be Midsman and Mediator betwixt God and man. Wisdom in furnishing him with all the help and assistance in this work, that the other two glorious persons could give him, while he is sealed by the Father, and anointed by the Spirit: "Him hath God the Father sealed: and the Spirit of the Lord God is upon him above measure." Wisdom in uniting the most distant extremes, in joining God and man in one person, the infinite and eternal God with a piece of clay. O wisdom, wisdom shines here! Wisdom in punishing the sin, and yet pardoning the sinner: taking vengeance on the crime, and yet shewing mercy on the criminal. This wisdom of God shines in the face of Christ, the Surety of the better testament. Wisdom in bringing the greatest good out of the greatest evil, and all by the most unlikely means; making sin itself, which tends to the greatest dishonour of God, to contribute to his greatest glory; while salvation from it, by Jesus, brings in glory to God in the highest; and while in him also is brought life out of death, and the highest salvation out of the deepest humiliation. Wisdom in counteracting the policy of the old serpent in such a wonderful manner, making the seed of the woman to bruise the head of the serpent; and the Babe of Bethlehem to conquer all the armed

legions of hell. But to turn over all the leaves of this book will be the work of eternity ; however, all this wisdom, and infinitely more, is to be seen in Christ.

(2.) He that hath seen Christ hath seen the Father in his infinite power ; for, as he is the wisdom of God, so he is the power of God, 1 Cor. i. 24. It is no disparagement to the display of the power of God in making of heaven and earth, and all things out of nothing, though we declare to you that the power of God does not shine there so much as it does in Christ. Divine power is glorious in creation work, but much more in salvation work. It is more for God to redeem one sinner than to make a thousand worlds. Our help is laid upon one that is mighty ; and how does the almighty power of God here shine in laying such a weight upon the Redeemer's back, as should have broken the back of all the angels in heaven ; yea, under which the creation groans, and yet supporting him under so great a burden ? What burden ? Why, the Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all ; " and, together with the burden of sin, the burden of all the wrath that was due to it, that he might deliver us from the wrath to come. Power in upholding him in this great service ; " Behold my Servant, whom I uphold," Isa. xlii. 1. Power in enabling him to overcome all the powers of earth and hell, and making him to triumph over them on the cross, and to spoil principalities and powers openly. Power in giving him victory over sin and death, that we might share of his triumphs, and have victory in him : " O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ? Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. xv. 55. Power in saving sinners by the efficacy of his grace, the virtue of his Spirit, as well as by the merit of his blood, and in bringing them from the power of Satan unto God, which is more than to bring them from nothing to a being. In him we see that power of God, whereby he is able to save to the uttermost.

(3.) He that hath seen Christ hath seen the Father in his infinite holiness. He is indeed the Holy One of God, and Holiness to the Lord is a title that peculiarly belongs to him who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. It is no disparagement to the holiness of all the angels and inhabitants of heaven, to say, comparatively with him, that the heavens are not clean in his sight, and that he chargeth his angels with folly. God hath, in Christ, discovered most clearly " That he is of purer eyes than that he can

behold iniquity." Yea, in giving his Son to the death for our sins, he hath declared that he hates sin as much as he loves his eternal Son: "He gave himself for our sins, according to the will of God," Gal. i. 4. Thus God gave him, and he gave himself to take away sin, which is so contrary to his holiness. The Father put him upon this work, and held him to it, till he finished transgression, and made an end of sin, by the sacrifice of himself: therefore when we see Christ, we see infinite holiness vindicated, and may cry out, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory."

(4.) He that hath seen Christ hath seen the Father in his infinite justice and righteousness. Christ is set forth for this very end, to represent and declare this glorious attribute of the divine nature: "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins," Rom. iii. 25. Not only to satisfy his justice, in punishing of sin; but also to declare his justice, in pardoning of sin; and both, in and through Christ the propitiation. It is no diminution of the glory of God's justice, that shines in the eternal damnation of the wicked world of men and devils, to assert that the glory of his justice, in executing judgment upon sin, appears more brightly in the face of Jesus, as he was a sacrifice to satisfy justice to the full by one offering, which all the millions of the damned, that are sacrificed to incensed justice, will never be able to do through all eternity. God had a mind to save a number of sinners, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God;" but the law, that required the death of the sinner, and that the soul that sins should die, stood in the way; therefore God, rather than go contrary to his own law, will take payment according to the law, of his own Son. Christ, therefore, pays all the debt that the law could crave, and thus God is glorified in his most exact righteousness and infinite justice.

(5.) He that hath seen Christ hath seen the Father in his infinite love, mercy, and grace: "God is love," says the apostle, 1 John iv. 8. But where is this property of the divine nature manifested, seeing his wrath is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness of men, and we are compassed about with the evidences of his anger and displeasure at this day? Where, then, shall we see that God is love? Why, the same apostle tells us, verse 9, "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him: here-

in is love, not that we loved him, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Out of Christ we see him a consuming fire; but in Christ we see that "God is love!" O the love of God that shines in his mission, person, and offices! Love, in giving him to be a Saviour and Surety! Love in giving him for us and to us! Love in accepting the payment of our debt from him, and substituting him in our room! Love in accepting us in him, and love in giving out to us the great blessings promised and purchased by him: O love! love without a parallel! Mercy without a match! Wonderful mercy vented through a sacrifice; sovereign grace and goodness, in setting up such sun as Christ in the firmament of the church militant and triumphant. The natural sun runs his race, and rides his circuit from one end of the heaven to the other, and the benefit we enjoy thereby is a fruit of the goodness of God as the God of providence; but, O the glorious race that the Sun of righteousness runs from everlasting to everlasting! His circle is from one end of eternity to the other, if eternity, that is endless, may be thus considered; for he was set up from everlasting in the council of peace, and to everlasting will he shine, and shew forth the goodness and mercy of God as the God of grace.

(6.) He that hath seen Christ hath seen the Father in his infinite faithfulness, veracity, and truth; for, as he is the way to the Father, so he is the truth, John xiv. 6; in whom the fidelity of the God of truth does shine. Here was the glory that the disciples saw, John. i. 14, "Full of grace and truth." To see the truth of God in Christ is a noble sight, on which our everlasting safety and security does depend; and behold in Christ it is to be seen most conspicuously. The truth of God in all the threatenings of the law shines in Christ, while these threatenings receive their accomplishment in him, "As the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth," Rom. x. 4. The truth of God, in all the promises of the gospel, shines in Christ; "For in him they are all Yea and Amen," 2 Cor. i. 20. In Christ this miracle sparkles, that God, in saving the sinner, is true to his threatening, and true to his promise both: true to his threatening, that says, "The soul that sins shall die;" and yet true to his promise also, that says, "I will love thee freely." How gloriously do these opposites centre in Christ! And so the glory of truth, of the Father's truth appears. He is true to his threatening in Christ, who hath endured the shock of it; and true to his promise in Christ also, who hath fulfilled the condition

of it'; and both by his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross.

Thus the Father is seen in Christ, in respect of all these and the like divine properties and perfections, which in Christ appear to be both his Father's attributes and his own. They are seen to be Christ's divine perfections, and the perfections of the Father in him; "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." I would here say further,

7. They that see Christ see the Father's name in him; "My name is in him," says God, Exod. xxiii. 22. God's greatest name is his name, for example, "What is his name?" Exod. iii. 13. God says unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM, verse 14. This explains his name JEHOVAH, and signifies that he is self-existent, having his being and essence of himself, that he is eternal and unchangeable, always the same; that we cannot by searching find him out, but that he is the fountain of all beings. Now, it was Christ, the Angel of the covenant, that said this to Moses, when he appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the bush, Exod. iii. 2. He discovered himself by his name, when he was to deliver Israel out of Egypt, which deliverance was but a figure of good things to come; and therefore you may see him again taking this name three times to himself in one chapter in the New Testament, John viii. 58, "Before Abraham was, I AM." And ver. 24, "If ye believe not that I AM he, ye shall die in your sins." The word in the original is, THAT I AM. And so it is, verse 28, "When ye have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall ye know THAT I AM." Now, Christ hath been lifted up on pole of the cross, on the pole of the sacrament, on the pole of the gospel, and exalted on the Father's right hand. Do we know by this time that the name of the man that was crucified at Jerusalem is, I AM THAT I AM? Do we see his Father's name in him? "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

8. They that see Christ see the Father's glory in him; not only his name, but the glory of his name; not only his attributes, but the glory of his attributes: his name and attributes are indeed his glory, and when we see these, we see the Father's glory. But what I further mean is, that in Christ we see the glory of the Father's glory, and the glory and splendour of all these things that I have mentioned. This light is the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, who is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, therefore in him we

see not only the wisdom of God, but the glory of his wisdom ; not only his power, but the glory of his power ; not only his holiness, but the glory of his holiness ; not only his justice and righteousness, but the glory of his justice and righteousness ; not only his love, mercy, and grace, but the glory of his love, mercy, and grace ; not only his faithfulness, veracity, and truth, but the glory of his faithfulness, veracity, and truth. When God discovers himself in Christ then he is seen upon his highest throne, in his greatest glory. O sirs, let me tell you that when only heaven is his throne, and the earth his footstool, he appears infinitely more glorious when displayed on such a lofty throne. O but a God in Christ, which is the throne of grace, is also a throne of glory ; and glory to God in the highest, it is the throne of God and of the Lamb. If we see it, we cannot choose but sing with the redeemed, " Salvation to our God that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever." What shall I say ? He that sees Christ not only sees the Father's glory, but all the Father's glory ; for he is not only the seat of his glory, but the seat and centre of all his glory : In him dwells not only the fulness of God, but all the fulness of the Godhead, Col. ii. 9. Though finite eyes can never see all that infinite fulness, yet all that see Christ do see that all that infinite fulness, that can never be fully seen is in him. Though a man cannot comprehend the whole globe of the earth in his arms, or see it all at once, yet he may see it all in a lively representation thereof in a map ; even so, though we cannot see all this fulness comprehensively, so as to comprehend it, yet we see it all representatively in Christ, who is the lively and living representative of all the divine glory, and the repository of all the divine fulness ; all the dimensions of the divine glory are to be seen in him, even the height and depth, length and breadth thereof. In his humiliation we see the depth of the Father's love reaching down to hell to lift us up ; in his exaltation we see the height of the Father's grace, raising us up to sit with him in heavenly places ; in the extent of his death we see the breadth of the Father's love, extending, by divine destination, to all the promised seed, and by the method of application, to whosoever will. In the duration of his life, as a Priest for ever, we see the length of the Father's love, which is like himself, from everlasting to everlasting ; and so in seeing Christ, in all his estates, we see the Father in all the dimensions of his glory. So in all Christ's offices we see all the Father's treasures ; why, all the trea-

asures of the Father's wisdom centre in his prophetic office, and that for our illumination; all the treasures of the Father's righteousness centre in his priestly office, and that for our justification; and all the treasures of the Father's power centre in his kingly office, and that for our sanctification: yea, all the treasures of the Father's grace centre in him, as being all in all for our complete redemption. Thus, "He is made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," 1 Cor. i. 30. When we see Christ, then we see the Father in all his glory, in all his fulness, in all his treasures, and that for our eternal salvation, our everlasting consolation and good hope through grace.

Thus I have given you a short and poor hint at the resolution of that question, "He that hath seen Christ hath seen the Father;" insomuch that I say again, there is no need of Philip's prayer here, "Shew us the Father," for "He that hath seen Christ hath seen the Father: and, O happy they, whose eyes have seen this glory of God in Christ, while their ears are hearing of it! But I come now to,

IV. The Fourth Head proposed was to shew how and in what manner the Father is seen in Christ. Besides the light that the former head may give to this question, I shall add these following particulars.

1. In Christ we see the Father clearly and evidently, so much is implied in the term seeing; "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." To know God in Christ is to see God, because in Christ he is clearly and distinctly known; though faith and sight differ in certain respects, yet faith is a kind of sight, for "It is the evidence of things not seen," Heb. xi. 1. In Christ we see clearly and evidently him who is invisible, verse 27. Christ is the clearest and brightest glass that infinite wisdom could contrive to represent the glory of the Father; and as the disciples, when Christ was revealing the Father to them, John xvi. 27, 28, 29, cried out, "Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and not in proverbs, or parables:" so the soul that sees the Father in Christ, sees him clearly and plainly, not in clouds and thick darkness. The Old Testament church had, in types and sacrifices, a dark representation of Christ, but now we have in Christ the antitype a clear representation of the Father; we now see him with open face.

2. In Christ we see the Father savingly. This is plain from the context, shewing that Christ, who is the glass, the true and liv-

ing glass, in whom we see the Father, is also the true and living way, by whom we come to the Father, and so enjoy him as our God and Father in Christ, verse 6. My friends, to see the glory of Christ, and the glory of the Father in him, is such a saving sign, that salvation is inseparable from it; nay, salvation is in it; yet, more, it is the very thing that formally constitutes everlasting life and salvation, "This is life eternal to know thee," &c., John xvii. 3. The true and faithful witness who cannot lie is saying this to his Father, and you may be sure he will not lie to him or you either. Further, says he, "This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent;" that is, to see Christ and to see the Father in him, is eternal life; to see Christ, and to see the Father in him, is eternal life; to see God out of Christ is no saving, but a confounding sight to a sinner, but to see him in Christ is to see him savingly: Look to me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and besides me there is none else.

3. In Christ we see the Father comfortably and satisfyingly: it is the best antidote in all the world, against all heart trouble, therefore, says Christ here, verse 1 of this chapter, "Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me." To believe in God as a Judge and Lawgiver is necessary for the secure, to awaken their conscience, but this faith will never pacify the conscience, till you believe also in me, says Christ. I have given satisfaction to the Judge, and his law both, therefore believe also in me, that you may get satisfaction to your heart and conscience both, "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me." God out of Christ is the most terrible, but in Christ the most comfortable sight that ever was seen; and no wonder that the heart be pleased when it sees in Christ that God is well-pleased; "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." To see God in Christ, is to see the Father smiling in the Son's face; and surely they are unbelievers that have not seen God to be well-pleased in him. I do not love to discourage any poor drooping believer: and I shall not deny, but that there are some believers that have very little comfort, but I can hardly think that they are believers that never had any comfort less or more. What! if ever you saw God in Christ, will you tell me, dare you say for your life that it was no comfortable sight? If so, then I truly think you never yet saw him. I ask not what comfort you feel at present. It may be you are still drooping by reason of unbelief; but if ever

you saw him, and his Father in him, I am sure it was a joyful sight at the time, and afforded some satisfaction: so much is imported in Christ's assertion in the text, compared with Philip's petition in the preceding verse, "Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth;" importing that the sight and knowledge of God is full of satisfaction and refreshment, tending to give full contentment. Well, says Christ, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father:" and there is the most satisfying sight of the Father that you can have. It is true, the way of seeing God by faith, as revealed in his Son, is a way not satisfactory to a carnal heart, and believers themselves have a jealousy of it, so far as they are carnal and unbelieving, which was the ground of Christ's reproof to Philip here, upon which he also instructs him that here is the only satisfying sight to faith; "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

4. In Christ we see the Father applicatively, and as near at hand. It was unbelief in Philip, that said, "Shew us the Father," as if the Father had been still at such a distance as to be inaccessible and invisible; nay, but says Christ, whatever God be in himself absolutely, and though he remain still in his nature invisible and incomprehensible, yet in me, and in me alone, he comes so near as that you may see him and embrace him by faith; "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." To see God absolutely with mortal bodily eyes is impossible, he stands at an infinite distance from us. When we see him in the creation, or in any external representation of his glory, we see him at an infinite natural distance from us as creatures; when we see him in the law, or covenant of works, we see him at an infinite moral distance from us as sinners; yea, there we see him compassed about with flames of wrath, ready to devour us; but when, through the gospel glass, we see him in Christ, then we see him near at hand; yea, nearly related to us as our God, Friend, and Father in Christ. And hence the sight of faith brings in Thomas's exclamation, John xx. 28, "My Lord and my God."

5. In Christ we see the Father discriminately: that is, so as to discern the personal distinction betwixt the Father and the Son, notwithstanding of their essential oneness. The very run of the text and context, both before and after it, declares the distinction. O sirs! the three distinct persons of the glorious Trinity, in their distinct personal properties, as it is an unfathomable mystery in itself, so it would have been for ever hidden and

unseen to us, if Christ, the Son of Righteousness, had not risen; and in his light, discovered the same, so as we have, in Christ, a discriminative view of the Father; for we cannot see the Son of God in the light of the eternal Spirit, but we must, at the same time, see that he is the eternal Son of an eternal Father. The distinct economy and administration of the three persons in the work of our redemption gives us a clearer view of their personal distinction than can be had in any other glass: nay, I know no other glass that can make it known. The glass of the creatures says, It is not in me to shew that; the glass of the law says, It is not in me; but the glass of the gospel saith, I have found it. And when the Spirit promised in the gospel comes to glorify Christ, then, in the glory of the Son, we see the glory of the Father; "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." Hence,

6. In Christ we see the Father truly; "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." It expresses the truth of the matter out of the mouth of him that is truth itself. He that hath a true sight of Christ hath a true sight of the Father, and a sight of the true God. "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true. This is the true God and eternal life," 1 John v. 20. Ye that never yet saw Christ you are yet Atheists, without God; you never saw the true God to this day, but only a false god, a god of your own devising, an image of your own brain. But as for you believer, when you got a true sight of Christ, then you got a true sight of the true God. We see the true Father in the true Son, by the light of the Spirit of truth testifying of Christ.

7. In Christ we see the Father, not only truly, but gloriously. This is plain also in the text, for notwithstanding the Lord Jesus had said, verse 7, "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also:" yea, "And henceforth ye know him, and have seen him:" yet Philip says, "Lord, shew us thy Father," as if there had been some other and better way of knowing the Father than by knowing and seeing Christ; whereupon Christ reproves him, and lets him know that this was the best, the only, and the most glorious way; "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father: and how sayest thou, Shew us the Father?" If you would have another way of your own, might Christ say, whereby to see the Father, you shall find that the way you would be at is

either impossible, or vastly inferior to what you enjoy ; for, whereas you say, " Shew us the Father ;" if you desire an immediate sight of him out of me, that is impossible, and would consume mortal men, so as you know not what you would be at ; or, if you desire only such a sight of God as Moses and others got of old, then know, that what they got, comes far short of what you have already when you see me : " He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father's glory ;" and not only so, but the glory of the Father in the most glorious manner that can be seen by mortal eyes.

8. In Christ we see the Father orderly and regularly. This is imported also in the text and context : that as there is no coming to the Father, but by Christ ; nor seeing of the Father, but in Christ ; so the gospel-order of coming to God, is by Christ ; and of seeing God, is in Christ. And here, indeed, is the true order and evangelical method of access to God, when, by the Spirit, we are led to Christ, and by Christ to the Father : " Through him we have access, by one Spirit, unto the Father," Eph. ii. 18. Here is the true order of communion with God, the way in which God descends unto us, is the way in which we ascend unto God. The Father sent the Son into our nature ; and the Son sends the Spirit into our hearts, that, by the Spirit, we might ascend to the Son ; and by the Son to the Father. Here is the true order of all right worshipping of God : it is a worshipping of God in Christ, by the Holy Ghost. It is the same with the order of seeing God in the text, where the light of the Spirit being supposed, wherein alone we can see Christ, it follows, " He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." So much for the manner.

V. The Fifth Head proposed, was, to offer some grounds or reasons of the doctrine, shewing whence it is that they that see Christ, see the Father. The reasons of a doctrine being the great pillars which support it, and the hinges on which it turns ; therefore I must mention some of these for the confirmation of faith in this matter.

1. He that hath seen Christ, hath seen the Father, because of the oneness that is betwixt them ; as I shewed upon the first head. The true ground of our knowing the Father in the Son, is his unity in essence with the Father ; so that though their personal properties be distinct, yet the essence is the same in both, and the one is in the other ; for thus the Lord Jesus clears it in the following words, " How sayest thou, Shew us the Father ? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me ?"

2. He that hath seen Christ, hath seen the Father, because of the agreement that is betwixt them. As they are one, so they agree in one; as it is said of the Three that bear witness on earth, "The Spirit, the water and the blood," 1 John v. 8; so much more may it be said of the Three that bear witness in heaven, "The Father, the Word, and the Spirit," that are one, that they agree in one; and indeed their agreement in the work of our redemption is such, that though the several persons of the glorious Trinity have their distinct work, and economy therein, yet it is with such a complicated harmony, that the administration of one cannot be seen without seeing that of the other. He that sees, by the Spirit's shining on the word, what the Son hath done as Mediator, in the Father's name, and as the Father's Ambassador, cannot but see, in the same light, the Father as employing him in that embassy.

3. He that hath seen Christ, hath seen the Father, because of the relation that is betwixt them. In his natural relation, as he is the Son of God, we see the first person of the glorious Trinity to be his Father by eternal generation. In his economical relation, as he is the Sent of God, we see God to be his Father by special election, unction, vocation, ordination, and exhibition unto the mediatorial work. Both these, I think, are joined together in that word, John i. 14, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; and we beheld his glory, as the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

4. He that hath seen Christ, hath seen the Father, because of the likeness that is betwixt them. Not only as God was he in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, Phil. ii. 6, but also as man; though he came in the likeness of sinful flesh, yet he had also the likeness of his holy Father about him, being holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, Heb. vii. 26. The pity, mercy, and compassion of his Father; the love, grace, and goodness of his Father, did, when on earth, and does now, in heaven, so appear in him, that whoever have a perfect understanding of Christ, will have a perfect understanding of the Father.

5. He that hath seen Christ, hath seen the Father, because of the liking that is betwixt them. Not only a likeness but a liking. Such a liking hath Christ to the Father, that he declares it his heart's delight to do his Father's will, Psalm xl. 8. And if Christ's love be stamped, as it were, on the Father's heart, and the Father's

love be stamped on Christ's heart, he that hath seen Christ, must see the Father's love and delight. One of the capital letters of the Father's name often mentioned in scripture, is his Love to Christ as the Saviour of his people. His love to him, not only as his own Son, but as our Surety. Hence Christ, as Mediator, so frequently says to his Father, John xvii., "Thou hast loved me; thou hast loved me;" and again, "Thou hast loved me." But why three times in the close of that chapter? Why so oft does he repeat this in his intercessory prayer? Why, because as the Father loved him in his undertaking, from all eternity, before the foundation of the world, and loved him in his state of humiliation here, and loves him now in his state of exaltation, and will do so for ever; so the Father's love to them for whom Christ prays and intercedes, is founded in all the displays of it, upon his love to him; and he hears him always on their behalf, because he loves him; and loves them only in him. In him they were loved from eternity; in him they are loved in time; and in him they will be loved to eternity. His loving-kindness will he not take away from them, because his loving-kindness he will not and cannot take away from him, Psalm lxxxix. 33. It is a matter therefore of the greatest moment unto us to know this great letter of the Father's name, which he repeats three times over, "Thou hast loved me." Now, if Christ bear this golden letter on the breast-plate of his mediation, and shews himself thus clothed with the robes of his Father's loving-kindness, then they that see him, must see the Father's favour to him, and to them in him, according to the measure of faith; and this is the very thing that he does, John xvii. 26, "I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them." O matchless mystery! They that have Christ in them, they have the Father's love that he bears to Christ in them. But again,

6. He that hath seen Christ, hath seen the Father, because he is the image and representative of the Father. I distinguish this from the likeness that is between the Father and him; for one may have a likeness to another, and yet not be such an one's actual representative, as Christ is of the Father, 2 Cor. iv. 4. Christ is the image of the invisible God, Col. i. 15; the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, Heb. i. 3. In his divine person, absolutely considered, he is the essential image of God, even the Father; but thus he is as invisible as the Father; therefore, in

his incarnation, he becomes the representative image of God unto the church, that we may have the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus, 2 Cor. iv. 6. It is true, the saints are said to be the image of God, when they are renewed in a conformity to the nature and will of God; but great is the difference betwixt the image of God in man, and the image of God in Christ. The image of God in the believer, is like Caesar's image in his coin; but the image of God in Christ, is like Caesar's image in his son, his only son and representative. Christ is the image of the invisible God, but man is the image of the visible God; that is of Christ, Rom. viii. 29. In whom God is made visible to us. Christ indeed, as God, is not only the image of God, but the invisible image of the invisible God; but as man he is the visible image of the invisible God. It is true he is out of sight now, and we cannot see him with our bodily eyes; but as he was visible on earth, and is visible in heaven, in our nature; so the only saving sight of him that a sinner can have, is by faith. Suppose it were possible for a sinner on earth, to see Christ in heaven, merely with his bodily eyes, it would not be a saving sight; but now, when by faith, we see Christ as the representative image of the Father, then we cannot but see the Father in him. He bears the image of all the Father's glorious excellencies; and, therefore, to see his glory, is to see his Father's glory also, and that for the following reason. Further,

7. He that hath seen Christ, hath seen the Father, because he is sent and sealed of the Father for this very end, that he might represent, manifest, and declare the Father. Hence, "No man hath seen God at any time, the only-begotten Son, that is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him," John i. 18. "All things that are delivered to me of my Father," says Christ, Matt. xi. 27, "And no man knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." He was sealed and anointed for this very end: "The Spirit of the Lord God was upon him, that he might bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." And hence "God, who, at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake, in times past, to the fathers by the prophets, hath, in these last days, spoken to us by his Son, who is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person," Heb. i. 1, 2. Whatever Christ did, either by his preaching, working of miracles, or laying down his life, it was by the appointment of his Father, and to lead us to the Father. He

is the way, the new and living consecrated way to the Father. He, therefore, that sees him as the way, does see the Father as the end to which the way leads by divine appointment.

8. He that hath seen Christ hath seen the Father, because the Spirit, that discovers and testifies of Christ, is equally the Spirit of the Father and of the Son. The Spirit of the Son is the Spirit of the Father; and the Spirit of the Father is the Spirit of the Son; "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceeds from the Father, he shall testify of me," John xv. 26. He cannot, therefore, testify of the Son, without testifying of the Father. The Spirit of the Father testifying of the Son, cannot be without reference to the Father; nay, when he discovers Christ and the things of Christ, he discovers, at the same time, in the same light, the Father, and the things of the Father, "He shall glorify me," says Christ, "for he shall receive of mine, and shew it unto you," John xvi. 14, 15. Now, if it be asked, what things of Christ's he will shew? The answer is, they are the things of the Father; for, "All things that the Father hath, are mine." The things of Christ are the Father's, and the things of the Father are Christ's. The glory of Christ is the Father's glory; and the glory of the Father is Christ's glory. The fulness of Christ is the Father's fulness; and the fulness of the Father is Christ's fulness. Therefore, he that is the Spirit, both of the Father and of the Son, when he glorifies Christ, and shews the things of Christ, he glorifies the Father, and shews the things of the Father: consequently, "He that hath seen Christ, hath seen the Father."

VI. The Sixth Head proposed was, to draw some Inferences from the whole for Application. This doctrine is so vastly great and prolific, that it is not possible for me to overtake all the purposes that lie in the bosom of it, and are deducible from it. The special Inferences I design are for Information, Trial, Reproof, Comfort, and Exhortation.

First, For Information. O how many truths lie in the bosom of this doctrine! That such is the oneness betwixt Christ and the Father, that he that hath seen Christ, hath seen the Father. There are two great truths here that lead us into many other truths.

1. That there is an oneness betwixt Christ and the Father.
2. That he that hath seen Christ, sees the Father.

1st, Is it so, that there is such an oneness betwixt Christ and the Father as I have shewn? Hence we may learn the following lessons.

1. Hence learn, that the object of faith is very great and glorious, far beyond what natural reason, or human understanding can fathom; therefore, our Lord Jesus here, as he makes his essential oneness with the Father the foundation of his assertion, That they that see him, see the Father: so he lays down this great mystery, as absolutely necessary to be believed, and apprehended by faith, though it cannot be comprehended by reason. Christ's question to Philip hereupon, is a fundamental question of the gospel-catechism; "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?" Without the faith of this, there is no right worshipping of God; no right apprehension of one God in three persons. This is no indifferent thing to be believed or not. Our eternal life depends upon it. God hath born witness to it from heaven, as I have already shewed.

2. From this oneness we may learn, that the doctrine of Arianism is damnable blasphemy, that denies the supreme Deity of our Lord Jesus, and his essential oneness with the Father. Many affronts have been offered to the crown and dignity, and royal prerogatives of our Lord in these lands, since we first broke, and then burnt the Covenant of our God, and were ashamed of our glory. But the spreading of Arianism now, in Britain and Ireland, is like a pulling up Reformation by the roots, and a saying, We will not only pull off the jewels of the Mediator's crown, but we will take the crown itself, and cast it into the mire. If this error be subtilly maintained among us, pray that God may discover and destroy it, otherwise it will destroy the very foundation of our holy religion. That pernicious error strikes directly against the doctrine of our Lord Jesus here; for, if there be not an essential oneness betwixt him and his Father, then it is not true, That he that hath seen Christ, hath seen the Father. If he be inferior to the Father in point of essence, self-existence, independency, or any other essential perfection, that we cannot see all the Father's glory in him; But

(1.) When this Sermon was delivered, the Arian tenets were not only getting up their head, and overspreading the nation, but there was a process commenced and depending before the supreme ecclesiastical court, against Mr Simpson, professor of theology in the university of Glasgow, for teaching and propagating these tenets. The kindly reception the Arian sentiments were meeting, the many friends this propagator of them was, at this time, like to have, and in the issue really had, and the small number that appeared courageously against them, no doubt, influenced our author, both to observe more frequently, in his discourses, the spreading of them, and to express himself more zealously upon the head, justly dreading the dismal consequences thereof.

let Christ, who is truth itself, be true, and every man a liar. What I have said refutes this abomination.

3. From this oneness betwixt the Father and the Son, you may learn the danger of denying Christ. To deny the Son is to deny the Father, 1 John ii. 23, "And he is Antichrist that denies the Father and the Son," ver. 22. And who is a liar, but he that denies that Jesus is the Christ? To deny the unity of the same undivided essence betwixt the Father and him, is to deny him to be the true Messiah; "IMMANUEL, God with us," Isa. vii. 14. O the danger of deviating from the doctrine of Christ! "Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son," 2 John 9. Hence he that deviates from it hath neither. Why? because of their undivided essence, notwithstanding of their personal distinction. It is not possible to deny the one and not the other.

4: Learn hence, how fearfully Christ was humbled: what! one with the Father, the Father's fellow, and equal, and yet a babe, a servant, a sufferer, a worm! Psalm xxii. Should an emperor become a fly; yea, should all the glorious angels in heaven become one crawling insect upon earth, it were not to be mentioned with this humiliation of Christ. Oh! how sadly was the world mistaken concerning Christ. Oh! how sadly was the world mistaken concerning Christ, when they took him up to be a mere man, the carpenter's son, and did not see him to be the eternal Son of God, and essentially one with the Father.

5. See here how gloriously adorned Christ is with all divine perfections, and so how infinitely valuable and efficacious all his mediatory actings are. If he had not been God, equal with the Father, his active and passive obedience could not have profited us; for, they had not been dignified with infinite merit, value and virtue. But now, being one with the Father, his divine nature is the altar that sanctifies the whole gift; therefore his blood is the blood of God; his righteousness the righteousness of God; we may safely depend hereupon for peace with God, and acceptance to eternal life.

6. Here we may learn the infinite ability of Christ, to apply, by his power, what he purchased by his blood. His oneness with the Father declares, that as he was able to make all things out of nothing and does still uphold all things by the word of his power; so he is able to save to the uttermost; his arm,

is the arm of God; his power is the power of God. "It is said, "The Son of man, even on earth, had power to forgive sins," Matt. ix. 6. The Pharisees had made the objection, "Who can forgive sins but God!" Christ takes their own argument to prove that he was God, because he could forgive sins; and indeed to take away the guilt of sin requires omnipotency; the guilt of sin hath the whole strength of God's law to back it; and God's law hath the whole strength of his infinite justice to maintain it; therefore, there must be an infinite power to take away the guilt of sin, even that power that can break the force of God's law, and satisfy the demands of infinite justice. The same power and ability also is requisite to take away the power of sin; for guilt and power are the two great attributes of sin; infinite power only can destroy them. It is to some a known maxim, "Ejusdem esse potestatis instruere et destruere." "No less power is required to destroy the world than there was to create it." In the first creation, there was something made out of nothing; yet that nothing did not resist: and if God should annihilate the frame of heaven and earth, and reduce it to nothing again, it would suddenly sink; there would be no resistance. But to bring together things that are contrary: to do away sin, and bring in grace, that are so opposite one to another, and meet one another with the utmost resistance, requires an infinite power to effect it. Sin is not only an enemy, but enmity against God; and as the mind musters up millions of objections against Christ when he comes to deal with a sinner; so the heart and affections oppose him, as it were, in battle array; "In the last days perilous times shall come; for men shall be lovers of themselves," 2 Tim. iii. 1, 4. There goes the captain of self-love, after which follows the body of the army of lusts, "Covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemous, disobedient, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good; traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God," &c. The weapons of the warfare that can defeat this opposition, needs to be mighty through God. "Thy people shall be willing," but when? "in the day of thy power:" this is said to, and of our Lord Jesus, Psalm cx. 3. Being one with the Father, see his infinite ability.

7. From this oneness betwixt the Father and Son, we may learn, that Christ was not alone in the work of redemption, John xvi. 32, "I am not alone, because the Father is with me." How could he

fail or be discouraged in his work? The power and presence of the eternal God-head, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, was with him. O see and admire the joint concurrence of the Father with the Son, together with the Holy Ghost, in carrying on this great work of redemption? It was the pleasure of the Father, the pleasure of the Son, the pleasure of the Holy Ghost, that this work should be carried on and prosper.

8. Hence learn, how glorious and ineffable is the love of the Father in giving Christ, the same in substance with himself, to assume our nature, and die for our sins: "He took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham," and the Father put the robe of our nature upon him, "A body hast thou given me." Behold, how he loves the nature of those whom he hath given to Christ, that though he hath them not all with him in heaven, yet he loves to have their picture, his Son in their nature, to see them in him, and love them in him. In the faith of this, O what ground of encouragement is there, and what foundation of confidence in coming to the Father in him! that our Advocate is so near to the Father, so nearly related to him, and yet so nearly related to us; one with the Father in nature, and yet one with us in nature also: "Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh;" and great is the mystery of divine love, in making him, that is one with himself, to be the way to himself. Surely, if you come to the Father by this way, you may be sure you come with the Father's allowance; you may come boldly. Is there access to Christ, and yet the Father inaccessible that way? Nay, that is impossible, if you believe this oneness that Christ is in the Father, and the Father in him.

9. Hence learn the necessity of divine revelation, objective and subjective: the necessity of scriptural revelation; without which we had wandered in the dark without knowing Christ in his oneness with the Father. O bless God for the Bible, and for eyes to look upon it; and study to improve that privilege. See also the absolute necessity of spiritual illumination and divine teaching, in order to our apprehending this divine mystery of Christ's oneness with the Father. When Peter confessed this, by saying, "Thou art Christ the Son of the living God," Christ answers, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven," Matt. xvi. 16, 17. Let us be humbled under a sense of our ignorance of God and Christ, and cry

for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, and in this way.

19. Let us learn, from this oneness betwixt Christ and the Father, the glorious excellency of Christ being one with the Father. Is he not a glorious object of adoration? "The Lord our God is one Lord." And, O believer, "He is thy Lord, worship thou him;" crying out with Thomas, "My Lord, and my God." Being one with the Father, is he not a fit portion for your immortal souls? His riches are indeed unsearchable; for they are all the fulness of the Godhead. It was said, "Who can count the dust of Jacob?" but much more, who can tell the thousandth part of the believer's treasure, that hath a right to say, "The Lord is the portion of my soul!" O immense and everlasting portion! Being one with the Father, is he not the fountain of living waters; the fountain of all grace, as well as the channel through which it runs? As God he is the fountain; as man, he is the mean of conveyance; that out of his fulness we may receive grace for grace. Being one with the Father, is he not the fountain of authority equal with the Father? yea his law is his Father's law. They that sin against him, sin against the Father: the original authority of the law is not annulled by being put into Christ's hand. Are believers under less obligation to obedience to the law, as a rule, than before? No, by no means; see what gives authority and efficacy to the words of Christ, and what obliges us to obey him, otherwise we disobey the Father also: "The word which you hear is not mine, but the Father's that sent me," John xiv. 24. And this he grounds upon the oneness betwixt the Father and him, in the preceding part of the chapter. Consider therefore, man, woman, who it is that speaks to you in the gospel. Why is the neglect of his word so dangerous? It is the Father's word. Why is his voice so efficacious, and able to make the dead to hear and live? and why should his word have weight with us, and be credited by us? O! it is the Father's word. Being one with the Father, is he not a terrible enemy? How sadly are unbelievers, and enemies to Christ circumstantiated, and how dreadful will their day be, when he shall say, "Bring forth these mine enemies, that would not that I should reign over them, and cut them in pieces before me? O kiss the Son lest he be angry;" for his anger is God's anger, his wrath is the Father's wrath. It is true, he does not appear now in this gospel-dispensation, clothed with the robes of wrath, but rather in his robes of grace and mercy,

“He is not come to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved:” but if this Saviour and salvation be neglected, he will put on his robes of fury, “And come in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel;” and then his wrath will be seen to be the Father’s wrath. Being one with the Father, is he not a glorious, blessed and amiable friend, whose friendship is worth courting an interest in? How happily are they privileged that are interested in him, and united to him? What! to be his followers and favourites is a great matter; but, believers, you are more, being the body of Christ, and members in particular. O the dignity of union with Christ, what a great thing is this to be one with him who is one with the Father! John xiv. 20. O believer, you little know and consider the honour of this relation; “But, says Christ, at that day ye shall know that I am in the Father, and you in me, and I in you.” O what is that to be wrapt up with Christ in the bosom of a Trinity, “Being one with the Father!” Is he not a strong tower, and mighty shield? Is it possible that his church on earth can be totally ruined, let men and devils rage as they will? No, no: the King of Zion is one with the Father.” Is it possible that the true believer can totally and finally perish and fall away? No, it cannot be; his perseverance is founded upon Christ’s oneness with the Father: “There is no plucking them out of my hand, nor my Father’s: I and my Father are one,” John x. 28, 29, 30. In a word, being one with the Father, we need not think it strange that such glorious things are spoken of him: let this conform our faith of all his mediatorial actings. Is it any wonder that he could spoil principalities and powers, and triumph over them in his cross, and bruise the head of the serpent? Could not the power and wisdom of heaven defeat and outwit the power and policy of hell? Is it any wonder that he could conquer death, and rise from the dead, being the living and eternal God? Is it any wonder that he, who is one with the Father, could appease the Father’s wrath, and bring in everlasting righteousness, and that the Father is well pleased for his righteousness sake? Finally, being one with the Father, what a fit representative is he of the Father’s person and glory? and what a native position does the Lord Jesus build upon this foundation of his oneness with the Father? namely, “He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father.”

2ndly, Is it so, That he that hath seen Christ, hath seen the

Father? then, in the light of this truth we may see light clearly, and learn many other great lessons. As,

1. Do they that see Christ see the Father? Hence I infer, the gross darkness of our natural state, and the gross ignorance of God in all natural men, so long as they are not enlightened in the knowledge of Christ. The mind of man is but a mass of ignorance. The understanding is darkened, Eph. iv. 17, 18; Yea, darkness itself, 1 John ii. 9. 11. Under the power of darkness, Col. i. 13. Partial ignorance of Christ in believers, is the reason why they know God but in part; therefore Christ says to his disciples here, "If ye had known me, ye would have known my Father also," ver. 7. Total ignorance of Christ in others, is the reason why they are wholly ignorant of God; therefore Christ speaks in the same terms to the proud Pharisees, John viii. 19, "Ye neither know me, nor my Father; if you had known me, you would have known my Father also." They that see not the glory of Christ, as the Father is represented in him, they neither know God nor Christ; they have neither the Father nor the Son; they know not God, because they know not the holy perfections of God's nature, in the principal way designed of infinite wisdom for their manifestation; they know not Christ, because they see not the glory of God in him; whatever other notions men may have of God, they are utterly ignorant of the heavenly mystery; and know not the wisdom of God in a mystery. Again,

2. Hence we may infer, both the greatness of the glory of God, that is represented to us by such an one as Christ, and the greatness of the grace of God, in providing such a representative, in whom we might see his glorious perfections, as his eternal Son, in our nature. To see the natural sun shining in its strength, would spoil the sight of the strongest eye; but to look on it through a vail is not offensive. If God should manifest himself in his naked glory, we would be dazzled and confounded; but to look to God in our nature, bringing down his glory to our eye, it invites us to behold it. "God manifested in the flesh;" O sirs, wonder and be amazed, that God will, in a manner, be no more God, but take another nature, rather than that the brightness of his own glory should undo us! O how willing is he to reveal and make himself known to poor sinners that had lost sight of him, in that he exhibits Christ, the brightness of his glory to us, that in him we may see all his glory?

3. Do they who see Christ, see the Father? Hence learn the

preciousness of Christ. As in his oneness, with the Father, we may see his infinite glorious excellency in himself; so in his representing the Father to us we may see the infinite preciousness of Christ, and the excellency of the knowledge of him; and the necessity of this knowledge unto us; as he is the notable mirror, and looking-glass, wherein God is to be seen; such a living mirror as can discover itself, and bring men to look unto it. O wonderful mirror! God in our nature representing God in his nature and perfections, and saying, "Look to me, and be saved; for I am God, and there is none else!" O the preciousness of Christ, in whom all the beams of divine glory are contracted, that we may see and look upon them through the vail of his flesh, because we could not endure one glance of the immediate rays of divine glory! O precious Christ, as he is thus the only way to the Father! God could get glory to his justice in our destruction; but behold his wonderful love, in laying his Son as a bridge betwixt him and us, that we might return to God upon him. And, O the wonderful love of Christ, that he was content to stoop so low! May not all the creation of God wonder at this? Angels are wondering; and what are we doing that are more concerned than they? O precious Christ, as he is the only meeting-place where God meets with us; and we with him! In him we see God, and God sees us; we cannot see God savingly, but in him; and God cannot look on us favourably but in him: for, he is the temple where God dwells, and manifests his glory. Where can we meet with God, but in a place where alone we can see God? O precious Christ, in respect of the glory and honour that the Father hath given him as Mediator! As he is the Son of God, "The Father, who hath life in himself, have given to him to have life in himself," John v. 26. As he is the Sent of God, "All power in heaven and earth is given unto him;" and particularly he is crowned with this glory and honour, of being the visible image of the invisible God, and of all the divine glory. O the preciousness of Christ, when such beauty is in him? It is a promise of the New Testament days, "Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty." What is this beauty of king JESUS, but that God is in him, and all his glory to be seen in him? God is said, under the law, to have dwelt in thick darkness; but now, when the Son of God hath appeared in the flesh, in the discharge of his office, the Son of righteousness hath arisen in his strength and beauty. God himself, as to his being and manner of his existence in three distinct persons, with

all the glorious properties of his nature, is illustriously manifested to believers. Thus Christ is the great light of the world; "They that follow him, shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life," John viii. 12. O precious Christ! in that hereupon he is the desire of all nations, the desire of all saints, the desire of all ages. The saints of old, that did not enjoy the benefit of the New Testament revelation, express this desire. See how David prayed for a discovery of this glory of God in Christ, though he could behold it only in types: "O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee; to see thy power and thy glory, as I have seen thee in the sanctuary," Psal. lxxiii. 1, 2. There was in the sanctuary an obscure representation of the glory of God in Christ; how much more should we desire and esteem that view, which we may now have with open face, though yet as in a glass! 2 Cor. iii. 18. Whence is it that a hiding Christ is such a matter of lamentation to believers? Why, the reason is, because, when he hides himself, God is out of sight; when he smiles, the Father smiles; when he appears, the Father appears; and O! how can he be but precious to the believer, when such a precious sight is to be seen in him!

4. Do they who see Christ, see the Father? Hence learn the excellency of the gospel, for there we see Christ. How highly dignified are we that enjoy gospel-ordinances and sacraments? In the gospel, Christ is presented to the ear; and when we hear him, then we hear the Father. In the sacraments, he is presented to our eye; and when we see him there, we see the Father. How sad is the case of those that want the gospel! They want the glass where Christ is seen, and so are without God; and much more sad is their case, that enjoy gospel-ordinances and sacraments, and yet neglect the great salvation, by neglecting to look to Christ there exhibited, and are never concerned to get a saving sight of Christ there! O how near does God come to them, yet they lose a sight of him! How great are the advantages of a clear dispensation? The more bright the glass is, the more may Christ be seen therein; and the more that Christ is seen the more is the Father seen in him. The gospel is a revelation of Christ; and herein also the difference betwixt the law and the gospel appears. The law, as a covenant, yields a terrible sight of God out of Christ; but the gospel affords a pleasant sight of God in Christ, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." Which also exposes the malignity of a legal spirit, and a legal strain of doctrine, by the means of which Christ is hid

and kept out of sight, and consequently the Father also ; or, if he be seen, it is not in Christ, but as it were, in the law ; and the law not being the ministration of the Spirit of light, life, and liberty this is the reason why legal doctrine is so troublesome to a gospel believer ; Gal. i. 7, “ There are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ,” namely, by their legal doctrine, which the apostle there speaks of. Again,

5. Do they who see Christ, see the Father ? Then hence learn, wherein the very nature and essence of faith lies, even in the beholding of the glory of God’s wisdom, power, holiness, justice, and mercy, in the person and offices of Christ, as our Saviour and Surety. In the ignorance of this lies the formal nature of unbelief, 1 Cor. i. 23, 25. Not to see the wisdom of God, and the power of God, and consequently all the other properties of his nature in Christ, is to be an unbeliever. But to see the wisdom, power, and other glorious attributes of the divine nature in Christ, with application, as our Saviour, and Surety, and so to see God glorifying his perfections thus, is to be a believer. Unbelievers are blinded, so as the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, shines not into them ; but believers are seers, as the prophets of old were called ; and they see visions, as the prophet Joel expresses it, Joel ii. 18. What visions ? O ! a beatific vision indeed, to see Christ, and to see the Father in him ! What a large field hath faith to travel through, broader than heaven and earth, even all the fulness of God ! And what a sure footing hath faith also ? For when it fixes upon Christ, it fixes upon God in him. Faith looks on Christ as a friend and helper, and so it cannot but see the Father as a friend in him. What solid ground for the assurance of faith is here, while faith cannot look to Christ, but it must see the love and good will of God in him ?

6. Do they who see Christ see the Father ? Hence learn, whence it is that the great design of Satan, from the beginning, hath been to blind the eyes of men, and fill their minds with prejudice, that they may not behold this glory of God in Christ, 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. And, indeed, this blindness and darkness is gradually cured in believers, by no less means than the almighty power of God ; “ God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,” verse 6. „And this in a conformity to that promise, Isaiah lx. 1, 2, “ Arise, shine ; for thy light is come, and the glory of the

Lord is risen upon thee: for, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people. But the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee." But, why does the devil raise such opposition to the gospel? And why is he raising a smoke out of the bottomless pit at this day, to darken that fundamental gospel-truth, the essential oneness betwixt the Father and the Son, but that people may not see the Father in the Son? Think not strange, that the devil and his instruments are at such pains to cloud and darken the truths of the gospel, wherein Christ is exhibited to us.

7. Do they who see Christ see the Father? Hence learn, what a happy place heaven is, and what is the difference betwixt a fiducial vision here, and a beatifical vision hereafter. Heaven will be the place of the full vision of Christ, and of the Father in him; but the difference is stated, 1 Cor. xiii. 12, "Now we see through a glass darkly;" or, as it may be rendered, BY A GLASS, IN A RIDDLE, a parable, or dark saying; where our present sight of Christ is spoken of with a double figurative limitation, namely, "Through a glass in a riddle;" THROUGH A GLASS; that is, either a looking-glass, which yields but a representation of him; the shadow of Christ is drawn in the gospel, and we have but a representation of him there: or an optic glass, or a perspective, that helps the sight in beholding things at a distance; as men discover the stars through certain glasses, while the eye itself is not able to discern them; such a glass is the gospel, without which we can make no discovery of Christ at all. Again, the gospel-displays of him are but, as it were, IN A RIDDLE; a parable, or so many dark things, which our weak faith understands but imperfectly. Hence, Song ii. 9, Christ is said to "Stand behind our wall, to look forth at the windows, and shew himself through the lattices." There is a wall of mortality betwixt him and us, that must be demolished before we can see him as he is; we see him now, as it were, through a glass window, through a lattice; yet when he stands looking forth at the windows of ordinances, shewing and "flourishing himself," as the word is, through the lattice of the promise, how unspeakably glorious does he appear? And if so, O what will it be to see him face to face, when walls and windows, and lattices, and all will be broken down, so as there shall be no more need of nor use for these glasses and ordinances? Angels and saints above are so ravished with his glory, and satisfied with his likeness, that they cannot look upon another object. It is

said, Isa. xxiv. 23, "The moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his antients gloriously." O but precious Christ must have a fair face, when the sun blushes and is ashamed to shine before him! Though a child of God were in a hell of misery and trouble all his life-time in this world, yet the first blink of this fair Immanuel in heaven would make amends for all. We may preach this wonderful Lord while we live, but we will never out-preach him; we may praise him to eternity, but shall never out-praise him: "Blessed are they that dwell in his house, they will be still praising him; yea, they like him, for they will see him as he is."

8. Do they that see Christ see the Father? Hence learn the grand difference betwixt the wicked and the godly; they differ like darkness and light, blindness and sight: sometimes they wonder at one another, as if they were monsters. The godly man wonders at the wicked, to see their carnal life and wicked temper. Oh! how can they laugh and be merry, when they are ready to drop into hell! The wicked also wonder at the saints, and that they run not with them into the same excess of riot: why, the one lives upon base, visible, earthly things, the other upon invisible glory, as seeing him who is invisible. Give a carnal man the world at his will, he cares not though God's face be hid; he is in his element, as the fish in the water; his language is, "Who will shew us any good;" a good bargain, and a flourishing trade? But the saint is of another temper; the language of his heart is, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us," Psal. iv. 6. Give him all the world, he cares not a straw for it, if God hide his face. This makes the difference also betwixt a saint and himself; to-day he is full of joy, though he hath but a bare house, and bare clothes, and a bare prospect of earthly enjoyments; yea, and be sadly harassed with trouble and reproaches; yet he sings, and rejoices, and triumphs. At another time he is full of heaviness, even though it should be better with him in his outward worldly circumstances, he goes sighing and sorrowing: Why? The reason is, One day the Lord shines, and then he is full of joy; another day the Lord hides his face, and then he is troubled; his heaven lies in seeing Christ's glory, in which he sees the Father's glory also.

9. Do they that see Christ, see the Father? Hence learn, what an honour it is to be conformed to the Son of God, as it is said, Rom. viii. 29, "Whom he did foreknow, them he did predes-

minate to be conform to the image of his Son." Is it the honour of Christ, as Mediator, to be the representative image of God, in whom the glory of God is to be seen? What an honour then is it for the saints to be conformed to the image of Christ? As Christ is in the form of God, so they are in the form of Christ, having Christ formed in them, Gal. iv. 19. And being renewed after his image, as the more we see Christ, the more we see God; so the more of Christ we see about a man, the more of God we see in him: This is the honour of all the saints, according to the measure of their sanctity.

10. Do they that see Christ, see the Father? Hence learn, what a dangerous thing it is to slight Christ, and contemn him, who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. If any despise the picture, it is an argument of their despising the person represented by it: "They that despise Christ despise the Father." And many despise Christ, that do not consider that they are doing so; particularly when they despise his sent ambassadors; "He that despises you," says Christ, "despises me; He that despises me, despises him that sent me." See John xv. 23, 24. Why, who would be so mad, say you, as to slight Christ? Even all you that slight his counsels, calls, and warnings given you by his word; that slight his people; and slight his ordinances; that slight his worship, such as prayer and praises, whether secret or social, private or public, wherein Christ is honoured and enjoyed. In slighting these, you slight Christ himself; and in so doing you despise the Father: for, you despise his representative image; and I will assure you, God will retaliate this treatment, and pay you home in your own coin: "O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image," Psal. lxxiii. 20.

11. Do they that see Christ see the Father? Hence learn, the awfulness of the day of judgment that is approaching. Though Christ is constitute to be the judge, Acts xvii. 31; yet the Father will judge the world in him, and by him; "For God is judge himself," Psal. l. 6. Then will Christ be seen upon the throne of judgment; "Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him," Rev. i. 7; and when they see him, they will see the Father in him; they will see God in him. It is true, he will not then be God's representative, in the capacity of a Saviour to sinners, as now he is, but as a righteous Judge of sinners and saints. A sight of God in Christ will not then be a pleasant sight to the wicked; for, he will appear to them, not as a Redeemer, but a revenger; for, "He

will appear in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel:" But to believers, who look for him, and to whom he hath appeared graciously, so as they have now seen him, and the Father in him, and who will then be all perfect saints, he will appear gloriously, the second time, without sin, to their complete salvation, Heb. ix. 28. How dreadfully awful will that day be to the wicked that shall see him, and see God in him no other way but as a consuming fire! How joyfully awful also will it be to the saints, who shall see him then, and see the Father in him, as their everlasting joy, and exceeding great reward?

12. Do they that see Christ see the Father? Hence also learn the great reason and foundation of many other truths; such as,

(1.) Why is it that a sight of Christ hath such virtue, and creates such blessed effects, as we see in scripture spoken of it? Even because they who see him, see the Father. Why is the sight of Christ so astonishing? Because then the wisdom of God in a mystery appears. Why is the sight of Christ so humbling? Why, because then God is seen in his majesty and mercy both. Why is it such a strengthening thing, even because then the power of God is discovered. Why is a sight of Christ so satisfying? Because then the grace of God appears. The sight is quieting to the conscience, for then the righteousness of God, in the remission of sin, is declared and manifested, Rom. iii. 25. The sight is sweetly filling and satiating, for then the all-sufficiency of God is discovered. Why is a sight of Christ so heart-cheering, that the believer can never get his heart up, when prest with guilt, till he get a sight of Christ, and then he gets ease to his mind, and not till then? Why, because when he sees Christ, he sees the Father; and he finds God is in him reconciled and well-pleased. In a word, why is a sight of Christ so sanctifying and transforming, that as they that see him perfectly in heaven are like him? Because they see him as he is, 1 John iii. 2. So they that even see him through a glass darkly, are more and more like him, and changed into the same image, from glory to glory, 2 Cor. iii. 18. Well then, they see the glory of a holy God in him, and the sight affects the heart, both with a sense of their disconformity to him, and with a strong desire of conformity to him; yea, the Spirit darting in the rays of the Son of righteousness dispels the darkness of sin, and inforces the contrary light of holiness upon the whole man gradually and power-

fully, according to the measure of the manifestation and communication.

(2.) Why is it that such honour, worship, and adoration is due to Christ? Even because he is the Father's representative image as man, even as he is his essential image as God. It is gross idolatry to worship God out of this image, or by any other image, either mental or real. Ah! shall the devil make men worship the image of the beast? Rom. xiii. 1, 8; and shall not we for ever honour this ever-living, everlasting image of our God? Why is it that what honour is done to Christ, is done to the Father, and what dishonour is done to him, is done to the Father? John v. 23. Because the Father hath ordered, "That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father:" And declares, "He that honours not the Son, honours not the Father." Why? Even as they that see not Christ, see not the Father: and they that know not Christ, know not the Father: so they that do not honour Christ do not honour the Father. They that disobey Christ, disobey the Father: they that displease Christ, displease the Father: they that believe in Christ, believe in the Father; therefore, says Christ, here in the context, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me;" which intimates this, among other things, that though one may believe in God, in some respect, without believing in Christ, yet we cannot believe in Christ, without believing in God: for, "By him we believe in God," 1 Pet. i. 21. Again.

(3.) Why is it that the Father honours them that serve and follow Christ? John xii. 26, "If any man serve me, him will my Father honour." Why, they that serve Christ, serve the Father. Why does the Father love them that love Christ; John xiv. 23. Why the lovers of Christ are the lovers of God; and they are but haters of the Father, that are not lovers of the Son.

(4.) Why is the anointing said to teach all things? 1 John ii. 27. Why, when the Spirit makes known Christ, he makes known the Father: and surely they know all things necessary to be known: they know all, who know him, who is all in all. Thus the meanest believer knows more than the wisest philosopher that ever was in the world, if he was ignorant of Christ.

(5.) Why is it that the Father is employed in glorifying Christ in heaven, and the Spirit sent to glorify Christ on earth? See how the Father glorifies him in heaven, Phil. ii. 9, 10, "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross: wherefore God

hath highly exalted him, and given him a name that is above every name." What is the reason? see it ver. 11, "It is to the glory of God the Father;" for when the Son of Man is glorified, God is glorified in him, John xiii. 31. See also how the Spirit is sent to glorify him on earth, John xvi. 14. Why so, even because when he is glorified, the Father is glorified in him, verse 15, "All things that the Father hath are mine." O sirs, if the Spirit hath been sent to glorify Christ among us to-day, then the Father hath been glorified in the Son.

(6.) Why is it that the saints and children of God desire sometimes to be dissolved, and to be with Christ? why, even that they may see him there, and the Father in him gloriously; for, if they that see him here see the Father in him, how much more will all his own and his Father's glory, then be manifested to their everlasting contentment, and full ineffable consolation through the ages of eternity! The sight of Christ that the believer gets is of such an attractive nature, that the heart affected with the glory of Christ, is just like the needle touched with a loadstone; it is in constant motion till it fix on its proper point; so is the believer's heart in a continual motion towards Christ, though yet, perhaps, like the needle, in a weak tremulous manner, the soul sighs, and sobs, and pants, and groans, in reading, in hearing, in prayer, in meditation, yet still pressing forward till it come to its centre in heaven.

13. Hence learn what reason ministers have to preach Christ; what reason people have to learn Christ; what reason sinners have to receive Christ, and what reason saints have to love Christ. Why, they that preach Christ learn the Father; they that come to Christ, come to the Father in him and by him; and they that love Christ love the Father. They who do not preach Christ let them bask up, deck, and adorn their sermons with all the flowers of rhetoric and oratory in the world, and with all the expressions of seeming respect to God imaginable, yet they cast a cloud upon the glory of the Father when they do not preach Christ. As he that honours not the Son, honours not the Father that sent him, John v. 23: so he that does not preach Christ does not preach the Father. Little wonder, then, that honest ministers are always beating upon this string: O! let none blame them for preaching Christ: for he is both the ALPHA and OMEGA, the first and last letter and lesson of our religion; "The author and finisher of faith." We cannot preach the Father's mind and will, concerning any part of our salvation, without preaching Christ.

Who can learn the Father's enlightening, justifying, sanctifying, and saving grace, without learning Christ, as made of God to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption? Who can learn repentance towards God, which is a turning from sin to God, without learning, in order of nature before it, "Faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ," Acts xx. 21, seeing there is no turning to God, but in Christ; no coming to the Father but by him. Repentance, then, towards God is the end; and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ is the mean towards that end: and so, with respect to faith itself, there is no believing in God aright without believing also in Christ, "By whom we believe in God;" nor can there be any love to God but in Christ; we are not lovers of the Father, if we be not lovers of Christ; and good reason have the saints to love Christ, because they see his glory, and the Father's glory in him. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

Use 2. The Second Use might be by way of trial or examination. Have you got a saving sight of Christ at this, or any such occasion? Why, then, the great mark of it is, if you have seen Christ you have seen the Father; if you have seen Christ's glory, you have seen the Father's glory in him, for "He is the brightness of the Father's glory:" if you have seen Christ's person, you have seen the express image of his person; if you have seen Christ, you have seen the Father in all these and the like respects that I mentioned in the doctrinal part. Hath the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness shone into your heart, to give you the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Christ? Then you have seen Christ indeed, if you have thus got the light of the knowledge of the Father's glory in his face. It is possible, indeed, that you may have seen Christ, and yet not know that you have seen the Father, even though it be impossible to see Christ, and not see the Father: for, Philip here had seen Christ, and seen the Father in him also, as Christ declares, verse 7, "Henceforth you know him and have seen him." Notwithstanding this declaration of Christ, Philip's saying, "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth," intimates the weakness of his faith, the darkness of his view, and that he knew not that he had seen the Father; upon which Christ, having reprov'd him for his ignorance, saying, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" he again resumes the doctrine he had delivered, verse 7, where he had said, "If ye had known me, ye would have known my Father also:"

and he resumes it here yet more clearly and expressly, saying, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father: how then sayest thou, Show us the Father?" If any believers here, who think they have seen Christ, be yet at a loss to know if they have seen the Father, let them hearken to what Christ is here saying to them, as he did to Philip, "Have I been so long time with thee, and yet hast thou not known me? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." But are still in the dark, Philip? Do you not yet know, believer, that you have seen the Father in Christ, and would you have this question further opened?

QUEST. How shall I know if I have seen CHRIST in such a saving manner as to see the Father in him?

For helping the weak believer in this matter; if he whose prerogative it is to shew us the Father, would send his Spirit to shine on a mark or two for clearing this, that in seeing Christ, you have seen the Father, there are two ways by which you may try it, namely, 1. By reflecting on the object. 2. By the offspring of this saving sight.

1st, Take a review of the object of this sight, namely, CHRIST, in whom the Father is seen. And if every you have seen Christ, you may know you have seen the Father: for, there are certain relations wherein he stands to the Father, not only as he is his eternal Son, but also as he is our Saviour. He stands related to the Father, I say, in these respects so closely, that it is impossible to see him without seeing the Father. As he that sees a son cannot but know, not only that there is a father, since the son is a relative that must have a father; but also, if the son be so like him, the very picture of the father, then he that sees the son cannot but be said to see the father; much more so it is here; Christ the Son, being not only the Father's picture, but, in respect of his Deity, being clothed with the very same essential perfections, the same individual attributes and excellences. Such is his personal equality in power and glory, and essential oneness and sameness in substance with the Father, that there is no seeing of him without seeing the Father. But more particularly, with a view to the relations wherein he stands to the Father, even as he is our Saviour.

1. If you have seen Christ you have seen him to be the Father's choice; "Behold mine Elect," says the Father of him, Isa. xlii. 1. Why, then you have seen the Father choosing him from all eternity, to be a Saviour and Surety for lost sinners.

2. Have you seen him as the Father's Servant, in this work of our redemption? "Behold my Servant, whom I uphold." If so, then you have seen the Father in his matchless love, putting his service in his hand, and laying help upon One that is mighty to save.

3. Have you seen him as the Father's Darling and Delight? "Mine Elect, in whom my soul delighteth," says the Father; then you have seen the Father taking pleasure in him, as his faithful and righteous Servant in managing this work. And I will assure you, such views of the Father in Christ are no small thing. Again,

4. Have you seen him as the Father's ambassador, and as the Sent and Sealed of the Father: and that him hath God the Father sealed? Why, then, to be sure, you have seen (as imported in this) the Father sending, sealing, and clothing him with a commission to this effect, of saving sinners, of whom you are the chief. There is a notable sight of the Father. Again,

5. Have you seen him as the Father's Gift: the unspeakable Gift of God, given for a Covenant of the people? This imports a sight of the Father, as giving him freely for that end, to be our complete salvation; and so you have seen the Father in him. Again,

6. Have you seen him as the Father's Treasurer, "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; all the treasures of divine fulness in him?" Then you have seen the Father's fulness in him. And what better sight of the Father can you have, than to see him in all his fulness: to see him in Christ, in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. Again,

7. Have you seen him as the Father's Secretary, sent to reveal the heart, and mind, and will of the Father to you? Then you have seen the Father's council in him, yea, the Father's thoughts; even though, as heaven is higher than the earth, so his thoughts are higher than our thoughts; yet, when you see Christ, you saw his thoughts towards you to be thoughts of good, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. While unbelief prevailed, and a legal spirit, you judged he had ill thoughts and designs against you, and a mind to destroy you: but when, by faith, you saw Christ, then you saw he had better thoughts, and a mind to save you. And did you not win forward, and admitted very near, to see the Father when in Christ, you saw his very mind, and thoughts, and council concerning you: How can you say, then, if you saw Christ, that you did not see the Father? Again,

8. Have you seen him as the Father's Image and representative?

Then surely you have seen the Father represented by him, "Who is the image of the invisible God; the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person;" his essential image as God; and representative image as man. And hence,

9. Have you seen him as the Father's Equal? "The man that is my Fellow, says the Lord of hosts, who thinks it no robbery to be equal with God?" Then you have seen the Father's power and glory in him: for, therein they are personally equal, and essentially one.

10. In a word, have you seen him, and the Father's furniture about him, qualifying him as Mediator for the great work of our redemption, both by price and power? Then you have seen the Father's Spirit in him, and resting upon him, as a Spirit of wisdom and understanding, a Spirit of counsel and might, a Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord, Isa. xi. 2, "For he hath put his Spirit upon him, that he might bring forth judgment to the Gentiles, Isa. lxii. 1. The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, says Christ, for he hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and to open the prison-doors to them that are bound." Got you never an apprehension of Christ, as being anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows, and as having a super-eminent unction of the Spirit above measure? If you have thus seen the Spirit of the Father in him, it is one of the greatest sights that can be seen; for, to see the Father's Spirit in the Son, is to see a whole Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, with one glance of the eye of faith. Well then, can you say, believer, but that when you saw Christ in these respects I have mentioned, you also have seen the Father? Try it, then, by the object of this sight.

2dly, Take a view of the fruit and offspring of this saving sight. As they that see Christ see the Father, and cannot but see the Father's wisdom in providing him, the Father's love in bestowing him, the Father's grace in accepting him as the Surety, and the Father's satisfaction with him and in him, for his doing and dying in our room and stead, according to the Father's will, and council of peace that was betwixt them both; so this sight cannot but affect the hearts of all that have the happiness to enjoy it. If a prince come to a poor man's house, how shall we know whether he be still there? Though we see him not, we may know by his train, and these that attend; if we see his train, we know he is there; even so

the believer may know whether Christ be revealed in him, and in his heart, though he be at present out of sight, if his train be attending. Isaiah "saw the Lord upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple," Isa. vi. 1. Now, it is possible the train may be seen, when the Lord himself is not so discernible. There is a train of blessings that attend a saving revelation of Christ, or a saving sight of him, that you would try yourselves by. I shall name a few of them; for, if you have seen Christ, and the Father in him, then the sight was generative, so as to regenerate you, and beget all graces and virtues in you, John i. 13, 14, 16. There believers are said to be born, not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God; not of their free will, but of God's free grace. Well, but by what means are they thus regenerate? It follows, "The Word was made flesh and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." The great mean of their being begotten anew, is, their beholding the glory of the only begotten of the Father; and, as it is by this sight they are begotten, so by this all graces are begotten, as you see, by comparing verses 14 and 16 together, "We beheld his glory—full of grace and truth; and out of his fulness have we all received, and grace for grace." A saving sight of Christ then, and of the Father in him, hath a powerful generative quality. Would you know, believer, when you was born again, or the first moment of your regeneration? It was that moment wherein you first got a view of the glory of the only begotten of the Father; and if you would try it by the fruits of it, the offspring is so numerous, that we cannot undertake to speak of all. I shall mention some of the many things that this sight begets.

1. This sight begets faith, it ushers in believing: "He that sees the Son, and believes in him, hath everlasting life," John vi. 40. It is by beholding him, we believe in him: "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith," Heb. xii. 2. There is a looking to him by spiritual understanding, in order to our looking to him by faith; a looking to Jesus, the object of faith; and, in this way, we are made to find him the author of faith. There is a looking to him for faith, and a looking to him by faith. Can you say, Alas! I could not believe, though you give me a world, till he manifested his glory to me; and when I saw his glory, then I could not but believe that the first act of faith was begotten by the first view of Christ; and that all the after-acts of faith depended upon

the further discoveries of Christ: "He manifested forth his glory, and his disciples believed on him," John ii. 11.

2. This sight begets hope, 1 Peter ii. 3. It is there declared, that by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, manifesting himself particularly in Christ's resurrection from the dead, believers are said to be begotten again to a lively hope. O believer, when once you beheld this glory of God in Christ, was not then your languishing despair turned to a lively hope? Was not your fears of hell and wrath, which you was convinced was your natural inheritance, as a child of wrath, and an heir of hell, was not this fear of hell and wrath, I say, in the day when you saw Christ, turned to a hope of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away?

3. This sight begets repentance and sorrow for sin: Zech. xii. 10, "They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn." Was it possible for you, O believer, to look upon this glorious Sun of righteousness without a watering eye, or a mourning penitential heart? Did not the heart, that was harder than a flint, become softer than wax, melting before the warm fire of the love of God, manifested in Christ?

4. This sight begets love: "Whom having not seen [viz. by sense, but by faith,] we love," 1 Peter i. 8. Love to his person, as being the brightness of the Father's glory; love to his people, as the excellent ones of the earth; love to his statutes, saying, "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes;" love to his ordinances, and to the place where his honour dwells. Is it possible you could see him, and yet not love him in all respects?

5. This sight begets liberty; for, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is [as a Spirit of revelation, discovering the glory of Christ,] there is liberty," 2 Cor. iii. 17 — O sirs, did not the sight of the glory of God, in Christ, enlarge your heart, and loose your bonds, and set you at liberty from your fetters and fears; at liberty from the law and legal bondage? Got you not liberty to unbosom yourself unto the Lord; liberty to plead, and liberty to pray, and liberty to praise, and all the doors of your prison cast open?

6. This sight begets joy and satisfaction: "In whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory," 1 Peter i. 8. "Abraham saw my day, and rejoiced," says Christ; and, "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." This is sweetly prophesied of, Isa. xxxv. 1,

2, "The wilderness and solitary places shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing." Why all this? It follows, "They shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God."—O believer, did not your heart leap within you, when you saw the glory of the Lord? It is true, people may have a kind of joy, in that which will not give solid satisfaction; but here is full satisfaction, as well as fulness of joy. A man may say, when he is highest in the comforts of this world, Ah! there is no solid permanent satisfaction here; there is a want, there is a want; death and judgment trip up the heels of all that comfort; but it is not so here; the man that hath seen the glory of the Lord, may say, Now I can trample upon all worldly joy; now I can triumph in the view of death, judgment, and eternity: "Thanks be to God, which always causes us to triumph in Christ. Now is my soul satisfied as with marrow and fatness."

7. This sight begets longing; yea, longing for more and more of the knowledge of Christ, and of the glory of God in him: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that I will seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord," Psalm xxvii. 4; so Paul, Phil. i. 8-14. It begets a longing to be above, where the vision will be full and uninterrupted; and a desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ. O to be for ever with the Lord! It begets a longing to be free of sin and unbelief, and every thing that hinders the immediate vision and enjoyment of the Lord.

8. This sight begets holiness and conformity to the object discovered: "Beholding his glory, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory;" and so thereby he becomes all glorious within. Notwithstanding of the remainder of corruption, and the prevalence of it; yet there is something within that will have the last word, so as the devil cannot get his work finished in that heart. The devil is said to work effectually in the wicked; that is, says one, "He finishes his work." But in the saints he cannot get that done; for, grace comes after, and overthrows that work some way or other. Thus the devil sifted Peter, and foiled him; but afterwards Peter wept out the devil's work upon Christ's looking upon him, and his looking to Christ. Indeed, a new sight of Christ gives always a new victory over sin, and makes the soul advance in holiness, purity, and conformity to the Lord Jesus: "Beholding his

glory, full of grace and truth, we receive out of his fulness, grace for grace," as the wax receives letter for letter from the seal. This sight of God in Christ, is not dry, barren speculation, that leaves you as proud and carnal, malicious, wicked, and worldly as ever, no; you may suspect it is not a saving sight, if it did not, in some measure, leave an impression of the holiness of God upon you.

9. This sight begets humility, self-loathing, and abasement; other knowledge puffs up, but this presses down the soul to nothing before the Lord, saying, "Now mine eyes see thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes," Job xlii. 5. The same light that discovers the greatness of God, discovers the meanness of the creature; the holiness of God seen, discovers the vileness of the creature; the fulness of God being seen, then appears the emptiness of the creature, and the baseness thereof; hence the holiest of men, upon the discovery of the Lord, must cry out, "Behold, I am vile!" Isaiah vi. 5. Then is the soul ashamed and confounded, when the Lord is discovered as pacified towards it, Ezek. xvi. 63. O! did not the sight of the glory of God in Christ, believer, make the haughtiness of man to fall, and the loftiness of man to be laid low? The fairer that Christ is seen, the viler does the believer see himself; and then self-wisdom, self-righteousness, self-love, are dashed down to the ground, and covered with shame and blushing.

10. This sight begets holy boldness, and confidence. Notwithstanding the humbling nature of this view, yet it is emboldening also, leading the soul to say, "Truth, Lord, I am a dog;" but yet, be what I will, I must have a crumb. Now that thou hast let me know where my supply lies, I will trust and confide in thee alone for it: "They that know thy name, will put their trust in thee; for thou Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee," Psalm ix. 10.

In a word, if you have seen Christ, and the Father in him, did not the sight beget peace of conscience before God? "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God;" and this flowing from the sight and knowledge of God; for, "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many," says God. According to the measure of faith, was there never a joy and peace in believing that you found?—Did not the sight beget patience under crosses that you was compassed with? It is said of Moses, "He endured, as seeing him that is invisible."—Were not all worldly troubles, trials, and reproaches made easy to you, when the Spirit of God and of glory was resting on you? Did not the sight beget zeal for the glory of

God, and for the good of the souls of others, and make your heart cry out, O that all the world would come and see this glory, and admire the King in his beauty?—Did not the sight beget strength and fortitude, so as the joy of the Lord was your strength; and you could say, “I can do all things through Christ strengthening me;” for now he hath strengthened me with strength in my soul; and made me to say, “In the Lord have I righteousness and strength?”—Did not the sight beget a cheerful gospel-walk, according to that word, Psal. lxxxix. 15, 16, “Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. Thou art the glory of their strength; and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.” Did not the sight beget praise and adoration, saying, “O! what shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits?”—Did it not beget wonder and admiration, saying, “What am I, and what is my Father’s house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? Is this the manner of man, O Lord; and what can David say more unto thee?” Did not the sight beget contempt of the world, and a selling of your ALL for this pearl of great price, saying, “I count all but loss and dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ.” Could you not trample on the world as dung, when the glory of the Lord appeared to you? Was not Christ more precious to you than a thousand worlds of gold? Hath the sight you got of God in Christ, such a fair offspring as this? Then it looks like a saving sight.

I shall add finally, Did not this sight of the glory of God in Christ, O believer, beget in you an indelible impression of that glory that time cannot utterly wear out. It is prophesied, Isa. lx. 19, “The Lord shall be thy everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.” This light of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord in the face of Jesus Christ, is, in some respect, everlasting; while the candle of the wicked is put out, and the candle of the hypocrite put out. Hence, Heb. vi. 4.—Though once enlightened, they may fall away; the apprehension and impression of all that common light may utterly fail; but it is not so here with the believer: the Lord is his everlasting light, even though the Lord may, for a moment, hide his face from him.

Perhaps some believers may now be saying, Whatever be the fair offspring of this saving sight of God in Christ, that you have been mentioning, though I sometimes think I have got that sight you speak of, and at certain times have found some of these fruits and offspring thereof, yet have I not now reason to suspect, it is but

a common light, like that of the hypocrite, and that I never got that saving sight when I find, to my experience, that all the fruit and offspring thereof is now dead and gone, dead and buried, dead and out of sight? For I think sometimes not so much as the least impression thereof remains.

O believer, if you have seen Christ, and the Father in him, examine it over again, and you will find it otherwise than you suppose, and that there is a living impression remains, whether it be lively or not; therefore, I charge you before God, believer, to be ingenuous in this matter; was there not something in Christ you saw, that took such impression on you, that you have never to this day forgotten? It may be you have forgotten many friends and acquaintances, that are dead and away; you have forgotten many sermons that you heard in your lifetime; you have forgotten many words that passed betwixt you and your neighbours some years ago; you have forgotten some visits that certain friends made to you; but there was a visit that Christ made to you at such a time, there was some sight that you got of him, and some word that you got from him, and that is a thing you can never forget to this day. I speak either of the first sight that ever you got of him, or of some following remarkable visits that he made to you, in displaying his glory; for a believer may get a thousand views of Christ in his lifetime, but there are some views that he gets, that if he were to live a thousand years, he could never forget them. Have you not a fresh remembrance, believer, to this day, of such a spot of ground where you saw his glory? Was not such a place like a Bethel, a house of God? And such another place like a Peniel, where you saw God in a manner face to face? Whatever cloudy days have intervened since that time, yet you can never forget it; for, so far as you can judge in the sight of the heart-searching God, it carried all the marks of a saving manifestation along with it. Why then, will you say, that all the fruits and impression of it are dead and gone? For there is a living remembrance of it in your heart to this day, and a living wish and desire at the root of your heart, saying, O to see that glory of God again! What is the reason that this can never wear out of your head and heart? Even because it is an eternal and incorruptible thing: "The Lord is thy everlasting light;" and you will carry this impression into eternity with you; and heaven will perfect the vision: "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."

USE 3. The Third Use might be for conviction to the wicked and ungodly; that is, to all unbelievers that never yet have seen Christ, and consequently, never saw God the Father in him; and, like Gallio, "Care for none of these things;" and that are not concerned with such speculations. Why, man, have you no concern in this matter? Is it not of everlasting moment, whether you got a saving sight of Christ, yea, or not? Know you not, that "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them?" 2 Cor. 3, 4. And that it is life eternal to know God in Christ, and consequently eternal death to want this sight? Will you tell me, if a physician should come into a chamber where there are two sick persons, and should say, the one will die of that disease, and the other will recover; would they not think it their concern to inquire after this matter? Much more is this a concern above all such concern. When I tell you that hear me, that one part of you are believers, that have seen the glory of God in Christ, and you shall live, and live for ever; the other part, and, alas! the greatest part are unbelievers, that have never seen the glory of God in the face of Christ; and if you live and die in that case, you die for ever, and will lie eternally under his revenging wrath; and is all this a matter of moonshine to you? If you see him not now, you shall never see him in mercy hereafter. This sight of Christ, and of his Father in him, is no bare empty speculation; nay, it is the very root and foundation of all practical godliness; there is no conformity to his image, without beholding of his glory. Many speak of following the example of Christ, even as some write volumes of it as if it were to be attained by a bare imitation of his actions; but this is impossible, without a view and intuition of his glory, which alone is accompanied with a transforming power, to change us into the same image, from glory to glory. What makes one half of the generation so grossly wicked, and another so madly superstitious, but the want of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ? Why is the throng of the nobility and gentry of our day, besides the commonalty, running so fast to the devil? And why are ceremonies, and superstitious human inventions in the worship of God, become so fashionable?"¹

(1) Episcopacy, though reformed from, and abjured by our Covenants, was, at this time, in several places, meeting with encouragement; and approved by many of high rank.

Why, people do not see the glory of God in Christ, in the glass of his own pure ordinances and institutions; therefore they make use of painted glasses; they do not see the internal glory, therefore they turn to external pomp and forms; but, as the more paint is put upon the glass window, the less light is conveyed through it; so, the more people please themselves with a painted ceremonial worship, the less, in the righteous judgment of God, do they see of the glory of God; yea, the more do they run out of God's way, and love darkness rather than light. May the Lord pity a poor ignorant generation, that profess the knowledge of Christ, and yet know nothing of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But I shall not enlarge here.

USE 4. The Fourth Use might be for consolation to believers that have seen Christ, for "He that hath seen Christ hath seen the Father." O believer, you have seen much that have seen Christ, you have seen his glory and his Father's glory too. Here is comfort against the apprehension you have of your own ignorance of God: O! says the man that sees God in Christ, "I am more brutish than any man; I have not the understanding of a man: so foolish am I and ignorant, I am as a beast before God." Indeed, they that see him best are under most humbling impressions that they cannot see, and of the impossibility of seeing him during the state of sin and mortality; this keeps the believer's heart in awe, and causes him to walk before God with holy fear and reverence, knowing how dangerous it is to think amiss of God, and yet how difficult it is to think aright of him. However, believer, you that have got a saving sight of Christ, you have seen farther than you are apt to think you have seen, though it is but a small portion of God that at best we know: it may be, with Philip, when you saw Christ, you did not know that you saw the Father. There is more glory in the object of faith, than you are ready to take up; but the Lord Jesus is ready to teach you, and make you know better what you know. There is more knowledge and persuasion of the love and grace of God in Christ, in the act of faith, than the believer may be aware of upon reflection, till the Lord Jesus discover to him anew what his faith is, and let him know what he saw and discerned when he saw Christ; he lets you know, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Again, O believers, here is comfort against all troubles and trials you can meet with in this valley of tears: let me say to you as Christ said, Mat. xiii. 16, "Blessed are your eyes,

for they see." You cannot be unhappy and miserable, to whom the Lord hath manifested his glory, though you be a poor man, a plundered man, a persecuted man, a sick man or woman, or whatever else can be called misery about you: if you believe Christ, who is the truth, you are a blessed man, a blessed woman. Though you were sick, and should never see health; though you were weak, and should never see strength; though you were poor, and should never see wealth; though you were banished, and should never see your own country or friends; yea, though you were stark blind, and should never see the sun in the firmament: yet if you have seen Christ, and seen the Father in him, blessed are your eyes, for they see. All the blessedness in the world, and that ever mankind enjoyed from the creation, put all together, is not worthy to be compared with one glance that a believer hath of the glory of God in Christ. And it may be there are some believers here of such standing, that they have got a thousand of these glances, since the Lord began to discover himself, and reveal his glory to them. For shame then, believers, be not discouraged with every trifle in the world; "Your lines are fallen in pleasant places, and you have a goodly heritage." Never look dejected any more; envy not the wicked any more; but rather pity them, and weep for them, whatever be their outward pomp and prosperity, you have infinitely greater treasure. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels," saith the apostle; well, what treasure? even the manifestation of God's glory in Christ, that is here spoken of: therefore you may say, believer, though I have not worldly profit, nor pelf, nor money, nor honour, let the world have all, yet I have a good bargain. O believer, pity the world that know no better happiness than good meat and brave clothes; that know no better enjoyment than caballing, eating, drinking, dancing, roaring, dicing, carding hunting, gaming. Alas! if they were not mad they could not be merry in that case, being without God in the world. Here is comfort against desertion; have you seen him once, you will see him again; though he hide himself for a moment, yet he is the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar and vowed the vow unto him. Here is comfort against death, though you should die poor and mean; yea, though you should die distracted, yet having seen his glory, you shall see him in glory, and praise him for ever: your eyes have seen his salvation; and therefore, though you know not in what circumstances you shall die or how soon you shall depart, yet you may be well content to die

what death the Lord will, and how soon soever he pleases, saying, "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." And whenever death closes your bodily eyes, you shall see him face to face. Take home all the strong consolations that God allows you who have seen Christ.

USE 5. The last Use should be in a word of exhortation. And our exhortation shall consist of two branches. 1. To those who have never yet seen Christ, nor the Father in him. 2. To believers, who have already seen Christ.

1st, Our exhortation shall first be directed to unbelievers. Do they that see Christ see the Father? O, then, you that never saw before, "Come and see; come and see this great sight!"

[1.] For motives consider, 1. The excellency of this sight. 2. The necessity of this sight.

1. Consider the excellency of this sight. To see all the great works of God is a great thing, but to see God himself, who is invisible, in his own image and representative, is an excellent sight. O the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, in whom we have the knowledge of the Father! The holy properties of the divine nature are not only represented to our faith in Christ as to their own essential glory, but as they are exerted for our salvation; for in him we see infinite wisdom, power, justice, holiness, and mercy exerting themselves in the contrivance, constitution, and efficacious accomplishment of the great work of our redemption and salvation. This gives, as to our view, an unspeakable lustre to the native amiableness of these divine attributes. As they are eternally resident in the divine nature, and absolutely the same with it, we cannot so comprehend them as to have any endearing, satiating view of their glory; but as they are exerted to our salvation, these beams of glory shine with unspeakable ravishment; "O the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God; how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Rom. xi. 33. Here is a great privilege and a great mystery both; a privilege to be valued, as it is a dawning of heaven; and a mystery to be viewed with spiritual wisdom; wisdom from above is absolutely necessary, for flesh and blood cannot reveal it. How blind were the greatest philosophers, in comparison with the meanest disciple of Jesus that sees this great sight. But then,

2. Consider the necessity of this sight. There is no seeing of Christ above if we get not a begun sight and view of him here; yea,

you cannot so much as desire the glory of God in heaven, whatever you pretend, if you never saw the glory of Christ here. If a man pretend he is delighted with, and desires greatly what he never saw nor was ever represented to him, he does but dote upon his imagination. The pretended desires of many to behold the glory of Christ in heaven, who have no view of it by faith while on earth, are nothing but self-deceiving imaginations. Therefore, let none deceive; they that see not Christ here shall never see him, nor the glory of God in him hereafter. Now, they that do not see the glory of Christ have no grace; for all grace is begotten only by this sight, as I have shewed already. "He that sees the Son, and believes in him, hath everlasting life;" but they that see not the Son, are unbelievers and heirs of everlasting death.

[2.] For direction, if you ask, Where shall we see him? and how shall we see him?

1. If you ask, WHERE shall we see him? God the Father hath given Christ to be the glass wherein you may see him: Christ hath given the gospel to be the glass wherein you may see him; say not then, "Who will ascend to heaven and bring Christ down; or descend to the deep, to bring him up, that we may see him?" You may see him in this word of faith that we preach. O see him in that word, ver. 6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by me." If you take a view of him in that word, you will see the Father in him. If you see him as the way, you may see the Father in him leading you to himself; if you see him as the truth, you may see the Father in him, teaching you his mind and will; if you see him as the life, you may see the Father in him, quickening you that are dead in sins and trespasses. If you see him in that word, "No man cometh to the Father but by me," you may see the Father in him, determining the necessity of coming to Christ by faith, in order to your attaining the enjoyment of God. O see him in his sweet command, lined with gospel grace; "Look to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else," Isa. xlv. 22. There he is to be seen, and his Father in him; his call is the Father's call; you see it is the call and command of him that is essentially one with the Father; "I am God, and there is none else." O come and see him in his sweet promises, all lined with love; such as that, Ps. lxxii. 17, "Men shall be blest in him, and all nations shall call him blessed." And again, "Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." Men shall be blest in him, and surely one shall say, in the Lord I have all.

O what encouraging promises are here, even to them that think they cannot see him ; they cannot look to him ! for the very strength to look to him, and the eye to see him, is put in the promise, " They shall be blest in him ; they shall say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength. They shall look on him whom they have pierced and mourn." As the command makes it your duty, so the promise gives you encouragement to look to him in both ; and to see him in a promise, by faith, is as safe a way of seeing him, as if you saw him in heaven ; and better than if you saw him with your bodily eyes in the pulpit, and heard him preaching to you ; for many saw him thus, that never got a saving sight of him by faith. O come and see him in his purchase that he hath made, by his obedience unto death ; a purchase of grace and glory for you, sinner. But, say you, was it not for the elect only ? It may be he did not make the purchase for me ; that was not his design. My friends, we preach the doctrine of election in its own place, and declare, that the elect only shall obtain ; and that as many as were ordained to eternal life, shall believe ; but it were impertinent to bring it in upon the general call of the gospel ; it belongs so little to that purpose, that we could not mention it therein any other way, than to ward it off from that point, when the devil and the wicked unbelieving heart bring it in as an objection against, and an obstruction to your seeing Christ with application to yourselves. I only ask, therefore, whether is his secret counsel, or his open command your rule ? Whether is his hidden purpose, or revealed promise to be your encouragement ? What have you ado with his secret ? you are not excluded in his word ; and, why then will you exclude yourselves ? As I call you, therefore, to see him in his purchase that he hath made of grace and glory to you, sinner, declared in his promise, that he is come to save sinners : so I would warn you to beware of a trick of the devil and unbelief here, in turning that to a discouragement of faith, which is really an encouragement thereof. Hath Christ said, " All that the Father hath given me, shall come," why then come and see him, and then you will see the Father giving you to him from eternity. Would you desire to get into the very heart of God, and read his electing love ? You may do it by opening this book of the gospel-promise, and reading it with application to yourself ; and there you may see it. O come and see him in his robes of grace and salvation ; see him in his garments rolled in blood : behold how he comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah.

See him on a throne of grace inviting you to come to him, and kindly declaring, that it is his greatest quarrel with you, that you will not come to him that you might have life, and salvation from all your sins, and all the wrath that is entailed upon them. Are you afraid to look to him, thinking he hath a quarrel with you for your sins? Nay, but know it, no sin that ever you was guilty of is to be mentioned as the ground of his quarrel, but only for this one, that you will not come and look to him for salvation and deliverance from all sin whatsoever. O see him then, and welcome him in his kindly offer, and say no more, Where shall we see him? for he is here present dealing with you in this gospel.

2. If you ask, How shall we see him, and the Father in him? I gave many motives and directions also, with reference to the knowledge of Christ, on the doctrine raised from the former part of the text; therefore, I need enlarge the less here. I shall offer you these two or three advices, with reference to your seeing of Christ, in order to your seeing of the Father in him; or with reference to your getting a saving sight of God in Christ.

(1.) Be convinced, that unless he manifest himself, you can by no means in the world see him. Even as all the candles and torches in the world cannot discover the sun to you, when under a cloud, till it comes forth itself; so all the means in the world cannot discover God in Christ to you till he manifest himself: "I will manifest myself," John xiv. 21. It is his prerogative to do it when he pleases; therefore, give him the glory of his sovereignty, saying, Lord I cannot see thee; and all the world cannot let me see thee; but O manifest thyself to me. Be convinced that you cannot possibly see him, till he open your eyes and shew himself.

(2.) Be convinced of the necessity of a powerful regeneration, ere you can see God; "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," John iii. 3; and a God in Christ is the chief thing, if not the only thing in that kingdom. The eyes of flesh and blood cannot see this great sight; these eyes of flesh may see the natural sun; but you must have other eyes to behold the Sun of righteousness, otherwise though his glory be shining about you, your blindness and darkness comprehends him not. Therefore,

(3.) Be convinced of your own gross darkness and ignorance of God. A conceit of your own knowledge, and high esteem of yourself, and your own wisdom, will both be an evidence that you know nothing as you ought to know; and also be a hinderance of your

knowing and seeing the Lord: therefore you must become a fool that you may be wise, "For judgment am I come into this world, says Christ, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind," John ix. 39.

(4.) Be convinced, that it is your sin and misery both, that you do not, and cannot see this glory of God in Christ. It is your sin, your leading sin, and mother of all your other sins; for herein lies the formal nature of unbelief, that you do not, you cannot, you will not look to Christ and be saved. And it is your misery; for, while unbelief reigns, you are under the power of the devil, hiding this light from you; "And, if your gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them," 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. This darkness and blindness is the strength of the devil's kingdom. Whenever light shines into the heart, his power is broken; but darkness and ignorance is the chain wherein he leads you to the place of utter darkness, to which you will be sentenced with him, if that chain be not loosed in time. What will be the sentence of the great Judge? will he give one to the devil, and another to wicked men? No; he will make one to serve them both; "Go, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil;" you joined with the devil in loving darkness, and therefore depart with him! Oh! be convinced, poor soul, that the devil is cutting your throat in the dark; and that it is both your sin and misery that you do not see.

(5.) Be convinced, that there is a promise of divine illumination left to you to rely on, "They shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me: no man can come except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him," John vi. 44. Cry, therefore, for the promised teaching, the promised drawing; and seeing his powerful drawing is just his effectual teaching, O cry for the powerful promised illumination of his holy Spirit in the knowledge of Christ, in whom alone you can know the Father; be restless in the use of all appointed means, till the Spirit be sent for this end. It is his sweet counsel to you, that you buy of him eye-salve that you may see. Beg his enlightening Spirit; the Spirit is both the promise of the Father and of the Son, "I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry at Jerusalem till you be endued with power from on high," Luke xxiv. 49.

Stay about his hand, in the use of ordinances of his institution, till the promised Spirit be poured out; "And when he comes, says Christ, he shall testify of me, he shall glorify me," John xv. 26, and xvi. 14. Plead the promise that is left to you of this powerful illumination.

(6.) Be convinced that however unable and unfit you are for yielding to his call, yet it is both your indispensable duty to see and behold this glorious object Christ, in whom you will see the Father; and your present duty to essay it with a view to his enabling grace. O sirs, is not the Father calling you to look to his Son? saying, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth," Isa. lxii. 1. And is not the Son calling you to look to him and be saved? "Behold me, behold me!" Isa. lxxv. 1. And does not the Spirit and the Bride say, Come? Rev. xxii. 17. Is a whole glorious Trinity crying to you, Come and see; come and see the Son, and see the Father in him? Why, then, unless you dare say, it is your duty to trample under foot the authority of God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to look to Jesus is your indispensable duty. And since he is dealing with you this moment, it is your present duty, "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." Now he is saying, "Behold me! behold me!" Now you may see him in mercy; and if the opportunity be slighted, you may never get another occasion to see him, till you see him in wrath, coming in the clouds of heaven, and coming in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them that know not God, because of their not obeying the gospel-call of seeing God now in the face of Christ. O sinner, then he will be seen upon a throne of judgment; a dreadful sight to his enemies! But now he is to be seen upon a throne of mercy and grace, calling sinners and enemies to be reconciled to him, and to see the Father reconciled in him, that so you may find your justifier; for now, "Christ is set forth of God to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, for the remission of sin, that he might be just, and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus," Rom. iii. 25, 26. O sirs, see and behold him then, as the propitiation and atonement; and there take rest to your guilty soul; and see the Father in him well pleased and satisfied. O see and behold him as the true Jacob's ladder, reaching between heaven and earth, that you may ascend by, and see the Father at the top of the ladder, with open arms ready to embrace all comers, and you among the rest. O see and behold him as the helper, since

you cannot ascend the ladder, or get up of yourself : and see the Father constituting him to be the helper, saying, "I have laid help upon one that is mighty." Behold this mighty Helper standing in the Father's name, at the foot of the ladder, saying, Man, woman, would you gladly be up? would you have my help? There is my helping hand, take hold of it; "Take hold of my strength," Isa. xxii. 5.

But, say you, he must take hold of me, and draw me up, otherwise I cannot take hold of him. Well said, man; therefore, see him as the author and finisher, as well as the object of faith; and see him as the ALL of your salvation, and the Father making him so; for, "He is made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and complete redemption." If you think you can do any thing without him, you are not worthy of him; and you go cross to this revelation made of him. But if you can do nothing, and have nothing at all, and would have one to do all for you, and to be all to you; then see him, and take him as God all-sufficient, to do all your works in you and for you; and to be your all for grace and glory; and thus to see him, is to see the Father, and all his fulness in him; and thus to take him into your heart, is to take him indeed, and his Father's blessing with him.

O sirs, shall we hope he hath come and discovered himself to any soul here in this offer? O! blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, and lets himself be seen; for, "He that hath seen Christ, hath seen the Father."

2dly, I should now close with a word of exhortation to believers that have seen Christ. Have they that have seen Christ, seen the Father, in regard of the oneness between the Father and him? Have you seen this great sight? Then I exhort you to prove it, and improve it.

[1.] Prove it: How do you prove, believer, that you have seen Christ, and the Father in him? May I ask you, as the Pharisees, who once asked the man whose eyes Christ opened, John ix. 15, "How did you receive your sight?" Why, says the man, "He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see." Can you say, in allusion to this, whatever was the clay vessel, the poor contemptible, and unlikely mean the Lord made use of, yet he put to his invisible hand, and led me to the pool of Siloam; I mean, to the blood of Shiloh, the Sent of God; and no sooner did I, through grace, essay to wash there, but I saw; I saw the Son of God, as the

Saviour and Surety ; I saw the face and favour of God in him : Can you say, " One thing I know, whereas once I was blind, now I see ? " I see a glory in him, that darkens the glory of sun, moon, and stars ; I see a beauty in him, that eclipses the beauty of all the world, and makes it seem but trash to me ; I see an excellency in him, that makes me count all but loss and dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of him. Though I see that I am blind, and cannot see, yet I see what some time a-day I saw not. Can you not say, that the sight you got of Christ, at least in the day of believing, did dispel your darkness, and dissipate the gross mists of ignorance, and make them fly away as dark clouds before the rising sun ? Did not the sight break the power of your enmity, and make you, like Paul, on his way to Damascus, when he saw Christ, drop the rebellious arms, and fall down before the Lord, saying, " What wilt thou have me to do ? " Did not the sight dash unbelief out of countenance on that day, and with holy shame for your harsh thoughts of Christ, make you with Thomas, after his unbelieving jealousy, to cry out, " My Lord, and my God ? " Did not the sight loose your heart from all your lusts and idols, and make you to say with Ephraim, " What have I to do any more with idols ? " O believer, was it not a wonderful sight, and a marvellous light ? Was it not a heart-piercing, a soul-humbling, a faith-strengthening, and joy exciting sight ; the most desirable sight out of heaven ?

Again, if you ask, How shall I prove that I have seen the Father in seeing Christ ? Besides what was formerly said, you may inquire,

1. Have you seen the Father's blessing in him ? We read of the Father's blessing him, Psal. xlv. 2. He hath blessed him in all his offices as Mediator ; and, as God's blessing makes rich ; so, by virtue of the Father's blessing, he is, as Mediator, enriched with all communicative fulness, and store for our supply ; and never would we have been blessed, if God had not blessed Christ, and in him blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, Eph. i. 3. The question then is, Have you beheld Christ as the blessing of the Father ? Then, of consequence, you have seen the Father blessing him. It is a great sight of the Father, to see the Father's blessing on Christ, and in Christ upon you. Many speak of God's blessing, that never saw how his blessing comes, and on whom it principally descends ; for, Christ is made of God a public blessing.

OBJECT. How is Christ made a blessing, when it is said, "God made him to be sin for us," 2 Cor. v. 21, "And made him a curse for us?" Gal. iii. 13.

Why, man, for this very end was he made sin and a curse, that he might be made a blessing. He was made sin by imputation: sin was imputed to him, that it might not be imputed to us; and the curse fell upon him, that it might not light upon us; and God, in the very act of making him to be sin for us, and a curse for us, in doing so, he made him to be a sacrifice for sin, and to bear away the curse, and bring back the blessing. Now, this mark excludes all who never saw themselves to be, by nature, under the curse of God, and never saw the gospel-way, wherein the blessing of God comes to any sinner, viz., through Christ; for, all that are blessed of God are blessed of him, in Christ; "Men shall be blessed in him:" and to be blessed in him, supposes that he is first blest, and then men in him. However, they who have seen Christ as the Father's blessing, have so far seen the Father. To see God out of Christ, and in the law, is to see him cursing us; and this is the sight all Christless sinners will get of God, sooner or later; either mercifully here, to their awakening, that they may flee from that curse: or wrathfully hereafter, when they shall lie under it for ever. But to see God in the gospel-glass, and in Christ, is to see him blessing us with all spiritual blessings, in heavenly places in Christ; and this is the believer's sight of God in Christ, or of the Father in the Son: "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father."

2. Have you seen the Father's promise in him? 2 Cor. i. 20, "All the promises of God are in him, yea;" none of the Father's promises are made out of him: and if we have seen Christ as the centre of the Father's promises, in whom they are all affirmed and confirmed by him, being in him, YEA, in point of affirmation; and AMEN, in point of confirmation; then you have seen the Father as a promising God in him; and that you have no right to any promise, but by virtue of union to him; and as it comes running through the channel of his blood and righteousness. Now, this mark excludes and shuts out all who have not seen themselves to be heirs of all the threatenings of the law, by nature, and God to be a threatening God, ready to execute the law threatening against them, because of their sin; and all that have not been brought to acquaintance with the promises of the gospel, and seen them to be

the promises of God in Christ; for they only that have seen this have seen God in Christ; "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father."

3. Have you seen the Father's work in his hand? The Father's business committed to his management, according as he says, Luke ii. 49; particularly the work and business of our redemption and salvation. This imports, and carries with it a sight of the Father, as employing Christ in that great work. They that have seen Christ, as the Father's Agent in this affair, have seen the Father in him, which is indeed a great sight; to see the Father intrusting him with such a work, and Christ discharging his trust in the Father's name. This mark excludes, and cuts off, all those that never saw the work of salvation to be any other, but what themselves are capable of, either by their own natural power, or some little divine assistance. Many declares themselves ignorant of God, and under the law of works, by their gross notions of salvation; thinking that God still stands upon the old covenant ground with them, calling them to work for life; and so they reckon, if they do their best, God will pity them; or, though they come short, yet with some of God's help and assistance, their own doing will be sufficient; not knowing that salvation work is God's work, and that God's work is put in Christ's hand, and that there is no work, pertaining to the law as a covenant, that belongs to us now at all, nor can possibly be performed by us; Christ's everlasting righteousness answers that completely. And for any other work that he works in his people, it is not for salvation, or to be saved, but a part of salvation, when he works in them both to will and to do, of his own good pleasure; those whom God saves, he saves them to work, but not for them. Works of holiness, are a part of the salvation to which we are saved; but we are not saved either for our works, or by them, or according to them. Not for them; Ezek. xxxvi. 32, "Not FOR your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you; be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel." Nor by them; Titus iii. 5, "Not BY works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Nor according to them; 2 Tim. i. 6, "He hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not ACCORDING TO our work; but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus before the world began." The Scripture then

declares, we are not saved either by, or for, or according to our works; for though men are to be judged according to their works, yet not saved according to their works. The rule of judgment, and the rule of salvation, are vastly different. The rule of judgment will be the law; and therefore men will be judged according to their work, and according as they have a law-biding righteousness, yea, or not. The wicked will not have it; and so will be adjudged to eternal death; believers will have it in Christ, even a righteousness of merit and spirit, both for justification and sanctification: and so will be adjudged to eternal life. Men will be thus judged according to their works. But the rule of salvation is not the law, but the gospel, and the free grace of God in Christ; and therefore, though men will be judged according to their works, yet let none expect to be saved according to them, or by them, or for them. The works that will be available to salvation are not our works, or any thing either wrought in us, or done by us: but the work of Christ, his perfect obedience: "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one many shall be made righteous," Rom. v. 19. Now, have you seen Christ's obedience to be the Father's work in his hand, and his righteousness to be the righteousness of God? Then you have seen God in him; God fulfilling his own law in him: God satisfying his own justice in him; and God bringing in everlasting righteousness in him.

4. If you would try if you have seen the Father in Christ, try if you have seen the Father's wages bestowed on him. Christ, as Mediator, did not work without wages and a reward; nay, having drunk of the brook in the way, he was to lift up his head. "Ought not Christ to do and suffer these things, and then to enter into his glory," Luke xxiv. 26. See the wages and reward given him, Phil. ii. 9, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name." Heaven then is to Christ, and to all that get into him, the reward of Christ's obedience unto death, even the death of the cross; so it is also declared, Heb. xii. 2. Now, they that have seen the Father's wages bestowed upon Christ, as Mediator, then they have seen the Father in him; or they have seen the Father rewarding him for his service, and exalting him to his right hand on the account of his work. Heaven is called, "The recompence of reward;" to Christ, it is a reward of debt; for, it is justly due to his obedience. But, to believers in Christ, it is a reward of grace, because to them, it is the gift of God, through Christ.

Now, this mark excludes, and shuts out all those that expect heaven and eternal life, as the reward of any good deed done, or to be done by them. This declares they never saw the glory of the Father in the Son, nor the Father conferring heaven and glory on Christ, as the reward of his everlasting righteousness. Mercenary workers, that expect proper wages for their work from God, are yet under the law, and so under the curse of God. In this manner many work all their days, and may work very earnestly at a multitude of duties, and work their own ruin and damnation, and yet think they are safe, and never dream that they are under the curse of God, notwithstanding all they do, See Luke xiii. 24, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able." Why that? Is it not said, Seek, and ye shall find?" Yea, but they shall seek to enter, and shall not be able; because they seek in a legal way; not by faith, but, as it were, by the works of the law. And this is indeed one of the great things that makes the way strait.

5. Try if you have seen Christ, so as to see the Father in him. Have you seen the Father glorified in him, as Christ says, John xiii. 31? Have you seen his wisdom glorified in contriving, his power in accomplishing, and more of his wisdom and power here, than in the whole creation? Have you seen the holiness, justice, mercy, and truth of God glorifying themselves in him, and exerting themselves in Christ unto salvation? Do you see the wisdom of God more glorified and glorious in Christ, than in contriving the sun, moon, and stars? His power more glorified in Christ, than in making a world? His holiness more glorified in Christ's obedience than it is by all the holiness of men and angels to eternity? His justice more glorified in Christ's satisfaction than in the punishment of all the damned in hell for ever? His mercy more glorified, and gloriously displayed in Christ, and venting itself through his blood and merit than if he had shewed mercy without exacting the debt of Surety, while he freely provides the Surety, and thereby provides both for his own honour and our happiness at once? And do you see his truth and faithfulness more glorified in Christ than any other way? For, if Christ had not been set forth, God behoved to have glorified his truth, in executing the threatening of the law upon all the sinners of Adam's family. But now he glorifies his truth, both as a threatening and promising God, towards all whom he saves in Christ, who both bears the shock of the threatening of the law, and fulfils the condition of the promises of the gospel; and

both by his obedience unto death. Have you seen this glory of God in Christ? Surely this mark cuts off thousands of blind souls, that cannot behold this glory of the Lord, whose minds the god of this world hath blinded.

6. Have you seen the Father reconciled in him? Here is an evidence of seeing the Father, if you have seen God reconciled in Christ. Here is a threefold reconciliation to be seen in Christ, 1. God reconciling himself with himself. 2. Reconciling himself to the world. 3. Reconciling the world to himself.

(1.) In Christ, you will see God reconciling himself with himself. What do you mean by that? say you: I do not mean, as if God were ever at variance with himself: but upon man's fall, and the proposal of man's recovery and salvation again, there was, in the apprehension of all creatures, men and angels, a seeming inconsistency betwixt some things in God, that spoke for man's salvation, and other things in God that spoke for man's damnation: but yet in Christ they are reconciled; particularly, there are some irreconcilable like names, attributes, words, and works of God, that are in Christ's reconciled.

1. There are some irreconcilable like names of God, that in Christ you will see reconciled; for example, these names, Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth: keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin; and yet that will by no means clear the guilty." How will that name of merciful and gracious to sinners agree with that name, He will by no means clear the guilty, since all sinners are guilty? Why, have you seen Christ to be the propitiation? then you can see these names reconciled; he will not shew mercy to the dishonour of his justice; but justice hath got a satisfaction in Christ, therefore mercy will vent, not to the prejudice, but to the honour of justice.

2. There are some irreconcilable like attributes of God, that in Christ you will see reconciled; "Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other," Psalm lxxxv. 10. Men and angels could not contrive how mercy and truth should meet together; how righteousness and peace should kiss each other in the salvation of a sinner; yet in Christ they harmoniously conspire for our redemption, as I have formerly cleared upon the text,¹ therefore I insist not.

(1.) See Sermon entitled, *The Harmony of the Divine Attribute Displayed.*

3. There are some irreconcilable-like words of God, that in Christ are reconciled, such as *Exod. xxiii. 7*, where God says, "I will not justify the wicked," and yet, *Rom. iv. 5*, he is said to justify the ungodly. In Christ you will see these words of God reconciled, as you may observe, *Isa. xlv. 25*, "In him shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory;" justified in their sins they cannot be, nor justified in themselves, but in Christ they shall be justified.

4. There are some irreconcilable-like works of God, that in Christ are reconciled; for example, his work of rooting the law out of the heart, and writing the law in the hearts of his people. Do you understand this, man? that the law as a covenant must be razed out of the heart. Christ is made of God to us righteousness; and God, in this word, razes the foundation of the old covenant, and roots out all hope of life by the righteousness of the law in our own persons. Christ is also made of God to us sanctification; and, in this work, he writes the law in the heart, as a rule of holiness, and the transcript of the divine image, and so makes the person conformable to the law upon gospel-grounds, and in a gospel-manner. And this is the root of a gospel-becoming conversation. Now, have you ever seen anything of this glory of the Father in the Son, or of God in Christ reconciling himself with himself, in all these things wherein he seemed to be at odds with himself? If you have never seen God reconciled in Christ, even in this sense, you are but a stranger in Israel.

(2.) In Christ you will see God reconciling himself to the world. O! have you ever seen anything of this glory, even the great and glorious God, in the person of his Son assuming our nature; and in that nature have you ever beheld God satisfying his own justice, fulfilling his own law, appeasing his own wrath, quenching the flames of it with his own blood? "Awake, O sword, against the man that is my fellow, says the Lord of hosts." And thus glorifying his own name, and laying a foundation for revenues of praise to be brought in to his crown by men and angels for ever. To see this glory by faith of divine operation, is to see the Father in the Son; where this is not seen, neither Christ nor the Father is seen.

(3.) In Christ you will see God reconciling the world to himself; *2 Cor. v. 19*, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and not imputing their trespasses to them." This is the word of reconciliation; and it is further explained, *ver. 21*, "For he hath

made him to be sin for us, that we might be the righteousness of God in him." How does God reconcile any sinner in the world to himself? even by not imputing their trespasses to them, but imputing their sins to Christ, and imputing Christ's righteousness to them, and discovering this by the gospel, that he does thus reconcile the heart of the sinner to God, and kill the natural enmity. The faith of this mercy is the root of peace and reconciliation: "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God:" when God in Christ is seen, he is seen to be reconciled in him. And when I see God is reconciled to me, I cannot but be reconciled to God; his mighty love destroys the mighty enmity that was in the heart; this sight of God in Christ cannot be without some persuasion and confidence, and particular application: for hence comes that peace and satisfaction, upon a sight of Christ, and of God as reconciled in him. If faith had no particular assurance or persuasion of divine favour to the soul in it, the man could have no peace nor pleasure; but so much hope, peace, and joy in believing that a man hath, so much assurance is at the root of it; I mean, the assurance of faith founded upon the word of God. It is said of the forgiven woman, "She loved much, because much was forgiven her." They that have the faith of the forgiveness of their sins, and that much is forgiven them, will love much; they that have little faith of forgiveness, or think little is forgiven them, will love but little, and are hardly reconciled at all to God. They that have no faith of forgiveness, and believe not that any sin, is forgiven them, they will love none at all, they are not reconciled at all to God. Indeed it is impossible for a man that hath no faith of God's forgiveness, to love God; for he believes that God is his enemy, imputing sin and guilt to him unto condemnation; that man cannot but hate God. Indeed, many pretend to be lovers of God, that yet have no true love to him; but yet that pretended love of theirs is founded upon a false faith and ignorant fancy, that God loves them, and will not send them to hell for their sins. But when that refuge of lies is destroyed, and that they see God in arms against them, as they will see it in hell, then will they hate him like the devil; and their enmity will be perfect and at its height; but, true faith works true love to God. Thus you may prove whether you have seen this great sight or not. And as you would prove it, so,

[2.] Improve it. O have you seen him, and the Father in him? O improve this privilege.

1. Improve it as an evidence of your interest in him ; for, you may be sure, that this God is your God for ever and ever, and will be your guide even unto death. There is no better evidence of it under the sun than this, that you have seen his glory in the face of Christ. It is a solid mark of grace, and a sweet spark of glory.

2. Improve it as an antidote against all temptations. When the devil, and the world, and the vanities of time, would draw away your hearts and eyes after them, you may say, "O mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts;" "I have seen Christ, and the Father in him, and therefore, with disdain, I turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity." Think shame, O believer, after this to feed your eyes with these base objects, that a blind and sensual world is taken up with.

3. Improve it as a cordial against tribulations and difficulties, whether temporal or spiritual. When deep calls unto deep, and all his waves and billows pass over you ; you may remember him from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, and from the hill Mizar ; you may remember him from the place where he shewed you his glory, and that he is the God of Bethel, and will be for ever the same to you at your worst times, that ever you saw him to be to you at your best times.

4. Improve it as a confirmation of your experience, and of his having loved you with an everlasting love, and drawn you with loving-kindness. I seek no better experience than a sight of the glory of God in Christ ; and every new sight is a new confirmation thereof ; and when you saw him with an eye of faith, it is an argument he saw you with an eye of love and mercy. It may be, it was in a corner that you got a remarkable sight of him, or under the shadow of an ordinance ; but wherever it was, now he is saying to you as to Nathanael, "When thou wast under the fig-tree I saw thee;" when in such a place I gave thee a kindly blink of my beauty, and laid my hand upon thy heart, and made it glow with holy fire from my altar. Something past betwixt you and me that none in the world knows of: "I saw thee." Again,

5. Improve it as a spur to all the duties of religion. O! have you seen his glory, and do you not love that glorious object you saw? Shall not then the love of Christ constrain you to duty? This is gospel-service, gospel-holiness, when love makes you to read, and love makes you to pray, and love makes you to meditate, and love makes you to wait on ordinances, and love influences your

whole practice. Hath he manifested his glory to you? then he hath begun to glorify you: and, O does it not well become you to glorify him? "O let your light so shine before men, that others, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father that is in heaven." Again,

6. Improve it as an encouragement to your fellow brethren; you ought to meet together and encourage one another, saying, "Come hither all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul." And as an excitement to your graceless friends and neighbours, you may excite them, by telling them how the Lord convinced you, enlightened you, and shewed you his glory, to the quickening of your soul, and killing of your corruption; you may excite them not only by your talk, but by your walk; your conversation should be such as they may take notice of you, that you have been with Jesus, and that you have seen him and the glory of God in him, so as to change you into the same image. As you have seen God in Christ, so what an honour will it be to you, if any shall see God in you; if they see the grace of God, the love of God, the fear of God, and the image of God in you? It may be, they will long to see God as you have done; and may go and seek him with you, as the daughters of Jerusalem, Song vi. 1, upon the back of the spouse's commending her Lord to them. Again,

7. Improve it as an argument to prove the supreme Deity of Christ, and his oneness with the Father; that whenever you saw him, you saw the Father in him; you saw God in him; and all the glory of God in him; thus you have an antidote against damnable Arianism in your own bosom. Let your faith, therefore, be confirmed in his being God over all, blessed for ever; and let your zeal for his glory be thereupon strengthened and inflamed; your zeal for his precious gospel truths; your zeal for his royal prerogatives. In a word,

8. And lastly, Improve it as a ground of hope, that you shall see him for ever face to face, because now you have seen him, though it was through a glass darkly. Though grim death were staring you in the face, you may say, The sight of you, O death, shall not trouble me, for I have got a sight of Christ; I have seen his glory, and the Father's glory in him; and this being eternal life to know God in him, death needs not be matter of grief and trouble, but matter of joy and triumph to me, since eternal life is begun. What

is heaven, but the everlasting vision of the glory of God in the face of Christ, to be for ever with the Lord, and to be like him, by seeing him as he is; and seeing all the glorious attributes of God, in their brightest splendour, shining in his person! Then shall you have the happiness of the perfect knowledge of that mysterious oneness betwixt Christ and the Father, which is the reason, why they that see him, see the Father; yea such a close view, as to found a perfect oneness also betwixt Christ and you. O wonderful word, John xiv. 21, "At that day you shall know, that I am in the Father; and you in me, and I in you?" O! who can express the thousand part of that happiness which is imported in that word? For it says, Christ will be in your arms, and you in Christ's arms, and Christ in the Father's arms; you will be in Christ's bosom, and Christ in the Father's bosom, where he lay from eternity; there will he and you lie together to eternity. O the near and immediate sight and fruition of Christ, and the Father in him, that then you will have? O rejoice in the hope of the glory of God! it is heaven to see him, and to see the Father in him; this is the best sight in all heaven, and your Lord declares, believer, that this heaven, this beatifical vision, is begun in you. "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father."

SERMON CXX.—CXXI.

THE GRADUAL CONQUEST; OR, HEAVEN WON BY LITTLE AND LITTLE.¹

"And the Lord thy God will put out these nations before thee, by little and little."—DEUT. vii. 1.

YOU that have been right communicants at this occasion, you have been upon the field of battle, fighting in the name and strength of the Lord against your spiritual enemies; what victory you have got, I cannot tell; but some may, perhaps, be saying, Oh! I find my enemies to be yet strong and mighty; "Iniquities prevail against me;" and, I fear, I never get to the full possession of the heavenly Canaan, there are so many and strong nations of enemies

(1) This subject was discussed in two sermons, preached at the sacramental solemnity at Carnock, July 3d, 1727.

in the way, which I cannot get conquered. To such as may be thus exercised, the words of my text may be welcome news, "The Lord thy God will put out these nations before thee, by little and little. We have here God's promise to Israel of old, concerning their being brought to the possession of the earthly Canaan, which you know was a type of the heavenly Canaan; and, lest they should be discouraged by the difficulty of the conquest, so many enemies being in the way, he animates them against the greatest discouragement. 1. If they objected the number of their enemies, and their strength, he answers that objection, ver. 17, 18. He that destroyed greater enemies than these for them, and he that had done the greater, would easily do the less; he that began the work, would finish it. 2. If they objected the weakness of their own strength and forces; he answers that objection, verse 20, 21. Their greatest encouragement was, that they had God among them, a mighty God, and terrible; and if God be with us, if God be for us, we need not fear the power of any creature against us. 3. If they objected the slow progress of their arms, and feared that the Canaanites would never be subdued, if they were not expelled at the first; to this it is answered in the words of our text, "The Lord thy God will put out these nations, by little and little." Where you may notice two things.

1st, Israel's enemies described; they are called *nations*, because of their multitude and power.

2dly, Israel's conquest; "The Lord thy God will put them out before thee, by little and little." Where you may notice both the glorious Conqueror, and the manner of the conquest.

1. The Conqueror is God, described by his sovereignty over them, *the Lord*; and by his propriety in them, *thy God*. He it is that fights their battles.

2. The manner of the conquest; he will do it, 1. Effectually; He *will* put them out. 2. Remarkably; He will put them out *before thee*. 3. Gradually, which is the special thing here noticed in the manner of the conquest, namely, by *little and little*. The same you read, Exod. xxiii. 29, 30. The wisdom of God is to be remarked in the gradual conquest of his people's enemies; and it is in real kindness to the church, that her enemies are subdued by little and little.

Now, Israel, being typical of the church; and the land of Canaan typical of heaven; and Israel's conquest over the nations,

their enemies, typical of the spiritual conquest of the Lord's people over their spiritual enemies; and the manner of God's dealing with them, for the most part typical of the way of God's dealing with his people in all ages; therefore I would deliver to you the gospel of this text, and open it in this one doctrinal observation.

DOCT. That as the true Israel of God have nations of enemies in their way to the possession of the heavenly Canaan, so the Lord their God will conquer these nations, by little and little.

I shall endeavour to open and confirm this doctrine in the following method:

- I. Enquire who are the true Israel of God.
- II. Speak a little of the heavenly Canaan, which they will be brought to the possession of.
- III. Enquire what nations of enemies they have in their way.
- IV. Speak a little of the Conqueror, the Lord their God.
- V. The manner of the conquest, his putting them out before them, *by little and little*.
- VI. The reasons of this gradual conquest.
- VII. Make application of the whole, in several uses.

And in all these, I shall endeavour as much brevity as possible. Mean time, look to the Lord, that he would give some word with power, and with a blessing.

I. The first thing, Who are the true Israel of God, to whom this promise is made, in the mystical and spiritual sense of it? "They are not all Israel that are of Israel."

1. The true Israel of God, whom he will bring to the heavenly Canaan, are a people whom he hath set apart for himself, and separated from the rest of the world, as Israel was. The true Israel are set apart, not only by election from eternity, but by effectual calling in time. As, in the first creation, God separated the light from the darkness, and made the one day and the other night, so, in effectual calling, he separates the elect from others, as light from darkness; he leaves the rest of the world buried in their own obscurity, and makes the others children of light. By effectual calling, they get convincing grace, others are left stupid and seared; they get en-

lightening grace, and others are left in the dark ; they get renewing grace, and others are left in their enmity ; they get persuading and enabling grace to believe, others are left in their unbelief, and remain children of disobedience and unpersuadableness : “ This people have I formed for myself, they shall shew forth my praise.” Hence,

2. The true Israel of God are a people whom he hath brought out of Egypt, in a spiritual sense, as Israel was in a temporal ; and that with a high hand, and outstretched arm. He hath brought them out of the Egypt of a natural state, and out of the house of bondage, from their natural bondage to sin and Satan, their bondage to the law, as a covenant of works, putting them to the hard task and intolerable labour of doing for life ; a task much worse than the Egyptian bondage, of making brick without straw ; he hath brought them, I say, out of the house of bondage with a high hand ; no power in the world being able to loose their bonds, if the power of a God had not been put forth for that end. They are a people redeemed, not only by the price of the Mediator’s blood, but also by the power of his Spirit ; by his power he hath begun to plague their enemies, and to drown them in the Red-sea of his blood ; for, they overcome by the blood of the Lamb.

3. The true Israel of God are a people acquaint with travelling in the wilderness, from Sinai to Zion, as Israel was ; I mean, from the law to the gospel ; from the covenant of works to the covenant of grace. As Israel at Sinai was amazed at the sight of God appearing in his terrible majesty, and afterwards were brought into covenant with him, so the true Israel of God are a people that have been humbled with the views of God’s holiness and infinite justice, in the command and threatening of the law ; and been made to flee for refuge to the hope set before them, in the gospel-covenant ; they have come from Sinai to Zion ; to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling.

4. The true Israel of God are a people acquaint with the conduct of the pillar of cloud and fire, as Israel was ; I mean, they have gotten the Spirit of Christ to be their guide in the way to Canaan : “ If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his ;” and if any man have the Spirit of Christ, he is guided thereby, and led into all truth, and out of all the paths of damnable error. There is a leading of the Spirit by a secret invisible hand, and by the means of the word, that all the Israel of God are partakers of ; even a voice

behind them, saying, "This is the way," and that is not the way ; and all his sheep know his voice.

5. The true Israel of God are a people fed with manna from heaven, in a spiritual sense, as Israel was in another sense : they are a people that eat the hidden manna ; that have bread to eat the world knows not of ; even the bread of life that came down from heaven ; they live by faith on the Son of God ; Christ is the *Alpha* and *Omega* of their life ; the food and medicine of their life ; the restorer and preserver of their life ; they cannot live without him. The worldling lives upon his riches, the carnal man lives upon his lusts, hypocrites live upon their profession, legalists live upon their duties ; but the true Israel of God live, in the way of duty upon Christ himself, as their wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. If I have any wisdom, Christ is my wisdom ; if any righteousness, Christ is my righteousness ; if any holiness, Christ is my sanctification ; Christ is my ALL : my life, my strength, my treasure, my hope, my deliverer, my friend, my Saviour, my complete salvation.

6. The true Israel of God are a people acquaint with wrestling with God for the blessing, as Jacob was, who thereupon obtained the name of *Israel* ; and all believers are thereupon called the seed of Jacob, that shall not seek his face in vain. They are a people whose life of faith is acted much upon their knees ; or in a way of praying in the name of Christ, and in the Spirit of Christ : " Praying in the Holy Ghost ; This is the generation of them that seek thee ; that seek thy face, O Jacob's God." They are always wanters, and that makes them constantly seekers and beggars.

II. The second thing was, to speak a little of the heavenly Canaan, that they will be brought to the possession of. I would hold it forth in these four particulars, namely, in its types, epithets, parts, and properties.

1st, In its types. The types of the heavenly Canaan were many. I shall name a few of them.

1. The earthly Canaan was a type of the heavenly and celestial Canaan. How magnificently does the Lord speak of Canaan. It is called a goodly land ; a holy land ; a land flowing with milk and honey ; yet this land was but a type and shadow of the heavenly.

2. Paradise was a type of this heavenly Canaan. Though all the pleasant orchards, and comely things in the world were unite in one, they could not come that length as to compete with the earthly

paradise for pleasure and comeliness, when God placed our first parents there in their innocent state ; yet, what was it but a faint resemblance of the heavenly paradise ? nothing but a shadow of it.

3. The Sabbath was a type of this heavenly, happy, and eternal Sabbath of rest. Indeed it is unsettled rest the Lord's people have here ; when they rest in the Lord at any time, their rest is soon disturbed ; even though they can say at times, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee ;" how soon does the devil, the ill heart, and the world disquiet them again ? But, "There remains a rest [a Sabbatism] for the people of God," when they shall rest from their labour, rest from sin and sorrow.

4. The tabernacle was a type of the heavenly Canaan : the Lord's presence filled the tabernacle. O how does his glorious presence fill heaven, and fill all the hearts of the heavenly inhabitants ! Glorious things are spoken of the earthly Zion ; how much more glorious things may be spoken of the New Jerusalem above ! But then,

2ndly, We may consider the heavenly Canaan in its epithets ; as,

1. It is called a house, John xlv. 2, a mansion-house, a prepared place ; "In my Father's house are many mansions ; I go to prepare a place for you." O what a noble house it is, where glory dwells ! What an excellent house will it be, when the Father of the family will be in the midst of the house, and all his children about him ; all his elect gathered together from all the corners of the earth ; where the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Christ himself the elder Brother, and all the younger brethren will dwell together !

2. It is called the joy of the Lord : "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Joy here enters into the believer, but there the believer enters into joy ; he enters, as it were, into an ocean of joy, and it is the joy of his Lord Jesus. How great is the joy that our Lord entered into as the reward of his obedience unto death ? of which it is said, Heb. xii. 2, that, "For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." That same joy the saints are to enter into ; "In thy presence there is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand, there are pleasures for evermore."

3. It is called life, eternal life, Rom. vi. 23, "The gift of God

is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Life is sweet; and the more excellent the life is, the more sweet. A living fly is more happy, by reason of life, than the glorious sun in the firmament. The rational life is yet more sweet; the life of grace is yet sweeter than any of these: but the life of glory is sweetest of all; and this life is eternal; it is life for evermore.

4. It is called a kingdom, a heavenly kingdom; 2 Tim. iv. 18, "The Lord shall preserve me to his heavenly kingdom." Yea, such a kingdom, that all the subjects here are kings. One said of Rome once, that it was *Respublica regum*, "A commonwealth of kings;" it is true of heaven, it is a commonwealth of kings: they are all kings and priests unto their God. And there all the kings have their crowns; a crown of glory, righteousness, and joy. They will have their thrones; "To him that overcomes will I give to sit with me on my throne," &c. They will have their royal robes, their robes of glory and palms of victory. But again,

3rdly, We may consider this heavenly Canaan in its parts. There are especially these four parts of heaven and glory mentioned in scripture, namely, vision, likeness, love, satisfaction.

The first part of it is the vision of God; 1 Cor. xiii. 12, "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. Father, I will that these whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am, to behold my glory." New cabinets of rich treasure will be opened up to them every moment to eternity.

2. The second part of it is likeness, which follows upon the former; "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is," 1 John iii. 2. This is the native fruit of beholding Christ, to be thereby brought to conformity to him, 2 Cor. iii. 18.

3. The third part of it is love: this follows upon the former. Likeness breeds love, even upon earth: then will the saints be made perfect in love, 1 John iv. 18. O what flames of love will burn in heaven! Every saint will be a flame.

4. The fourth part of it is satisfaction, which proceeds from the rest; Psalm xvii. 15, "I will behold thy face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with thy likeness." All this is begun on earth in the heirs of glory. The brighter view a believer gets of Christ, the more likeness; the more likeness, the more love; and the more love, the more satisfaction. But, O when there shall be perfect seeing, there will be perfect likeness; when perfect likeness, perfect love; and when perfect love, perfect satisfaction and

joy ; “ Then the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come unto Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads : they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away,” Isa. xxxv. 10.

4thly, We might consider this heavenly Canaan in its properties. It is another sort of inheritance than the earthly Canaan.

1. It is a glorious inheritance : it is glory itself ; yea, an exceeding great and eternal weight of glory, 2 Cor. iv. 17. God, who is everywhere present, is there gloriously. To make a weak illusion : The sun in the firmament is in this or that place, by his rays and beams : but in the firmament, in a glorious manner : so God is here on earth, in his grace and the rays of his countenance ; but in heaven in a glorious way. O sirs, there the sants are, indeed, all glorious within and without both ; their bodies glorious, like unto Christ’s glorious body, when once they are raised ; their souls glorious, because perfect in holiness.

2. It is a heavenly inheritance ; therefore called a heavenly kingdom, as I said, in opposition to earthly kingdoms. There the great King is heavenly, the subjects are heavenly, the work is heavenly, the reward heavenly, the company heavenly, the converse heavenly, all heavenly.

3. It is a purchased and promised inheritance ; called a purchased possession, Eph. i. 14. The crown is purchased, the throne purchased, the robes purchased, and all purchased by the blood of the Lamb ; which makes them sing that melodious song, “ Worthy is the Lamb that was slain.” And as it is purchased, so it is promised in Christ before the world began, 2 Tim. i. 9, and Titus i. 2. The earthly Canaan was a promised land : they had it by promise made to Abraham first, and in him to them ; so is heaven promised to Christ, and in him to all the spiritual Israel.

4. It is an eternal inheritance ; 1 Pet. i. 4, “ An inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.” The earthly Canaan was but temporary, subject to be laid desolate for the sins of the inhabitants thereof ; and accordingly it was laid waste, and remains so this day : but the heavenly Canaan is an inheritance that is not liable to corruption nor defilement, and therefore it fades not away. It cannot, like the former, be infested with enemies or ill neighbours, nor with any plague or malady ; “ The inhabitants of that land shall not say I am sick.” It is a place of perfect health,

without any sickness: and a happy immortality, without any death or fear of death; a blest eternity; for, when thousands, thousands, thousands of years are gone, their happiness is but beginning. Earthly kingdoms fade, and this world's monarchs die; but, in that everlasting kingdom, death is swallowed up in victory. If it were to have an end after millions of years, it were enough to make them live in perplexity and trouble: but it is eternal and everlasting. There is a short description from the word of that heavenly Canaan.

III. The Third thing is, To shew what nations of enemies and oppositions are in the way to this heavenly Zion. See how many and mighty nations stood in the way of Israel's possessing the earthly Canaan, verse first of this chapter where our text lies: "Seven nations, greater and mightier than they." And after they came to that land of promise, some of these nations were suffered to dwell among them, particularly the Jebusites, that were prickles in their eyes, and thorns in their sides. And, in process of time, God stirred up other nations against them, for just and holy causes; as the Philistines, the Moabites, the Ammonites, that coasted near their dwelling; besides the Assyrians and Babylonians, from remoter countries, that led them captive. And, besides outward enemies and foreign invasion, they were not a little vexed and disquieted with civil and intestine dissensions: there was Saul's house against David's, and David's against Saul's; Israel against Judah, and Judah against Israel; Manasses against Ephraim, and Ephraim against Manasses: nations thus both without and within, and enemies on every side. Now, in like manner, there are great and mighty nations that oppose the true Israel of God in their way to the heavenly Canaan above, and that hinder their peaceable possession of any part of heaven that, through grace, they possess on earth. In allusion, therefore, to the seven nations here, that God cast out before Israel of old; I shall shew seven of these nations of spiritual enemies and oppositions that are in the way to the heavenly Canaan, and that disturb the Israel of God in any begun possession that they have here, through grace.

I only premise that as, in an outward sense, all nations of the earth proceed from one root and original, namely, the first man Adam: so, in a spiritual sense, most part of all the nations that oppose our happiness do spring from one root; and the grand root is original sin, and natural corruption: here is the great commander,

that leads forth multitudes of nations of actual oppositions against God, and the Israel of God, that are bound for the heavenly Canaan. A body of sin and death is the fertile womb that brings forth swarms in one day; yea, there, as it were, whole nations are born at once. But, more particularly, there are these seven nations that oppose and vex the Israel of God in their way to Canaan.

1. A nation of vain thoughts. We are by nature vain in our imaginations, Rom. i. 21: and these vain thoughts lodge within the walls of Jerusalem; "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness: how long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee?" Jer. iv. 14. These nations lodge within, take bed and board with you, and eat up the very sap of your souls; therefore, when David says, Psalm cxix. 113, "I hate vain thoughts," he expresses them with a word that signifies the *sprig* and *branch* that grows in a tree, which draws the sap out of it, and makes it fruitless. Do you not find a nation of this sort swarming about your heart every day, and every hour of the day? Yea, I am mistaken if these Philistines have not been upon you, and if these nations have not been besetting you, and besieging your souls in time of hearing, praying, communicating at this occasion; and, I imagine they who are exercised and bound for heaven, will find a need of almighty power, to put out this nation before them, though there were no more. And, indeed, these vain thoughts are like the flying posts to the rest of the nations that may be named. But then,

2. There is a nation of worldly cares, which Christ compares to briars and thorns, that choke the seed of the word, Mark iv. 9, and Luke viii. 14. This nation goes under the name of Frugality; but, if you look narrowly to its armour, you will find the motto thereof to be, "Careful about many things, but neglecting the one thing necessary;" and yet this is such a powerful nation that many people are subdued by it, so as they can do nothing but mind earthly things, and so lose heaven, and come short of salvation; yea, such is the power of this nation even over the Israel of God, that he is obliged, in a manner, to smite them, and extirpate the world out of their heart with the rod of correction; "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth and smote him," Isa. lvii. 17; yea, the rod of God will not do it till the grace of God efficaciously be exerted; I hid me, and was wroth; and yet he went on forwardly in the way of his heart; but sovereign powerful grace steps in; "I have seen his ways, and will heal him."

3. There is a nation of doubts and fears, and sinful discouragements, and unbelieving objections, Psalm xlii. 6, 7. The soul is overset and overwhelmed oft-times with them. They may well be compared unto a nation; they are so many, that no sooner does a minister begin to answer objections but the unbelieving heart will raise a thousand more; and so mighty that there is no subduing of them till Christ himself rebuke them, as he did the raging waves of the sea, with a word of power, and so create a calm in the soul. This is a nation that rages like the heathen spoken of, Psalm ii. and imagines many vain things against the Lord and his Anointed; but the Lord stills the rage with the rod of his strength, that he sends out of Zion, when he makes the people willing in the day of his power. He answers the doubts and objections of unbelief, and stills the fears and discouragements of his people, either by a word of power let into the heart, such as that, "Fear not, It is I; be not afraid; O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Or by a breathing of his Spirit, accompanying a word that is spoken to the ear.

4. There is a nation of ungodly men from without, that also vex and oppose the Israel of God in their way to the heavenly Canaan; "Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation," Psalm xliiii. 1. This is a nation that many times suppress and bears down the work of God in the soul. The company and influence of the ungodly, that mock at religion, and laugh at sacred things, is a great let and impediment to the salvation of a soul. And as it was with Israel of old, so it is with the church in all ages; she is never without enemies that annoy her; there are four sorts of ungodly men that the church of God generally complain of: the tyrant, the atheist, the heretic, and the hypocrite; some of these would subvert, and others pervert her; the tyrant by heart-hatred and open persecution, the atheist by profanity of life, the heretic by corruption of doctrine, and the hypocrite by pretences of holiness. These nations of ungodly men do oppose the Israel of God, partly by force and partly by fraud; and, indeed, the secret enemies are usually the most dangerous of the two; they that use fraud, more dangerous than these that use force; for these, being seen and known, are more easily avoided: but the other not so easily shunned because not suspected.

5. There is a nation of mighty kings, and powerful giants, as the sons of Anak are called, Numb. xiii 33. How many great

kings did the Lord give into the hand of Israel? Such as Og, king of Bashan; Sihon, king of the Amorites, Psalm cxxxvi. 18, 19, 20; Psalm cxxxv. 10, 11. But there are greater kings and potentates than these that stand in the way of the possession of the heavenly Canaan. There are, more especially, four kings, mighty kings, to be subdued: for,

(1.) As sin is a mighty king that reigns in us, and over us naturally; therefore says the apostle, Rom. vi. 12, "Let not sin reign in your mortal body; so,

(2.) Satan is a mighty king in his own territories; therefore called, "The prince of this world; The prince of the power of the air, that rules in the hearts of the children of disobedience," Eph. ii. 2.

(3.) Self is a mighty king; it competes with King Jesus, and keeps his throne, so long as the loftiness of man is not brought down, and the haughtiness of man made low, Isa. ii. 11, that the Lord alone may be exalted in the heart: and, even after Christ is exalted to the throne of the heart, Self is still fighting and working for the throne. It is a king that all the world adores.

(4.) Death is a mighty king; therefore called the king of terrors, Job xviii. 14. He is a king that is the terror of kings, as well as inferior subjects. This is called the last enemy of God's Israel; "The last enemy to be destroyed is death:" and happy they that get the sting of death removed, which is sin. See 1 Cor. xv. 54-57, "Death shall be swallowed up in victory." Christ is the victorious conqueror of this and all other enemies; however, these are mighty kings in the way; and some of them have mighty giants in their armies, particularly these three, viz., king Sin, king Satan, and king Self; these three have powerful armies to fight their hellish battles. And there are,

6. A nation of deceitful lusts in the heart; so called, Eph. iv. 22. These are like so many deputies and officers, captains and lieutenants, fighting under the banner of king Sin, king Self, and king Satan, against King JESUS, the God of glory. O what swarms of lusts make up this army of hell! If you will travel through the camp of your heart, you will see an armed regiment of gigantic lusts; there you may see grim-faced ignorance, armed with the devil's black livery; there you may see cursed atheism and unbelief, armed with lies and blasphemies, and bitter invectives against heaven; there you will see cruel enmity, armed with a bloody sword

of forcible opposition unto God and Christ; there you will see subtle hypocrisy, armed with fraud and flattery; there you will see brazen faced hardness of heart, armed with a bow of brass; there you may see doltish security, armed with a fearless spirit and a stupid conscience; bold presumption, armed with a daring countenance; towering pride, armed with a robe of gaudy attire, and an eye of scorn, contempt, and disdain; as also self-righteous confidence, armed with gross ignorance, both of the spirituality of the law and mystery of the gospel. There is a powerful nation of heart plagues and deceitful lusts, that reign over the ungodly world, and many times rage in the hearts of believers to the leading of them captive.

7. There is a nation of actual outbreakings in the life, and sins in the conversation; these are like the common soldiers of the army of hell, making daily excursions into the camp of Israel; yea, every hour of the day they are breaking out on this hand, and on that hand, and round about us on all hands, in innumerable omissions and commissions. Here breaks out intemperance and insobriety in eating, drinking, and using of the comforts of life; there breaks out idle words, vain talking, unprofitable conversation; here appears negligence in duty, and carelessness and indifference in hearing, reading, praying, communicating; and there appears misspending of time, Sabbath and week days both, wasting our precious opportunities, and mis-improving our talents, without endeavouring to do good or get good, to glorify God, or edify these that are conversant with us. The former nation I mentioned was the lusts of the flesh, and this nation was the works of the flesh; the lusts of flesh are deceitfully hidden within the walls; the works of the flesh are open and manifest, making continual outward excursions. You may have a list of them, Gal. v. v. 19-21. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings." Another lists of the names of the soldiers of this army you may read, 2 Tim. iii. 1-5, "Men shall be lovers of themselves;" there goes the king and commander-in-chief, Self-love; and then follows a list of the common soldiers; "Covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures, &c.

Now, these are the seven nations continually in arms and at work for hell and against heaven; the nation of vain thoughts con-

tinually flying post through the rest of the nations for intelligence ; the nation of worldly cares continually making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof ; the nation of doubts, and unbelieving fears and jealousies is still keeping watch, and standing sentry at the door of the heart, to keep out all heavenly messages, and exclude all proposals of peace with heaven ; the nation of ungodly men continually guarding the outworks of hell, and plying their large artillery and battering rams, to beat down what God, and Christ, and the gospel would build up ; the nation of mighty kings that I mentioned, are still issuing forth new commands and orders for war against heaven ; the nation of deceitful lusts, like officers of the army, are still mustering the host, leading them forth to the field of battle, and setting them in battle array ; and the nation of actual sins and out-breakings, are still brandishing their swords and spears, and other implements of war, making daily and hourly excursions out of the camp of hell, and incursions upon their opposites and antagonists ; running on the camp of Israel, to destroy them, and hinder their march to the heavenly Canaan.

Now, to these seven nations all the world of mankind are, by nature, kept in subjection ; and, which is worse, they are willing slaves and captives to them ; and even the Israel of God, that have left their camp, and fled under the colours and standard of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Captain of salvation, are many times led captive by them : they are still giving battle to Israel. Now, O thou that art bound for the celestial Canaan, what thinkest thou of these nations ? Are they not seven nations greater and mightier than thou ? Surely, if thou hast found, to thy sad experience, the power and the policy, and the pernicious influence of these mighty nations upon thee, it will be welcome news to hear that “ The Lord thy God will put these nations from before thee, by little and little.

IV. The Fourth thing that I proposed, was, to speak a little of the Conqueror of these nations ; that is, “ The King of glory ; the Lord, strong and mighty ; the Lord, mighty in battle.” Indeed, they that have such mighty nations to fight and debate with, have need of a mighty conqueror to subdue them ; and he is here said to be *the Lord thy God* ; where he is described, 1. By his name, JEHOVAH. 2. By his relation to them in Christ, THY GOD.

1st, Israel's Captain, that fights their battles, is described by his great name JEHOVAH, *the LORD*, in capital letters ; which is ordinarily used in all our English translations, to intimate, that in

the original it is JEHOVAH ; and it is a name that points out the perfection of his nature. It is remarked, that all along the first chapter of Genesis, while God was yet upon his creating work, he is called ELOCHIM, *a God of power* ; but in the second chapter of Genesis, ver. 4, God having completed his work, he is then called JEHOVAH-ELOCHIM, *a God of power and perfection*. And as he here takes that name, when he perfects what he had begun, so we find him making himself known by this name, when he appears to perform what he had promised to Israel, Exod. vi. 3, "I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, by the name of GOD ALMIGHTY ; but by my name JEHOVAH was I not made known to them." God would now be known by his name Jehovah, as being, 1. A God performing what he had promised, and so giving a being to his promises. 2. A God perfecting what he had begun, and finishing his own work. And now, the subduing of the Canaanites before Israel, was a work that God had promised, and a work that now he had begun ; therefore, he makes himself known in this work by his name JEHOVAH, a performing and perfecting God. This is the powerful Conqueror, that all the true Israel of God have to look to, and depend upon, for destroying the nations of spiritual enemies for them. This name belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ, equally with the Father and the eternal Spirit. It is he that led Israel out of Egypt, by the hand of Moses, wrought wonders for them, and brought them to Canaan, and delivered their enemies into their hand ; by all which was typified the greater salvation and deliverance that he was to work, in accomplishing the business of our redemption in our nature. And by taking to himself the name JESUS, he hath not lost the name JEHOVAH ; nay, he could not be a JESUS, if he were not JEHOVAH ; he could not destroy these nations I have named, the sum of which is *sin* ; for to destroy sin, is more than to make a world ; sin cannot be destroyed without satisfying that infinite justice that sin offended, and glorifying that infinite holiness that sin affronted, and fulfilling the law that sin had violated, and appeasing the wrath and vengeance that sin had kindled. Further, sin could not be destroyed, without destroying the devil that begat it, and the wicked heart that brought it forth ; all which requires a new creation, more great and glorious than the first, and belongs to none but Jehovah. This name points out the divine glory of our Redeemer and Conqueror, which I offer in these two further remarks upon it.

1. This great name JEHOVAH (as these that investigate the Hebrew root observe,) signifies *being, essence, simple-existence, or self-subsistence*, and imports his most simple, absolute, eternal, and independent being and existence : having his being in, of, and from himself ; and from whose infinite being all creatures have their finite being.

2. This name JEHOVAH comprehends in itself the three Hebrew tenses : the preterite signifying the time past ; the present signifying what is now ; and the future signifying the time to come ; and imports that designation given to Christ, Rev. i. 4, 8, *Which is, and which was, and which is to come*. Thus he is the I AM THAT I AM, as he is called, Exod. iii. 14. The ALPHA and OMEGA, the *First* and the *Last* ; the first, without beginning, and the last, without end. O but they who have such a glorious General to follow, need not fear to take the field against the nations ! He is JEHOVAH.

2dly, Israel's Captain-general is here described by his relation to them, *THY God ; the Lord THY God*. This relation is stated upon the ground of a new covenant dispensation, even a covenant of promise in Christ Jesus. Of this covenant there was an Old-Testament dispensation, under which this people of Israel were ; and a New-Testament dispensation, under which we are ; the former was a darker, and this is a clearer and brighter dispensation of the same new covenant. The old covenant of works being broken and violated by the sin of man, God could not, in honour, come under his relation again to sinners, but upon the ground of a new covenant, established in Christ. This covenant of promise was first discovered to Adam in paradise, afterwards to Abraham and others. The promise of that new covenant was sealed by the blood of Christ, typically, under the Old Testament, by the sacrifices then offered ; and actually at Jerusalem, when he gave his life a ransom for many. Upon the footing of this covenant, I say it is, that he asserts this relation, *The Lord THY God*. But more particularly, for explaining this relative designation, *THY God*, we may take a fourfold view thereof.

1. As it is expressive of the ancient federal relation betwixt God and Israel of old, the church of the Jews under that dispensation. He became their God, and they were chosen of him to be his peculiar people, beyond all other people in the world ; as you see, Deut. vii. 6, " For thou art a holy people to the Lord thy God ; the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people to himself,

above all people on the face of the earth." He made known his mind with respect to the way of salvation to them, and they to others: "He shewed his word unto Jacob, and his statutes and judgments to Israel; he hath not dealt so with any nation," Psalm cxlvii. 19, 20. And having taken them visibly into a covenant relation, he establishes his covenant with them and their seed: "The Lord had delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them," Deut. x. 15. And thus he said to Abraham, Gen. xvii. 7, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, to be a God to thee and thy seed." Hence says God to them, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth." All this is said of them, even with respect to their church state, abstract from the singular saving privileges of true believers among them, who, through grace, were enabled to improve these great advantages they enjoyed above other people. By virtue of this relation that he stood in to them, he engaged, as the Lord their God, to put out the nations of the Canaanites before them by little and little.

2. You may view it as expressive of the present federal relation that God stands in to the visible church under the New Testament, even to us the Gentiles, as succeeding to the Jews in their church privileges, together with superadded advantages, in so far as the New Testament dispensation does excel that of the old. As it was said to the Jewish church, "The promise is to you, and to your children," Acts ii. 39. And that to them belong the adoption, and the glory, the covenant, and the promise, Rom. ix. 4. So, in like manner, do they belong to the Christian church, we being grafted in among them, to partake of the root and fatness of their olive-tree, Rom. ix. 17. Hence flows a common interest that all the members of the visible church have in God, as their God; and Christ as their Head; not only as a head of eminency, but as an head of influence and government. All the common influences shed among the members of the visible church come from this source; and from thence result also many excellent privileges, all which are sealed in baptism, which succeeds to the seal of circumcision among the Jews. Baptism seals to us, and to all the visible church, a common general right to God's covenant, so as we may warrantably plead the promises, and that promise in particular, "I will be your God, and ye shall be my people," which is the fundamental promise. Great are the privileges that belong to the visible church, which do not belong

to these that are without ; God commits to them his ministry, his oracles and ordinances ; by the means of which, he brings forth children, and gathers his elect ; so as out of the church " visible there is no ordinary possibility of salvation," Acts ii. 47. As all the baptised members of the visible church have a sealed interest in the covenant of promise, such as lays them under a special obligation to believe in Christ ; so they have a claim, beyond the rest of the world, to God as their God in Christ, and as their Saviour ; yea, all the church visible are said to be in Christ, John xv. 2 ; even these branches that bear not fruit, and that shall be taken away, and cast into the fire. Baptism seals our ingraftment into Christ ; that is, an ingraftment common to all that are members of the visible church, besides the saving spiritual ingraftment of true believers. Now, that common relation that you all have to God, as church-members, though it be common to believers and unbelievers : yet it is, in itself, a special privilege, whereby you are exalted above the rest of the world that are without the church ; and gives every one of you a right to plead this promise to be accomplished to you in a spiritual sense, " The Lord thy God will put out these nations before you, by little and little ;" even such nations of spiritual enemies as were typified by the Canaanites that Israel had to deal with. But then,

3. You may view this relative designation, Thy God, as expressive of the special relation he stands in to the church invisible, militant here upon earth : I mean, to true believers, the living members of Christ, and true Israel of God, whom he makes so, by becoming their God, in a way of sovereign free grace, in and through Jesus Christ, in whom they have a peculiar interest in God as their God, and a special title to, all the promises of the new covenant as their charter ; all the promises being Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus. Now, it is in this sense especially that I consider this designation, " The Lord thy God : " because it is the spiritual intent of the text I treat, namely, as it does typify and represent the spiritual deliverance of the true Israel of God from their spiritual enemies, in order to the possession of the heavenly Canaan ; yet not excluding the great appearances the Lord makes for his church visible on earth, collectively considered. And here it is proper you observe, that though this title, " The Lord thy God," be oftentimes in Scripture spoken of with respect to a visible church, a mixt people of good and bad ; as when he says to Israel, " I am the Lord thy God,

that brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and house of bondage ;” and whereas in many instances it is spoken collectively of the whole body of the church ; yet this rule is to be noticed, that where the Lord is mentioned in relation thus to a mixt people, all the privileges that flow from such a relation of God to that people, are but common privileges ; I mean, common to all that visible church. Thus the privilege of bringing out of the land of Egypt, was a common privilege, common to all that people, good and bad among them ; and so was this privilege of cutting off the nations of the Canaanites before them in a literal sense, and possessing them of the earthly Canaan ; and, therefore, though God be called the God of a church or people collectively, which infers many excellent privileges, though common to them all, as was shewed above ; yet he is not their God, in the same respect, as he is the God of the believer, or of the true Israel. As they are not all Israel that are of Israel (for the whole visible church, God’s professing people, are of Israel ; but only true believers are Israelites indeed, and Jews inwardly, the true spiritual circumcision) ; so these true Israelites have a course by common, having a special and peculiar propriety in God as their God ; which infers special and peculiar privileges. And hence,

4. You may view this designation, Thy God, as expressive of all the blessings that are imported in this special relation that he stands in to this true Israel. And, indeed, the privileges imported thus in the word, Thy God, are innumerable and unspeakable. His being their God, imports, that they have an interest in all that he is, and all that he hath, and all that he can do, and is wont to do for those whose God he is. Here is a field that would take a long eternity to travel through : “ Happy is the people whose God is the Lord.” All happiness in time, and for ever, is imported in it ; his being their God, imports all the relations that he can be in to them, for making them holy and happy for ever in himself ; that he is, and will be, their Sun, to enlighten them ; their Portion to enrich them ; their Father to pity them ; their Righteousness to clothe them ; their Guide to conduct them ; their Glory to crown them ; and their ALL IN ALL. But the text confines me to these relations imported in this title, *Thy God*, which hath a respect to his destroying their enemies before them by little and little. I only mention two of these : 1. His being their God, imports that he is their Friend, though their enemies be many. 2. His being their God, imports that he is their Shield, though their enemies be mighty.

[1] Amidst the multitude of enemies, their God is their Friend. And, indeed, no matter who be our enemies, if God be our friend; "If God be for us (says the apostle) who can be against us?" Rom. viii. 31. And he is a friend to all these to whom he is a God in a peculiar manner. And his being their friend imports, the removal of feud and enmity; his anger being turned away, and reconciliation made up through Christ, whatever was the former difference. It imports the acceptance of their persons into favour, and the obligation he lies under, as a friend, by virtue of the new covenant of grace and promise, to help them in every time of need; and to do all their works in them and for them: and to fight all their battles. Therefore,

[2.] Though their enemies be mighty, his being their God, imports that he is their Shield; The Lord God is a sun and shield to them, Psal. lxxxiv. 11. The shields of the earth are his; and his being their shield, is to be understood both in a defensive and offensive way.

(1.) He is the Lord their God and shield, to defend them; "My defence is of God, which saves the upright in heart," Psalm vii. 10. Hence called a strong tower, and rock of defence; a hiding-place, a covert, a shadow, to shelter them from the assaults and attacks of the nations of enemies that are within them, and round about them; "A man shall be a hiding-place from the wind, a covert from the tempest: as rivers of waters in a dry place; and as the shadow of a great rock in weary land," Isa. xxxii. 2.

(2.) He is the Lord their God and shield, for offending all their enemies; hence he is said to have a sword of power girded on his thigh, for executing judgment on their enemies; Deut. xxxii. 41, 42, "If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold of judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and a reward to them that hate me; I will make mine arrows drunk with blood." Read also ver. 43, and compare it with Isa. lxiii. 1, 4, "The day of vengeance is in mine heart, for the year of my redeemed is come." O! it is a happy vengeance to the Israel of God, when he, as their mighty Conqueror, subdues the nations under them, and takes vengeance on all their powerful lusts and spiritual enemies. A day of vengeance to the enemy, is a day of redemption to his friends. But this leads me to

V. The Fifth thing proposed, namely, to speak of the manner of the conquest. We have heard of the Conqueror, here designed,

“The Lord thy God;” and now the manner of the conquest is, “He will put out these nations before thee, by little and little.” And here three things may be noticed, with reference to the manner of the conquest. 1. It is obtained powerfully and effectually: He *will put out* these nations. 2. Visibly and remarkably; He will put them out *before thee*. 3. Gradually and piece-meal; by *little and little*. To each of these I would speak a word.

First, The manner of the conquest is, that it is obtained powerfully and effectually; “The Lord thy God WILL PUT OUT these nations;” or, as it is rendered in the margin, “he will PLUCK OFF these nations.” And so it is further explained, ver. 23 of this chapter; “He will deliver them unto thee, and shall destroy them with a mighty destruction, till they be destroyed utterly. And he will deliver their kings into thine hand,” ver. 24. And, Excd. xxiii. 30, “By little and little will I drive them out.” Now, thus, in the spiritual conquest, the nations must be put out; and the Lord’s putting them out, does import,

1. That these nations of lusts, and spiritual enemies, have strength and power upon their side; so that it is no easy work to get them driven out; yea, utterly impossible, unless the Lord our God undertake it. If you ask, where the strength of these nations lies, and particularly the strength of sin? I answer in these four things.

(1.) The strength of the nation of sin and of lusts lies in their root: viz., the body of sin and death: as the strength of a tree lies in the root; so that the axe must be laid to the root, if you would destroy it; and as the strength of the water is in the fountain, so that if you would destroy it, the fountain must be stopt up; so the strength of sin is in the root and fountain of sin that is within. And hence,

(2.) The strength of these nations of lusts lies in the relation they have to ourselves: and hence, for a man to destroy his lusts, is to deny himself. These nations of lusts and sins are such a part of himself, that they seem to be the best part, and the most useful part of himself; his right hand, his right eye, his members; “Mortify therefore your members that are upon the earth,” Col. iii. 5.

(3.) The strength of these nations lies in the commander and captain-general that leads them forth; that is, the Devil; the great quarter-master that fills the heart, as it is said of Ananias, Acts v. 3, “Why hath Satan filled thine heart, to lie to the Holy Ghost,

and keep back part of the price?" It is the devil that fills the heart of people to lie, and fills their heart to swear, and fills their heart to drink and debauch, and fills their heart to keep back what service is due to God. This commander is a strong man, and cannot be conquered but by a stronger. Yea,

(4.) The strength of these nations of sin lies in the law of works; 1 Cor. xv. 56, "The strength of sin is the law." Sin hath dominion over all that are under the law, and not under grace, Rom. vi. 14, and that on many accounts, that I cannot now insist upon; but particularly, among the rest, because, by reason of the original breach thereof, they are under the curse of it, of which curse the strength of sin is a great part; so that no less power than that which can pull up the root, a body of sin and death, and pull down self and all the members of it, and that can destroy the devil, the captain of hell, and, at the same time, give full satisfaction to the law of the God of heaven; no less power can destroy these nations, for here their strength lies. The Lord's putting them out, supposes and imports this strength and power that they have upon their side.

2. It imports, that these nations of lusts and spiritual enemies have the possession; which, indeed, is also a great part of their strength. There would be no need of driving them out, if they were not in; nay, they are in possession; they are in actual possession of the understanding of all men by nature, who are therefore alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them. They have actual possession of the will; hence men are not only unwilling to let these nations go out, and as unwilling as Pharaoh was to let Israel go, though plagued from heaven for his wilfulness; but also the will is filled with enmity against God, and rises up in arms and opposition against him, and in favours of these lusts. Yea, they have possession of all the powers and faculties of the soul; they are deeply rooted in the heart and nature, as the Jebusites were in the land of Canaan; and there they strongly fortify and deeply intrench themselves, so that it is no easy work to drive them out; yea as they have no will to go out, so out they will never go, till they be driven by a superior power, as Christ drove the buyers and sellers out of the temple, who turned the temple of God to a den of thieves. Therefore,

3. It imports, an exerting of the divine power in opposition to these nations, in order to their being put out and destroyed; and

that is even the almighty power of God in Christ, by the Holy Ghost; "If you, through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live," Rom. viii. 13. It is not by the power of nature, or free-will; "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts," Zech. iv. 6. When the conquest is actually commenced in a soul, the Spirit of God comes and gives battle to the nations of the Canaanites; the lusts and old inhabitants of the heart, and takes possession. How he does so, may afterwards more appear; only, I say here, the Lord's putting out the nations, imports, that his almighty power is actually put forth for this end.

4. It imports, that this power is and shall be effectual; for it is said, *He WILL put them out*; he will drive them out of their old quarters, and destroy them: he will drive them out of the heart, out of the house, out of the will, out of the affections, out of all the forts where they strengthened themselves, and at last out of the world, when he completes his work of sanctification; for, "He that hath begun the good work, will perfect it," Phil. i. 6. And sure there is no true hearted Israelite here, but will say AMEN: Lord, hasten the time when these nations of lusts shall be driven out of my heart, and driven out of the world; Lord, let them be driven to hell with the devil, their captain, and let me be quit of them for ever. Well, the day of their complete extirpation is a-coming: "The Lord thy God will drive out these nations." But then,

Secondly, The manner of the conquest here expressed, is visible and remarkable; "He will drive them out before thee." I think this word may import the visible and remarkable manner of the conquest; and more particularly,

1. That the Israel of God get a sight of their enemies. These nations are in their view, while the Lord their God is driving them out, and while they, through grace, are led to the field of battle against them; he will drive them out *before them*. They that never got a view of their sins and lusts, nor of the strength of their arms; that never saw their own corrupt nature, nor experienced the power of corruption in their hearts; they are yet living at their ease, in the midst of these nations, and under the power thereof; they are alive without the law, Rom. vii. 9. The commandment hath not come nor sin revived, to discover its strength to them; they are yet soldiers under the devil's banner; they have not taken on with Christ; the battle with the nations is not yet begun, for they never yet saw them, nor viewed and reconnoitered their strength.

2. His driving out the nations before them, imports, that, through grace, the Israel of God are made active herein. It is *before thee* they shall be driven out. Being acted by his grace, they act; being armed by his Spirit, they fight; and, through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body. It is true, sometimes the Israel of God have nothing ado at all, but just to stand still, as it were, to see how the waters will divide to let them through, and how they will return to drown and overwhelm their enemies; but, for ordinary, their work is to go forward, in the name and strength of the Lord their God, and give battle to their enemies, that they may be destroyed before them; and under the banner of Christ Jesus, the glorious Captain of salvation, to fight the good fight of faith. Yea,

3. His driving out the nations before them, imports, that, even when they are called to act and fight, they shall have no ground of boasting, but rather of blushing, when they consider what part it is they act in this matter; for the Lord himself must be the agent; "The Lord thy God will put out the nations before thee." Israel's Captain goes before them, and leads the van; the Lion of the tribe of Judah must go before them and tear their enemies to pieces: it is he that subdues the nations under them. He hath gone before them already, and had a bloody battle with all the nations of hell upon mount Calvary; there he fought, and overcame principalities and powers; there he condemned sin in the flesh, and destroyed the strength of it, by nailing the law to his cross, Col. ii. 14. And however the nations may rally their forces again, and seem formidable and dreadful, yet their strength being broken at this bloody engagement, the believer hath no more ado, in effect but to hold up the red flag of the blood of Christ by faith, and then he overcomes by the blood of the Lamb, Rev. xii. 1. The great battle is already fought, and the great art of the believer, in all the lesser battles and skirmishes, lies in setting his Captain before him, saying, "I will go in the strength of the Lord; for in the Lord only have I righteousness and strength;" viewing him as before them in the field, according to his promise, "The Lord thy God will put out these nations before thee."

4. It may import, that as the Lord their God will make their enemies to flee before their face, so they shall be witnesses to the wonders of his power in overthrowing the nations in their way. The true Israel of God dare hardly call themselves warriors against

their enemies, but rather witnesses to the battle of the Lord, when he fights for them, and makes them overcome, and then gives them the name of conquerors; yea, more than conquerors, through him that loved them. He overcomes for them, and then crowns them as the overcomers, saying, "To him that overcomes, will I give to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." They are witnesses to his grand achievements and valiant exploits against their enemies; for, his ordinary time of fighting remarkably for them, is, when their strength is gone, and when he sees their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left, by reason of the power of their enemies, Deut. xxxii. 36, then he steps in, and takes vengeance on their enemies. And, indeed, the day of power is a day remarkable for victories over sin, Satan, the world, and the lusts thereof. Do you mind the day, believer, when you thought there was a legion of devils, a nation of lusts, an army of corruptions, a regiment of hell within you; but, behold, you got a view of the Captain of salvation ready to put out these nations before you; and you got grace to take hold of him, to believe in him, and so to turn to flight the armies of the aliens? Are there not some remarkable times, when you got your feet set upon the neck of your lusts? "By thee I have run through a troop," says David, Psalm xviii. 29; "and by my God I overleap a wall." It is true, the conquest is not always remarkable; for sometimes the nations compass them about like bees, and sting them, and torment them, and prevail against them; "Iniquities prevail against me," says David: yet they never prevail so far, but that grace still renews the fight, and at last obtains the victory; though yet, through many ups and downs, fallings and risings, and vicissitudes and changes. Therefore,

Thirdly, The manner of the conquest here expressed, is gradual, by little and little. This is the main point here intended, with reference to the manner of the Lord's destroying the nations: Therefore I would here, 1. Show what may be imported in this his putting out the nations by little and little. 2. By what several steps, strokes, or degrees, he puts out the nations in a spiritual sense.

1st, As to the import of this phrase, by little and little. It says,

1. That the Israel of God are not to expect that their spiritual enemies will be all vanquished at the first onset. Though the vic-

tory be begun, whenever the soul gets into Christ, and under his colours, who is the Captain of salvation; yet the commencement of the spiritual war is not the complement thereof; nay, there may be many a battle before the war be at a close, and the victory complete: for, though the enemy hath got a dead stroke, and though the nations of lusts, like the beast mentioned, Dan. vii. 12, have their dominion taken away; yet their lives are prolonged for a season; which occasions the war to be prolonged. Also,

2. By little and little, it imports, that the visible advantages over the nations of spiritual enemies may be very small; Israel may be at a time but helped with a little help, Dan. xi. 34; and get a little reviving in their bondage, Ezra ix. 8; a little victory at a time; a small advantage against the enemy: but though it be small, yet the day of small things is not to be despised, Zech. iv. 10, for, as we say, Many smalls make a great, Therefore,

3. The Lord's putting them out by little and little imports, that though the several foils be small, yet they are successful; for, by little and little, the nations are thus put out and discomfited: every new battle tends to the ruin of the enemy more and more. Let not the believer say that nothing is done, because so little is done, and the enemy is yet alive. O be thankful, if, by little and little, the Lord be putting them out, and gradually diminishing their forces.

4. "By little and little;" it imports, the continuation and progress of the war, until there be a total extirpation of the nations. There may be an intermission of strokes, now a stroke and then a stroke given to the enemy; but no intermission of the war during the militant state; no cessation of arms; no proclamation of peace with the enemy; no league with any lust among the true Israel of God. Lusts may, indeed, rise and rage, and rally their forces again, even after they are routed, and a multitude of these nations may gather together; and the believer may be in great fears of the issue, lest he be swallowed up and destroyed before them; till, by faith, he get a new recruit of auxiliaries, and reinforcement of strength from heaven, and then he will say, with the Psalmist, Psal. cxviii. 10, 11, "The nations compassed me about, but in the name of the Lord will I destroy them; for then the right hand of the Lord does valiantly." Yet still it is by little and little; here a little, and there a little; here a little stroke given to Satan's kingdom, and there a little stroke; here a little dash given to the old man and his

lusts, and there a little dash ; a little at this duty, and a little at another ; a little at this sermon, and a little at another sermon ; a little at this sacrament, and the other sacrament, till the finishing stroke be given. But this leads to the other question here,

2dly, By what steps and degrees is the conquest over the nations advanced to a total extirpation of them? Here I might enquire, 1. By what degrees the conquest is advanced by Israel's Captain in his own person? 2. By what degrees it is advanced by him in their persons?

(1.) By what degrees the conquest is advanced and completed by the Captain of Israel, the Lord Jesus Christ, in his own person? I will tell you four remarkable periods of his conquest, wherein you may see four remarkable degrees thereof.

1. The first period was the commencement of the war in paradise, immediately after the fall of Adam : there he proclaimed war between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent ; and, after the proclamation, during that Old Testament period, he kept all his soldiers in expectation of his appearing, according to that promise and proclamation, as their Head and General ; so that, in the faith of this coming Messias, they overcame.

2. The second period was in the remarkable combat that was betwixt the two heads of the two contending parties on mount Calvary, Christ on the one hand, and the serpent on the other ; when, though the serpent bruised his heel unto blood, yet he brake the serpent's head with his bloody heel, while by death he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil ; and vanquished the nations of hell, by destroying their commander's power.

3. The third period was in the after-game that followed upon this memorable combat ; when, in his resurrection and ascension unto heaven, he dismantled all the garrisons of Satan, divided the spoil with the strong, and led captivity captive : which laid the foundation for a successful war to his Israel, carried on between Michael and his angels, and the dragon and his angels ; where the dragon having got a deadly stroke, cannot prevail, Rev. xii. 7, 8 ; though he continue thus to rally his forces against heaven, and all that bend heavenward to the end of the world. And then comes,

4. The fourth period, in that consummate stroke which the Captain of salvation will give to the devil and his armies at the great day, when he will come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory ; then death, and he that had the power of it, shall

be utterly destroyed; for, "The last enemy to be destroyed is death," 1 Cor. xv. 56. From the first to the last enemy, not one shall be spared from destruction: then sin, and death that was brought in by sin, shall be under an eternal banishment, never more to appear among the Israel of God. Thus you see by what steps and degrees the conquest is effectuated by the Lord Jesus, in his own person.

(2.) By what degrees, say you, is it actually obtained by him in his members and soldiers, when he drives out the nations before them? Why, 1. By little and little, he brings them to the field of battle against the nations, in a day of power, when the spiritual war is begun. 2. By little and little, he carries on the conquest, till the day of death, when the warfare is concluded.

[1.] I say, by little and little, he brings them forth to the field against the nations of lusts that stand in their way to the heavenly Canaan, and that in a day of power, in a day of conversion, when the spiritual war is commenced in the man's person.

QUEST. How does the Lord their God bring them forth against the enemy?

I do not limit the Lord to this or that way; he is Sovereign: but I speak of the ordinary steps and degrees, by which he brings any poor sinner that was under the power of sin and Satan, mixed with, and under the power of the nations of hell; by which, I say, he brings them to the field. There are several fields that the Captain of salvation leads them through, before they be on the field of battle, where the nations are put out before them.

1. He leads them to the field of consideration, and makes them there bethink themselves what a sad state and condition they are in, while waging war against heaven, under the devil's banner. What am I doing? and, where am I going? and, what will be the end of these things, and of living in the service of these nations of lusts? And, oh! where will be my landing-place to eternity, if this be my course? Many never go so far towards the heavenly Canaan, as to step in to this field of consideration: "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people do not consider," Isa. i. 3. But, ah! many never so much as turn their faces towards the field of battle against their lusts, so long as they do not enter on this field of consideration: therefore, when the Lord begins a good work, on his people, he brings them first to consider their ways; "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet to

thy testimonies." May be he brings them to it by some rousing providence, whereby he stops their career in wickedness, and hedges up their way with thorns, as he stopped Manasses, and held him in the thorns of Babylon, till he began to consider and know that the Lord was God, and that he was fighting against God.

2. Another little advance, where by little and little he leads them forth to battle, is his bringing them next to the field of concern: this natively follows upon due consideration. The man is brought to see the hazard and danger he is compassed with, and to be afraid of the issue. Some may make a step into the field of consideration a little, but they presently step back again, without going forward to the field of concern: but, when the Lord hath a mind to bring one forward to the camp for war, he brings them into the field of great concern, where they are filled with a greater concern about salvation than ever they had about any thing in the world, saying with the jailor, Oh! "What shall I do to be saved?" And with Peter's hearers, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Is there any salvation for me, that have been fighting against God all my days?

3. Another little advance, is, his bringing them from the field of concern to the field of restlessness, even to a restless endeavour to come out of Satan's camp, and out of that sad condition they see themselves into: for this concern about salvation, and fear of everlasting damnation, makes them to fall about the means of relief; and so they read, and pray, and hear, and meditate, and mourn, and weep, and reform; and you would think they are by this time beginning to fight against the nations of their lusts: but, however these means be good in themselves, and a restlessness in the use of them may be wrought under the awakening influence of the Spirit of God; yet there is some other field the man must be taken through, before he be capable to lift arms against his lusts in an evangelical and acceptable manner; for, as yet, his legal heart leads him to nothing but a legal warfare, under which his spiritual lusts remain still in their strength and dominion. The man is yet under the law, and so under the dominion of sin, Rom. vi. 14. And hence, while he is yet in this field, he is ready to be filled with vain imaginations, and legal dreams, like the young man in the gospel, that it is by doing some good thing or other he is to have eternal life. In this case, he may be doing a great deal of duties, and doing what he can with the greatest natural seriousness, and yet to no purpose;

because he is doing upon the principal of the old covenant of works, "Do and live." Therefore,

5. Another little advance, is the Lord's bringing them from that field of restlessness to the field of despair; so as to despair of help in themselves and in their endeavours; to despair of ever getting victory by their legal diligence; to despair of life by the law, and their own obedience thereto. When the soul is upon this field, it meets with the law, and sees the extent and spirituality of it, as exacting no less than perfection; internal perfection, in heart and nature; external perfection in lip and life; eternal perfection in point of continuance and duration; for, "Cursed is every one that continues not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." And so all this perfection it requires upon pain of eternal death and damnation. Now, the commandment comes, Rom. vii. 9; and though the man was alive without the law once, and reckoned he was right enough, and fairly bound for the heavenly Canaan, as well as his neighbours; yet the commandment thus coming, sin revives, and he dies; his hope and expectation by the law, or by his legal endeavours, give up the ghost. Now, till a man be brought to this field of despair, he is not brought half-way to the field of battle against the nations of enemies in his way to Canaan; but when the Lord brings a man to this despair in himself, and to despair of relief from creatures and means, then there begins to be some hope in Israel concerning him. Therefore,

5. Another little advance, while the Lord is bringing the man by little and little to the gospel-camp, is this: he brings him from the field of despair to the field of hope: I mean, to a distant sight of the cape of good-hope, in the hearing of the glad news of the gospel, concerning the Captain of salvation, in whom alone poor enslaved sinners may be made more than conquerors over sin, Satan, and the world; over death and hell, and all their spiritual enemies. The soul hears of this mighty Captain, that he is able to save to the uttermost; and so conceives hope, that perhaps he will shew mercy, and deliver a poor captive. I speak not here of the new and lively hope, that is the fruit and effect of faith; for, on this field of hope that I speak of, the man is yet between hope and despair, as it were: this hope cannot be a helmet to him, while he yet wants the shield of faith; yet it is such a hope, wrought by the objective revelation of the gospel, as keeps him from sinking into utter discouragement; and excites, enables, and encourages him to go for-

ward, because he sees a door of hope open, in the call of the gospel, wherein he hears Christ calling him to come to him freely, and receives his grace. O there is the door of a new covenant open, says the man within himself; I see it is open for the like of me, and I am particularly called to come in at this open door; and now, when the man is brought to this, he is truly not far from the kingdom of heaven; not far from the field of battle: he needs but be holpen with a little help further, and then this course is complete. Therefore,

6. Another little advance is, after the soul is brought over all these fields, by the good hand of God upon him, he is brought to the field of saving faith, getting such a discovery of Jesus Christ, the Captain of salvation, by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, as powerfully determines him to take on with him, as a volunteer, being made willing in the day of power; and being charmed with the glory of his person, the freedom of his grace, the holiness of the standard, and ruddy ensign dyed with his own blood. Here the man sees him girding his sword upon his thigh, even his glory and majesty. By this sword of glorious grace, the sinner is made a willing subject, a willing soldier, to follow the glorious Captain, and employ him to fight all his battles, and drive out all the nations of his lusts before him. And now the man is a believer, and is come, indeed, to the field of battle, being joined to the Lord Jesus, and disjoined from his old general: now he is, by virtue of union to Christ, entitled to a complete victory over all the nations of enemies in his way, and entitled to all these new recruits and reinforcements from heaven, that are necessary for the gradual subduing of the nations before him, till he win to the possession of the heavenly Canaan. Thus you see how, "by little and little," the Lord brings them forth to the field of battle; and by what various degrees they are brought from slaves to the devil and their lusts, to be soldiers of Christ. But now, as by little and little he brings them to the field of battle against the nations in a day of power; so,

[2.] By little and little he carries on the conquest, till the day of death, when the warfare is accomplished. The text leads me to speak of the Captain's part; "The Lord thy God will put out these nations before thee, by little and little." And indeed his part is the leading part in the All of this conquest; for, without him we can do nothing. To engage with the enemy alone, and encounter

the nations in our own strength, were madness; every lust will laugh at the shaking our spear. It is Christ alone, and his Spirit, that can destroy the nations before him. But now the gradual conquest, till the day of death, by little and little, speaks out these two things: 1. That the Israel of God hath many sad experiences all their days, that their enemies, the nations, are not utterly destroyed but are living and lively, strong and prevalent many times. 2. That they have also many sweet experiences, all their days, of some little aid and auxiliaries from heaven, whereby the enemy is driven out, and destroyed, by little and little, from time to time.

1. I say, this gradual conquest, taking place till death, and the warfare, speaks out many sad experiences, that the nations of their lusts, and corruptions, and spiritual enemies are not utterly destroyed, and that, notwithstanding of their being got fairly under the colours of their glorious Captain, yet they will find, all their days, that their enemies are living, lively, strong, and prevalent; for, their destruction being but by little and little, the conquest may be many times undiscernable, while the power of the enemy appears great and formidable, notwithstanding any little advantage gained at a time, and while they find many dreadful sallies and successful excursions that the enemy makes upon them. Now, may I not ask the Israel of God here, if they have not too many sad experiences of the yet remaining life and strength of the enemy? Does not your sad experience say, that there is a law in your members, warring against the law of your mind, and bringing you into captivity to the law of sin, that is in your members, Rom. vii. 23: and that you wrestle not against flesh and blood only, but against principalities and powers? Eph. vi. 12. Does not sad experience witness how violent your corruptions are, and how impetuously they break through every hedge, notwithstanding of your being sure to be scratched with thorns; and how eagerly they follow the bait, even when the hook is most discernable? Does not sad experience witness, that it is within you that troubles and assaults you most; and that your greatest adversaries are the men of your own house; and that in the worst of times, there is always more cause to complain of an evil heart, than of an evil world; and that it is this carnal heart especially, that clogs and incumbers your flight and motion towards God, and makes, many times, your choicest duties to be like a grievous task? Does not sad experience witness, even since you was brought to the field of battle against your spiritual enemies, that

there is more wickedness in your heart, siding with the enemy, than you could have believed, though it had been told you? When once a day you got your feet upon the necks of your enemies, you could never have thought they would ever so fearfully prevail again, or if you had thought it, would it not have been a terror to you? Does not sad experience witness such a power of corruption, that no sooner did you ever begin to parly with a temptation at a distance, and adventure to sport therewith, but it quickly hath turned to earnest, and carried all before it? So much fuel and gun-powder for the enemy do you carry about with you, that you take fire upon the smallest touch, and are ready to be blown up with the flame? Does not sad experience witness, how soon the strongest resolution, even under the sweetest gales, will evanish; that you are not oft in the evening what you was in the morning, nor for many hours do you keep the ground you had attained: and how quickly you destroy that which grace hath built, insomuch that if grace were not stronger to save and preserve, than you are to war and destroy, you would be undone for ever? Is it not past reckoning, how oft your heart hath thus deceived you? And is it not plain that the word of God knows your heart better than you do, declaring it to be deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked? Does not sad experience shew you, that the devil, who heads and leads the nations of lusts and corruptions, hath the advantage of the ground; and knows how to correspond with your corruption, and suits his temptation to your natural temper, to your calling and company, and predominant inclination, and even to your retirement and solitude; and that he can even then most dangerously tempt, when the temptation is least seen and discovered; and that by his temptation he drives not only at the bringing sin to the thoughts, but to the act, for putting some blot upon your walk and conversation? Does not sad experience shew you, that it is hard, difficult, and dangerous, to dance about the fire, and not be burnt; and that the temptation, which, at a distance, seemed small, upon a near approach you have found had more bands on your heart than you could have dreamed it would have had; and how impossible it is, many times, to stop the current to which, through unwatchfulness you have given a vent? Does not sad experience witness, how the power and prevalence of corruption hath consumed the vitals of your spiritual life, and tumbled you down headlong into confusion; especially when you have given conscience a wramp, by doing violence to

light, in siding with the enemies, and adventuring on the occasions of a temptation? When you have gone, with Peter, to the high-priest's hall, without a warrant or a call, hath it not cost you dear, inasmuch, that you have found bold sinning hath made faint believing, and turned all your comfort to the door, leaving nothing behind but bitterness and death? Do you not find your sins have a weakening, captivating, vexing, and tormenting power? But many sad experiences of this sort, and thousands of them in their life-time, may even the true Israel of God have, whereby they find, to their sad cost, that the nation of corruptions are alive and powerful; as this gradual conquest by little and little declares.

2. It shows also that they have many sweet experiences on the other hand, of some little succours and auxiliaries, some small aids and supplies from heaven, whereby the enemy is driven out and destroyed, from time to time; and this all the days of their life also, till the warfare be accomplished at death. I am speaking of these that have been brought to the field of battle, as I shewed before; and how the Lord, by little and little, makes the nation of lusts sometimes to flee before them. But by how many littles, in the believer's life-time, this warfare is carried on, who can tell? And how many little recoveries, little revivings, little supplies, little supports, little strengthening meals, little sin-killing antidotes, little soul-restoring cordials; how many of these little sweet things, or sweet little things, the Lord their God allows them, from time to time, that by little and little they may gain the day, is not possible to tell, they are so many. The poor fighting believer may get a thousand of them in a year, and ten thousands of them in his life-time; and, perhaps, more than half a score of them at one communion. Sometimes he gets a little new discovery of the glorious Captain, after he hath been long out of sight, and hiding himself: and a new sight of the glory of the Lord fills the Israelite's heart with new life and courage, and hope of prevailing; for then he sees Christ to be a full magazine of all military provision, and an open magazine to give out armour for the war; and so he becomes strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Indeed, so many little glances of the glory of Christ that the believer gets, so many little victories does he get over the enemy. Again, sometimes he gets a little outpouring of the Spirit of prayer, and of the Spirit of adoption, crying, *ABBA, Father*: O Father, may he say, pity a poor child

harassed with the devil, and captivated by the power of indwelling lusts and corruptions. O! but this gives the believer a little ease and relief, when he can get his heart poured out into the bosom of his best and most glorious friend, complaining of the tyranny of the temper, and the prevailing of the nations. Here is a little victory, when he gets a little grace to put the enemies of his soul into the hands of his Captain, saying, Vengeance, Lord; vengeance be executed upon these enemies, that dishonour thy name, and disturb the peace of my soul. Again, sometimes he gets a little discovery of the enemy's power and policy, and strongest holds; so as, knowing the depths of Satan, and not being ignorant of his devices, the believer is thereby put in case to be upon his guard: and especially he is made to see and observe the old man of sin, that deadly cut-throat, that lies within his bosom; and while he is bemoaning himself with Ephraim, and crying out with Paul, "Oh wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?" The enemy is losing ground. Again, sometimes he gets a little communication of life, after a deadness of spirit that seized him; and a little recovery, after a fit of the falling sickness and backsliding: and the new communication of life and health to the soul, makes him start up to his feet again, renew the assault, and pursue the enemy with more vigour and resolution than ever; like a man that grows stronger than before. Indeed that spiritual sickness of the believer is not unto death, but unto the glory of God, which his being recovered from, makes him fight more courageously, and watch more carefully against the enemy than ever he did. Again, sometimes he gets a little grip of a promise, such as that, "I will subdue thine iniquity; sin shall not have dominion over thee; fear not, for I am with thee; the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly:" and having these promises, he is encouraged to the holy war, namely, to cleanse himself from all the filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. Why, the promise takes hold of his heart, and his heart takes hold of the promise, and therein he sees that the strength of Israel is engaged to carry him through the host of his enemies. And thus, every little grip of a promise by faith is a little victory there needs no more to give a chase to the enemy than a little upstirring of faith on a promising God in Christ, and dependence on him under the conduct of the Spirit. Again, sometimes he gets a little grace to wait on the Lord, while the promise is not yet accom-

plished, until he bring forth judgment unto victory; and, "The Lord is a God of judgment, blessed are all they that wait for him: He that believes shall not make haste," knowing "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong." And hence the believer will find that his strength is to sit still, and quietly to wait for the salvation of the Lord. Again, sometimes he gets a little godly sorrow, that works repentance unto life; gospel-repentance, issuing from a sight of crucified Christ, brings along with it a train of artillery for subduing the enemy; "What carefulness does it work, says the apostle; yea, what clearing of ourselves; yea, what indignation; yea, what fear; yea, what vehement desire; yea, what zeal; yea, what revenge?" 2 Cor. vii. 11. When the heart is melting before the Lord in godly sorrow, O what revenge is it meditating against the nations of lusts and corruptions! O how glad would the believer be then to wash his hands in the blood of all his spiritual enemies! For, at the same time, he gets a little resentment of his own ingratitude, saying, O do I thus requite the Lord, O foolish and unwise? A little holy shame and blushing before the Lord at the thoughts of his own brutishness, saying, "Behold I am vile!" and a little soul debasement, casting indignity upon himself, and giving glory to the Lord, saying, "Truth, Lord, I am a dog," I am a beast, I am a devil: but yet I come to thee to cast out the devil, and get glory to thy name. Further, sometimes he gets a little intimation of peace and pardon, a little sprinkling of the blood of Christ upon the conscience, to purge it from dead works; and a little application of that blood by the hand of the Spirit, showing him that the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin. And this bloody banner of the Lamb being displayed, makes the nations to flee before him; they overcome by the blood of the Lamb. Sometimes they get a little opening of the heart like Lydia, at the hearing of the word; insomuch that their hearts, that were dead within them like a stone, or ever they are aware take life and need fire, with a word of grace, a word of power; and the more the heart opens to let in the king of glory, the more is the enemy shut out. Sometimes they get a little freedom and boldness at the throne of grace, when they come thither to obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need: and when there they get a little strength to wrestle with the Lord for a blessing, saying, "Lord, I will not let thee go, till thou bless me;" they get even power with God himself, as it is said of Jacob, Hos. xii. 4, "He had power over the angel, and prevailed." And when

a man is an overcomer in this sense, to have power with God; much more will he have power over the nations of enemies; "To him that overcometh will I give power over the nations," Rev. ii. 26. Sometimes they get a little anointing of the oil of gladness wherewith Christ is anointed above his fellows; and when the joy of the Lord is their strength; and a little shower of the sanctifying and comforting influences of the Spirit of Christ, for watering their graces and drowning their corruptions. Sometimes they get a little look and glance of the kind and compassionate eye of Christ, even after a denial, as he gave to Peter; and when they find him thus graciously looking to them, and kindly rebuking them, they go out and weep bitterly; and while they are shedding the tears of faith, they are shedding the blood of their enemies. Sometimes they get a little back-look upon an old experience of the Lord's, putting the enemy to flight before them, saying, "I will remember thee from the land of Jordan and of the Hermonites, and from the hill Mizar," or a little back-look upon an old promise that the Lord gave them with power: and when they are helped to plead it, saying, "Lord, remember the word on which thou hast caused me to hope;" the enemy gets a new dash. Sometimes they get a little opening of the door of hope in the valley of Achor, the lively hope of the heavenly Canaan through the resurrection of Christ; and this hope is the sinews of the holy war; for as hope makes not ashamed, so he that hath this hope purifies himself; and, according to the measure of this hope, is the measure of victory. Sometimes they get a little pull of the cord of love, so as to get the love of God shed abroad upon their heart, and then the love of Christ constrains them; the love of the captain draws them to the field, where love is the signal for war; Christ's love, I mean; "His banner over me was love," says the church. His love both leads the van, and fences the rear; and, when the flame of his love to them kindles a flame of love in their hearts to him, then a flaming sword is drawn in the face of the enemy, the banner of love beats down the nations. Again, they sometimes get a little spiritual sense to carry on the spiritual war; for instance, sometimes a little hearing of the voice of Christ, so as to know the powerful sound of it among a thousand voices; and then their heart leaps within them, saying, "It is the voice of my beloved; behold, he cometh, skipping upon the mountains, and leaping upon the hills." Sometimes they get a little sight of God in Christ, and then they can endure hardship, as good soldiers

of Christ; thus they endure, as seeing him that is invisible; counting the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. Sometimes they get a little touch of the hem of Christ's garment by faith; a little touch of his name, his offices, his blood, his righteousness, or whatever hem it be; virtue comes from him to stop the bloody issue, and stop the enemies' motion. Sometimes they get a little taste that the Lord is gracious; and it is like the taste of Jonathan's honeycomb; the more they taste of the honey of free grace, the greater is the slaughter they make among the Philistines. Sometimes they get a little smell of the Rose of Sharon, and the Lily of the valley, and it restores their fainting soul; all Christ's garments are said to smell of aloes, myrrh, and cassia; and the believer may be said to get a smell of the raiment, a smell of the rose, when Christ is precious to him above all things. And when all these spiritual senses are exercised, then they may be said to be exercising their arms, making havock among their enemies, and successfully gaining ground upon them.—In a word, he gives them sometimes a little breathing in the air of spiritual meditation: "My meditation of him shall be sweet;" and when Christ is sweet, sin is bitter, and the battle against it a bitter battle. He gives them here a little, and there a little; and, by little and little, puts out the nations before them.

I have mentioned many particulars; but yet there is no speaking of all the *littles* that believers will experience during the time of their warfare; only, thus you see how, by little and little, their Captain brings them to the field of battle; and how, by little and little, he carries on the conquest in their hand; it is the Lord their God alone that does it; it is he that conquered their enemies; it is he that helps them to chase the conquered, for it is he that bought their armour; he bought their shield, and sword, and breastplate, and helmet; and it is he, that as he bought them with his blood, so he puts on their weapons, and girds them with strength for war. It is he that rubs off the rust of their arms, when at any time they are out of use, by blowing up their graces, and giving them strength to exercise grace; and it is he that carries on the victory to perfection, by giving power to the faint; and to him that hath no might he increaseth strength, from time to time, till in death he end the warfare, by driving out all the nations, so as never to be seen again. "The Lord thy God will put out these nations before thee, by little and little."

VI. The Sixth thing proposed, was, to give the reasons of the doctrine. It might here be asked,

1st, Why the Lord their God, and he alone, does put out the nations before them. The reason is, because he alone can do it, for he is the *Lord*; they would never be put out, if he did it not; and he alone will do it, because he is *their God*; and thus stands engaged by promise and covenant so to do: "The Lord thy God will put out these nations before thee." But,

2dly, Why will he do it so gradually, by little and little? Why does he let enemies without and within live to annoy his people, seeing it is easy for him to destroy them all instantly? Why will he destroy them gradually, by little and little? There is much of infinite wisdom to be observed in this disposure; and therefore I would offer some particulars for representing the beauty of this method.

1. It is by little and little he puts them out, without destroying them at once, that by them he may prove his people, Judges ii. 22. Some Canaanites were still left remaining, to prove whether they will keep the way of the Lord; these Canaanites were enemies to their peace, enemies to their profession, that sought their bodies' overthrow, and their souls' ruin; and they are left to prove whether they will cleave to God's command, or whether they will follow the abominations of the wicked. Observe it then, sirs, we must look to find enemies, outward enemies to the peace of the church, and to the truth of the gospel; inward enemies to the graces and comforts of the soul; and this combat, thus continued in Israel, serves to prove whether our graces be counterfeit or not; for they only are true Israelites, that are still taking up arms against the devil, the world, and the flesh, and all the nations of the Canaanites. By this then it is evidenced who are true Israelites, and who not.

2. It is by little and little that he will put out the nations before Israel, and thus they may be still learning to exercise their arms; I mean, that their graces may be exercised, and particularly their militant graces. There are some graces would be for little or no use, if no Canaanites and corruptions were left; the special use of faith, hope, and patience, is for helping the believer to surmount the difficulties that are now in his way. Many other graces there are, that there would be no use for, if all our enemies and corruptions were destroyed at once; triumphant graces, such as love and joy in their perfection, would make a perfect heaven. But there are

militant graces, that must be exercised also, while we are on earth, and which there are no use for in heaven : for example, if all wants were supplied fully, there would be no need of poverty of spirit ; if all sins were wholly destroyed, there would be no need of godly sorrow ; if death were already swallowed up in victory, there would be no need of the desire of death, nor longing for heaven ; if vision were already come, there would be no need of faith, as it is a militant grace, fighting its way many times through doubts and fears, and want of sight and sense ; if fruition were come, there would be no need of hope ; if all trouble were at an end, there would be no need of patience. But this shield of faith, and helmet of hope, and other parts of the Christian armour, must be exercised ; therefore the nations are not wholly destroyed, but by little and little. Again,

3. It is by little and little they are put out, for the advantage of the militant saints in many respects ; as it is fit they should fight, before they triumph ; and that they war as soldiers on earth, before they reign as kings in heaven, since no man is crowned, except he strive lawfully, 2 Tim. ii. 5. So it tends to enhance heaven, and make them prize and value it more, when it is attained through many difficulties, troubles, and oppositions ; and by this means they come to have sweet conformity to their blessed Captain of salvation, who was made perfect through suffering ; and it is their honour to tread his steps, who endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, and fought his way. This contributes also to the believer's comfort at the issue of every conflict, as a safe haven is very comfortable to a mariner that hath been tost at sea. This method serves not only for the believer's comfort, but for his instruction and correction ; for his instruction, because thus he learns more and more to be humble and dependent ; all boasting is excluded by this means, while he finds his enemies still living, and lively, and strong ; for he looks with a humble eye upon himself, knowing his own utter insufficiency for grappling with these enemies and difficulties, and oppositions in his way ; and with a dependant eye upon Christ, that his grace may be sufficient for him, and his strength perfected in weakness ; thus he glories in his infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon him. And as it is advantageous for their necessary instruction, so for their necessary correction, when they are sparing and remiss in using the means, and improving the advantages for driving out the Canaanites, indulging the flesh and the corruptions

thereof; as it is said of Israel, Numb. xxxiii. 55. If they would not drive out the inhabitants of the lands, then it should come to pass, that those which they let remain should be pricks in their eyes, and thorns in their sides, to vex them. This is one of the severest ways of chastising them, when, to reprove them for one sin and lust, he lets them fall into the hands of another; and yet, in mercy to the true Israel of God, curing their disease in the issue: as he let Peter fall into a threefold pit among his enemies' hands, for curing his self-confidence. One would think the cure was worse than the disease; but our Lord hath sometimes very fearful ways of correcting and curing the souls of his own people

4. It is by little and little that the Lord puts out the nations before them, to commend the excellency of the deliverance we have by Christ. Though there be no condemnation to them that are in Christ, yet for their humiliation God suffers their enemies to live among them, and sin to live in them, and oftentimes to afflict them, that they may know the benefit they have by grace, while they make continual recourse to him for help. It is but little we can take up at once, by reason of our want of capacity; therefore he gives one deliverance at this time, and another deliverance at that time, and a third deliverance at any other time, and so on from time to time, that we may know how much we are obliged to him.

5. He delivers them by little and little, to shew the greatness of his glory, as the Captain of salvation. He shews the glory of his power, in keeping us, notwithstanding the great danger we are continually in, while the enemy is alive within us, without us, and round about us. How greatly does his power appear, in preserving the tossed ark amidst all the waves and billows of adversity that dash against it, and in keeping the burning bush from being consumed? He shews the glory of his triumphant arms, like some famous conquerors in battle, who, though they may, yet will not put all their enemies to the edge of the sword, but will take some captives, and others they will keep alive, against their day of triumph, and then to suffer death, to the greater shame of the conquered, and the greater glory of the conqueror. When Joshua had discomfited these five kings that fought against Gibeon, chap. x., he would not slay them instantly, but shut them up in a cave closely, intending, when the battle was fully ended, to put them to death openly; so our great General and Captain, the Lord Jesus Christ, he strikes through kings in the day of his wrath; he leads captivity captive;

he shuts up some of the kings and commanders of the hellish nations, into the cave of the heart, where they may rage, yet they cannot rule any more ; and at last crowns the solemnity of his triumph by making a shew of them openly, and destroying them utterly.

6. He destroys them by little and little, that he may counterplot the enemies in their own plot, and fight them with their own weapons. It is the plot of hell, by little and little, to destroy sinners ; yea, and to wear out the saints of the most High, Dan. vii. 25, by one temptation on the back of another ; therefore by little and little the Lord will defeat the design of the devil, and take the wise in their own craftiness. The wisdom of heaven can easily counterplot the policy of hell ; yea, thus he fights the enemy, and beats him with his own weapons. The tempter comes sometimes, and bruises the believer's heel, as he did Christ's ; upon which the believer is stirred up to look again to him that was bruised for his iniquity ; and then the devil is sure to get as good as he gave ; for the bruised heel, he gets a broken head. Perhaps, some temptation gives the believer a trip, and down he falls ; but the wise Captain makes use of that very fall, for giving the devil, and his hosts, a greater foil than ever ; for after that fall, the believer goes alone, with Peter, and weeps it out ; and watches, and prays, and fights better than he did before.

7. It is by little and little that the Lord conquers the nations of enemies in the way to the heavenly Canaan, because, by little and little, his people must be made ready for it : " By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, till thou be increased, and inherit the land," Exod. xxiii. 30. As the Canaanites had kept possession till Israel was grown into a people, so there were to be some remains of them till Israel should grow so numerous as to replenish the whole. The land of Canaan had room enough to receive Israel, but Israel was not yet numerous enough to possess Canaan ; even so here, the true Israel of God must be made ready for the heavenly Canaan, before they come there. They are not always in actual readiness, therefore there is some service they have to do for their Captain, some battle they have to fight with the enemy ; they must have some more experience, and learn some more lessons ; therefore their possession of Canaan is delayed till they be ready for it.

8. It is by little and little that the Lord drives out the nations before them, lest the beasts of the field increase upon them ; to allude to that word which immediately follows the text, which we have

also, *Exod. xxiii. 9*, "I will not drive them out before thee in one year, lest the land become desolate, and the beasts of the field multiply against thee." And thus it is with the children of God; if they had not enemies without and within, and oppositions in their way, there are some dangerous beasts that would be ready to increase upon them. For instance, there is a beast they call pride, that might grow upon you, if you had no enemies to fight with; and while yet you are not ready for heaven, and sanctification is incomplete. Hence a thorn in the flesh was given to Paul, that he might not be exalted above measure. Is not the thorn in the flesh well ordered, that prevents confidence in the flesh? There is a beast, they call security, might grow upon you; but now enemies are on all hands of you, to prevent your falling asleep, and to keep you both watching and waking, and constantly on your guard. There is a beast they call presumption, that might grow upon you, and make you think you were able to go forward to heaven upon your own legs, and in your own strength, if you found no such enemy in the way. There is another beast, they call worldly-mindedness, that might grow upon you; if you got no adversaries and adversities to vex you, and wean you from the world, you would be in danger of saying, *It is good to be here*; but now the wars and battles in your way to heaven, make you say with your heart, O it is better to be there. There is a beast, a filthy brute-beast, that they call sensuality, that might grow upon you, believer, that might make you lukewarm and formal in all your duties, as well as carnal, and light, and vain in the intervals of duties; but the sight of your spiritual enemies on the field will make you see a need to be spiritual, zealous, earnest, and fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. There is also a filthy dumb beast, that they call forgetfulness, that would certainly grow upon your hand, and be very dangerous to your soul and spiritual welfare, if your enemies were all destroyed; therefore God says, *Psalm lix. 11*, "Slay them not, lest my people forget." If the execution were quick and hasty, the impressions of it would not be deep and durable. Swift destructions startle men for the present, but they are soon forgotten; therefore, when we think that God's judgments upon the nations of our spiritual enemies come on but very slowly, we must conclude that God hath wise and holy ends in that gradual procedure, "Slay them not, lest my people forget." They would forget to pray, if they had not enemies to pray against; they would forget to praise, if they had not still

new deliverances to praise him for ; they would forget to pity these that are afflicted and tossed with tempests like themselves ; they would forget their Captain, and their duty of living by faith and dependence on him ; they would forget to take with their proper name, saying, " Truth, Lord, I am a dog ;" they would forget to mourn for sin, and repent ; they would forget their own weakness, and their deliverer's power ; and, like Jeshurun, in prosperity, would wax fat, and forget God that made them, and lightly esteem the rock of their salvation ; they would forget to sing the song of Moses and the Lamb, at the side of the Red-sea of the Lamb's blood, where their enemies are always drowned ; even to sing, saying, " The Lord hath triumphed gloriously, the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea ; the Lord is a man of war, the Lord is his name ;" Exod. xv. 1, &c. ; they would forget to speak of the wonders of his mercy from time to time, and to give him the glory due unto his name ; they would forget to employ him upon every new attack of the enemy, saying, " Lord, thou hast delivered ; and in thee we trust that thou wilt deliver." Better the enemy live and rage, and be not utterly destroyed, than that Christ want employment at your hand, and get not the glory of executing his saving office in your time of need. You would hardly think that so much advantage should accrue to the Israel of God by the nations of their enemies not being destroyed at once, but by little and little. You see some of the filthy beasts that would increase upon you, if the Lord did not spare some of your spiritual enemies, devils, and lusts ; which, though they may be called all beasts together, yet herein shines infinite wisdom in sparing one beast to destroy another ; he may let carnality live in a believer sometimes, to kill his pride ; much ignorance remain, to kill his self-wisdom ; much wandering in, and indisposition for duty, to kill his self-righteousness.

Now, as it is with believers in particular, so with the church in general ; why does God suffer tyrants and atheists, and hypocrites, and heretics, to live among them, and vex them, but for reaching many, if not all, of these ends that I have been naming. When the church was in adversity under the primitive ten persecutions, then religion flourished : the life of the tyrants tended to the life of religion in the persecuted church ; but when the Roman emperors became Christian, and friendly to the church, then pride and security crept in with their prosperous state : the beasts of the field increased so much, that, by degrees, a blasphemous beast assumed the very

name and office of being the head of the church, even a **beast with seven heads and ten horns**, mentioned, Rev. xiii. 1; I mean the **Roman Antichrist**. And then, why hath a nation of heretics, with erroneous principles and doctrines, been spared and continued in the church from time to time, but that the friends of truth might have occasion to clear and vindicate it, and to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints? "There must be heresies," says the apostle, "that they that are approved may be made manifest;" there must be errors, that truth may be more clearly discovered and maintained. Some precious truths had never been set into such a clear light, if opposite errors had not been vented for darkening the same. Thus our Covenant-obligations in Scotland are denied by some, that their obligation may be the more asserted by others; thus also, there is an ungodly nation left alive, that the godly may be distinguished from them, and exercised the more unto godliness; and a hypocritical nation, that true Israelites, that are so indeed, may try themselves, and become the more sincere and upright.

VII. The Application now remains to be spoken to. Is it so, that as the true Israel of God have nations in their way to the possession of the heavenly Canaan, so the Lord their God will conquer these nations by little and little?

1st, It may be applied in a word of delhortation and caution in these four particulars.

1. Beware of thinking that you may safely neglect the means, because this work of putting out the nations belongs wholly to the Lord. This were a lazy Antinomian conclusion, drawn from such promises, as rather bear the greatest encouragement in the world to make a diligent use of the means. If it be a good reason of working out our salvation with fear and trembling, that the Lord works in us both to will and to do, which is the apostle's argument, Phil. ii. 12, 13, then it is as good a reason for warring, and using all the means necessary for accomplishing this spiritual warfare, that it is the Lord our God that conquers the enemy for us by little and little. Yea, this is such a necessary consideration, that, take away this argument, and there remains no encouragement to use the means at all; and hence it is only believers that are capable of this spiritual warfare; and only believers in Christ that are capable of the right and diligent use of the means that relate thereunto; for they cannot be used duly but in the faith of this encouragement, "The Lord thy God will go before you, to conquer

the nations of enemies in your way. Unbelievers, indeed, ought to use the means, because the Lord commands the use thereof; and therefore, for the Lord's sake, neglect no commanded duty and ordinance wherein the Lord uses to be found. But yet I say again, never will any soul use the means aright, and acceptably till something of the real true faith of this encouragement excite him; therefore, O believer, neglect not to read, and hear, and pray, and meditate, and use all commanded duties and ordinances; for there you must expect to meet with your Captain, that hath engaged to put out the nations before thee.

2. Before of thinking that the strength of the warfare lies upon you, because you are obliged to use the means; and that it is using the means that will do the business. As the former is a lazy, so this is a legal thought, and as pernicious and destructive as the other; for, if you lean upon the means, and think that your reading, praying, hearing, and the like, will drive out the nations, bring down the body of death, or subdue one corruption, that were a beating your enemies with a sword of straw; such a fleshly weapon will never draw blood of your spiritual enemies; and, instead of getting victory over your sins by such legal weapons, you are brought under greater bondage, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse;" and to be under the law is to be under the dominion of sin; for, "The strength of sin is the law." This legal method then were to be opening a fore-door to let out the enemy, and, at the same time, opening a back-door to let them in, and that with more advantage against you than ever. As it is a dangerous extreme to neglect means, upon pretext that Christ must do all, since his doing all is the greatest encouragement thereunto; so it is as dangerous on the other hand to use means, upon a notion that you must do all, or that the weight of the warfare depends upon you and your duties; for your entertaining that notion, is the greatest discouragement in the world to the use of the means, and gives your enemies the greatest advantage against you, even in that wherein you think to defeat them.

3. Beware of thinking that you may lawfully enter into a league with any of your enemies, because they are not to be destroyed but by little and little. See what God says to Israel, with respect to the Canaanites, verse 2 of this chapter where the text lies, and elsewhere; "Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy to them." While we are showing that sanctification and mortifica-

tion is not perfected in the saints while they are here, and that the nations of lusts even in their heart, are not all to be destroyed in this world ; some carnal heart may be ready to think, My blessing on the minister, who, by this doctrine, makes me think I may get to heaven though my lusts be not all destroyed, and though I indulge myself in some of the pleasures of the flesh : and I hope I may have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my heart, adding drunkenness to thirst, and one sin to another. Say you so, man, woman ? I must tell you that your speech bewrays you, that you are not an Israelite bound for the heavenly Canaan, for cursed is that peace that is consistent with a standing league and covenant, with any lust whatsoever. Such are in covenant with death, and at agreement with hell ; and, “ There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.” The children of God dare not maintain a league with any lust, nor will they show mercy on their most darling lusts ; nay, as it is said of some, that their tender mercies are cruelty ; so I may say of the believer in this case, that his most tender mercy toward his most beloved lust is cruelty ; when he acts like himself, he is so cruel-hearted he would cut the throat of it if he could, and even of all his lusts.

4. Beware of thinking that believers have no advantage against the nations of their enemies, sins and lusts, more than others, because they are not utterly destroyed ; nor let believers themselves think that because their deliverance is not effected presently, therefore it will never be effected : for the Lord their God is upon the destroying work, only he will take his own time and his own way to his own work, and his time and way both is the best : The Lord thy God will do it by little and little. Hence a believer may be getting advantage, and gaining ground upon corruptions and lusts, even when he feels them stirring and raging most violently : it may be they have got a dead stroke for all that ; as a beast that hath got a death’s blow, may break off from those that are holding it, and turn more mad than ever, and yet will die at length of the same blow. The devil may rage most when he knows that his time is short, and that he will be soon cast out, and bruised under feet. Corruption is not always strongest when its motions are most felt ; it may be strongest, when the strength of it is not seen.

Use 2. The second use may be for Information. Many might be here inferred ; as,

1. Hence we may see the privilege even of a visible church,

whom the Lord hath not utterly forsaken, though filled with sin, as it is said, Jer. li. 5. As they have the Lord for their God, in the sense that I explained before, and as Israel here was privileged ; so, by virtue of that relation to God as their God, they may have manifold mercies in common among them, as a mixed visible church, beyond the rest of the world ; the Lord may appear for them against the heathen nations that are about them, and that are among them ; and he may do great things for them, by virtue of that relation that he stands in to them as their God, and they his professing people. As this text relates to Israel of old literally, it represents a privilege common to all that people, namely, the Lord's driving out the nations of the Canaanites before them ; and may we not say, The Lord hath in like manner dealt with us, particularly in the church of Scotland, several times ? As the Lord planted a church here very early, not many years after Christ's ascension ; so by little and little he drove out the nations before us : when our own forefathers were a race of blind Pagans here, the Lord destroyed that idolatry, and gradually enlarged his church till, in process of time, Popery entering in, we were overrun with Antichristian nations. But lo ! when the time to favour Zion was come : I mean, the time of the Reformation from Popery, the Lord was pleased to drive out these other nations before us by little and little, and gradually carried on the Reformation work, and that by the method of solemn covenanting with him ; and this covenanting work was carried on by little and little, again and again, till the whole nation came under solemn obligations this way. As Israel avouched the Lord to be their God by solemn covenants, that were binding and obligatory upon them and their posterity after them ; so, in this duty of vowing to the Lord, which is a moral duty, and consequently incumbent on the church of God under the new, as well as old dispensation, and not like the types and shadows that were to be done away : in this moral duty, I say we, in our forefathers, followed the example of the church of God in scripture, by entering into solemn covenant with him : which work the Lord, in many signal ways, countenanced with his presence, in the remarkable effusion and outpouring of the Spirit to the conversion of multitudes. It is the glory of a church, when God avouches them for his people, by the external dispensation of the covenant of grace ; and it is also the glory of a church when they avouch God to be their God, in a most solemn covenant of duty and service. This was a part of Scotland's glory, attended

with internal displays of the power and glory of God in the sanctuary. To prove the obligation of these covenants upon posterity to all generations, were, I suppose, needless in this auditory; neither would time allow me to insist here; but I think, to disparage these covenants, and to deny the obligation thereof, is to cast dung upon our glory, and to tread our honour in the dust; yea, I think it worse than the breaking, burning, and burying of them; for a broken covenant may be mended again; a burnt covenant may come forth out of the furnace again; yea, a buried covenant may rise again, when God raises up a reformation spirit: but to bespatter the reputation of them, and impugn the obligation of them, is, I think, to render them odious to all generations, instead of binding upon them. But now, as our Reformation was carried on by little and little; so, when it is under a decay in many respects, let us look to the Lord our God, that by little and little it may be revived again in the Lord's own time and way.

2. As we see hence the privileges of a visible church, so the special and peculiar privilege of the true Israel of God, the church spiritual and invisible, though militant on earth: the Lord their God will cast out the nations before them in a spiritual sense, and that by little and little. May it not be said of them, as it is, Deut. xxxiii. 29, "Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, who is the shield of thy help, and the sword of thine excellency?" And verse 27, "The eternal God is thy refuge, underneath are his everlasting arms: he shall thrust out the enemy before thee, and shall say, Destroy them." What though all the nations of the world were against them, outward and inward; the nations of earth and hell both? Yet he who is the King of nations is for them; and if God be for them, who can be against them? He can destroy nations for their sake; "I gave Egypt for thy ransom; Ethiopia and Seba for thee." The nations may fight, but cannot prevail; nay, the gates of hell can never prevail against them. Why? They have the Lord for their God; and their God is their guard. And as the common relation that God stands in to a mixed visible church, entitles them to many privileges while that relation stands; so the special relation that the true Israel of God stand in to him, as their God in Christ, by a spiritual, indissoluble union, intitles them to all spiritual blessings and deliverances. However difficult and dangerous their way to the heavenly Canaan is, by reason of the numerous opposing nations, which they can never destroy of

themselves ; yet their God and Captain leads the van, and drives out the nations before them.

3. See here the miserable case of the nations that know not God, and are enemies to the people of God. Why, like the cursed Canaanites, they are devoted to destruction ; they vex themselves in vain, when they fight against the Lord and his anointed. The Lord God of Israel is to drive them out ; yea, he will drive them to hell, that continue in their enmity against God and his people : “ The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.” Yea, the greatest misery of all the wicked, that remain in a Christless state, lies in this, though they do not see it to be their misery, namely, that they are under the power of all the nations of hell, under the power of the devil and their lusts, and in league with the nations that oppose the true Israel of God, in their way to the heavenly Canaan.

4. Hence we may see the reason of the multiplied experiences of the believer, both sad and sweet ; because the nations are cast out before him by little and little, and not utterly destroyed while he is here. Hence many sad tales he hath to tell of the nations compassing him about ; iniquities prevailing against him ; and lusts again and again, and a thousand times, stirring, and working, and warring, and overthrowing him, and treading upon him. And, on the other hand, notwithstanding all this, he hath many sweet tidings to narrate of the Lord's humbling and healing, convincing and converting him : many convictions, many conversions, does he get from time to time ; and the next conviction more deep than the former, and the next conversion more sweet than the former ; and one conversion on the back of another, because of one defection on the back of another, through the power of the nations of hell within and without him. As a dying saint that was asked, when he was converted ? said, “ He had been converted a hundred times :” so, in this sense, it is possible some believers, of long standing, may be converted a hundred times, and a hundred too. That saints may need conversion, is plain from what Christ said to Peter, who was a saint, “ When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.” Yea, every new conversion of the believer, may be more remarkable than another, while the Lord is thus, by little and little, destroying the enemy ; because every touch of the nation's power and policy, in drawing him aside from the Lord, and the recurring power of corruption, is so horrible and monstrous to him, that he thinks with

himself, Oh! will ever the Lord return again to the like of me? And, when the Lord returns, he wonders more than ever.

5. Hence we may see, why there is no justification by the deeds of the law, nor mortification by the means of the law; no justification by legal works, nor sanctification and mortification by legal means. How does this follow, say you? Indeed it is plain there can be no justification by the deeds of the law; for the best believer on earth must own, that at best he hath two nations in his womb, and the company of two armies; an army of lusts, and an army of graces; the flesh lusting against the Spirit, as well as the Spirit against the flesh: and when he finds nations of lusts and corruptions in his womb, in his heart, can he expect to be justified by the deeds of the law, by a legal righteousness of his own? No, he is made content to be obliged to grace, free grace, through the righteousness of Christ, for justification. And as there is no justification by legal works, so there is no mortification by legal means; they never saw the power of corruption, that are not convinced of this, that nothing in the world but the power of God can destroy it; "The Lord thy God will put out these nations before thee, by little and little." O sirs, pity ignorant Papists, that think their whipping, and scourging, and beating themselves, will do it; pity ignorant professors, that think their fasting, and praying, and legal endeavours, will do it. It is true, our Lord speaks of some devils that go not out but by fasting and prayer: not that these means of themselves do it; nay, let our Lord explain his own word; "The Lord thy God will put out these nations;" he will subdue your iniquities; such things go not forth but by fasting and prayer; that is, by Christ Jesus, sought and found in these means. Neglect not the means then; but, for the Lord's sake, remember, that if you go forth against lusts in the strength of means, or only with a verbal mention of the strength of Christ, without ever having taken on with this glorious Captain, or being joined to him in order to draw strength from him, your Leviathan lusts will but laugh at the shaking of your spear. Therefore,

6. Hence we may see where the believer's strength lies. You heard before where the strength of the enemy lies; but now, Where lies the strength of the Israel of God? Even in the GOD of Israel, the KING of Israel: "The Lord thy God will put out these nations before thee." Psal. lxxiii. 25, "My flesh and heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." My

outward advantages, inward vigour, and all fail me ; but my God will not fail me. More particularly, Israel's strength lies in God, as manifesting himself in Christ. There are two things in Christ that strength lies in, for the believer's safety and deliverance from the power of sin, and victory over the nations of lusts and devils ; One is the blood of Christ : we overcome by the blood of the Lamb. The death of Christ was the death of sin, for he nailed sin to the cross, and destroyed the devil's power. Another is the Spirit of Christ, who being in the believer, greater is he that is in them, than he that is in the world : and the Spirit mortifies sin. Here lies the believer's great strength, for actual mortification of sin, and victory over it, " If ye through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live," Rom. viii. 13. And the Spirit carries on this work,

(1.) By the application of the death of Christ to the soul : for, it is the virtue flowing forth from the death of Christ, that destroys sin ; and the Spirit applies that virtue, and implants the soul into Christ, that being ingrafted in him, and united to him, the sin-killing, soul-quickening virtue of Christ may flow in to the believer.

(2.) By the implantation of grace, and of grace contrary to corruption : in opposition to unbelief, he implants faith : in opposition to enmity, he implants love : in opposition to slavish fear, he implants fortitude and spiritual courage.

(3.) By the excitation of the grace he hath implanted : which, though it be active in itself, yet, by reason of our indisposition, needs to be whetted and actuated ; when the Spirit lets grace alone, sin revives, and gathers strength.

(4.) By drawing forth faith, especially to a lively exercise : and then this is the victory whereby we overcome the world, even our faith ; while the Spirit of faith draws forth the grace of faith : for faith carries up the soul to him in whom strength lies ; and then says, " I can do all things through Christ strengthening me." And faith employs the strength of Christ against the strength of the enemy, and so triumphs in its noble General, being strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Faith begets in the soul an antipathy against all sins and lusts, purifying the heart, and setting it directly against sin. Tell a carnal heart, sin lies at the door ; why, let it come in, it is a friend of mine ; but, acquaint a believer, exercising faith, that there is sin in such a thing. Oh ! it is an abomination. Faith discovers the danger the soul is in by the na-

tions of lusts that encompass it, and excites all the faculties of the soul to rise up against it, saying, "Rise, Samson, for the Philistines are upon thee," canst thou sleep in the midst of troops and armies of lusts? And so it rouses the soul to sigh, and groan, and pant, and pray, and cry, and wrestle; and so to overcome, under the standard of the glorious Captain.

Use 3. The third Use is for Examination. Hence we may see matter for trying our state by: What is the mark of a candidate for heaven, a traveller to Canaan? Why, "The Lord his God is driving out the nations before him, by little and little." Is the battle with the nations commenced, and fairly begun? And, is the Lord gradually carrying it on?

QUEST. How shall I know if the war is commenced, and progressively going forward?

ANSW. For a solution of this inquiry, you may take a mark or two out of the bosom of the text.

1. Have you got a view of the nations, that are in your way? I mean, a view and discovery of your corruption, your original and actual sin, and your natural bondage and slavery by reason thereof? Have you seen nations of lusts within you? And have you seen them to be such powerful nations, that nothing but the power of omnipotence can drive out? And, consequently, have you seen your own utter impotency to drive them out of yourself? Have you seen them to be such politic nations, and so fraudulent, that nothing but the infinite wisdom of God could counteract this policy of hell; knowing your heart to be deceitful above all things, as well as desperately wicked? Have you seen them to be such spiritual nations, spiritual wickednesses in high places, that no carnal weapon could avail in this warfare, but only such spiritual weapons as are mighty, through God, to the pulling down of the strong holds? Have you seen them to be such numerous nations, that your name is LEGION; a legion of lusts, a legion of devils, that nothing but a word from Jesus can put out? Now, this mark excludes all that never saw themselves, and their own natural bondage and thralldom; they are yet serving the nations, which they ought to be driving out. They who know the plagues of their own heart, and have experienced the power of these nations in their way, look more like the travellers to Canaan. But take this mark in conjunction with what follows.

2. Have you got a discovery of a God in Christ, the glorious

Captain of salvation, in whom alone your help and salvation lies, and who alone can put out these nations before you? Hath the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ been given to you, so as to reveal Christ in you, and so as you have sometime or other got Christ in you the hope of glory, Christ in you the hope of victory? Have you seen Christ, as a victorious Conqueror, triumphing over all the nations of spiritual enemies, "Travelling in the greatness of his strength, treading the wine-press alone, when of the people there was none with him, staining all his raiment with the blood of the enemy, and trampling them in his fury;" as this is elegantly represented, Isa. lxiii. 1, 2, 3. Have you seen help laid upon One that is mighty, One whose name is Jesus and Jehovah both? Jehovah is his name, in the first word of our text; and his name is called Jesus because he saves his people from their sins. As many discoveries as you have got of the glory of Christ as the Captain of salvation, so many marks of victory begun have you. But this mark excludes all that never get their eyes opened to see any form or comeliness in Christ, or any beauty, wherefore they should desire him; and hence the beauty and glory of a present world bulks more in their eyes.

3. Hath the discovery of the glory of the Conqueror loosed your heart from all other lords and lovers, and joined your heart unto him as the Lord your God, the Lord your Captain, the Lord your righteousness, the Lord your strength, the Lord your salvation? "The Lord thy God will put out the nations before thee." Now, the heart-drawing discovery of Christ, uniting the soul to him, is a great matter; for thus the believer is united to Christ by faith, and the relation constitute, so as he is the Lord thy God, thy Head. Indeed a saving discovery of God in Christ, natively brings this along with it: if you see not God in Christ, you cannot see him to be thy God, but rather thy enemy; but to see him in Christ, is to see him thy God, and thy friend: for they that see him in Christ, they see him in whom he is well-pleased; and to see God well-pleased in him, is to see God as thy God. This appropriation, then, is imported in the very nature of faith, according to the measure of it; and the ground of this believing appropriation, is the word of promise, *I will be thy God*; which is the great fundamental promise; and the proper echo of faith is AMEN; I will take it on thy word, that thou wilt be my God, Zech. xiii. 9, "I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God." There the Spirit

of God declares what shall be the language of faith, when it acts like faith indeed, "The Lord is my God." But, say you, can every believer say, "The Lord is my God?" My friends, I never thought that every believer could say so; nor that any believer in the world could always so: but as every believer is not always believing; so I speak of what faith says when it is acting, and what the believer says when he is believing, not when he is doubting and misbelieving. Neither do I think that every act of faith is a saying expressly, *He is my God*; but every appropriating act of faith says this upon the matter, and every heart-engaging view of a God in Christ hath a *my God* wrapt up in the bosom of it, whether it dare say it expressly or not; for, in Christ, they see him to be a well-pleased God, and a friend. You know, saving faith is thy "receiving and resting on Christ for salvation, as he is offered *to thee*, to thee in the gospel-promise;" and this receiving is no other thing than believing John i. 12; and so it is taking him on his word for salvation *to thee*, as a Captain *to thee*. Take away this particular application, and it is no faith at all, and constitutes no union to him, no relation to him as *the Lord thy God*, I ask then, if the discovery of the glory of Christ hath joined your heart to him as the glorious Captain of salvation, so as you have been taken on with him? Then thou art entitled to the complete victory; "The Lord thy God will put out these nations before thee." This mark excludes all these that never closed with Christ, by a peculiar believing, but satisfy themselves with a general faith, and may be called but general believers; they have no particular words on which they have been caused to hope, and no particular faith applying Christ to themselves. Such seem not yet to have entered the field of battle, nor closed with the Captain.

4. Hath the Lord begun to put out these nations before you? Hath he begun to exert his power, by subduing your lusts? Did you never know the day wherein Satan fell like lightning, as it were, from heaven; when the strong man and his goods, that were at ease, were cast out of his habitation? How was it with you in the day of believing, in the day when the Lord your God manifested himself, and appeared as a mighty Conqueror to you? Got you not all your lusts and corruptions, as it were, drowned in the blood of the Lamb, so as you thought you should never see them again? You know, believer, that was a false thought, but yet it was a glad

thought to you, to think ye would never be under the feet of your corruptions again, and you would never dishonor the Lord as you had done, however some time or other you have found the Lord pulling down the strongholds of unbelief, atheism, and enmity, and giving you the necks of your enemies. This looks like a good work begun, a battle begun, and a breach made upon the rule and dominion of sin. This mark excludes all these, in whom sin still reigns, and in whom the glorious Captain hath never so much as begun to give a blow to the enemy.

5. If you be a soldier on your march to the heavenly Canaan, then I ask you, If you be of any considerable standing in the Lord's way? Have you not had many a bloody battle with the nations, and many a fearful onset by the enemy, attacking you with main force, and may be taking you captive; yea, and bringing you into captivity to the law of sin that is in your members? Rom. vii. 23. Have you not found your enemies returning with such power and prevalency, that you was ready to think that you had lost all ground that ever you had got, and lost all the victories that ever you had gained, the Canaanites prevailing against you? "Iniquities prevail against me," says David. You would think this an odd mark; for, says the believer, it is the prevalency of sin that makes me fear I am not a true Israelite bound for Canaan. But stay a little till I further clear it. This mark excludes all these, in whom sin and lusts have not the power of prevalency only, but the power of dominion.

QUEST. What is the difference between the power of prevalency and the power of dominion?

ANSW. The power of dominion is a regal power; there sin is king: but the power of prevalency is a tyrannical power; there it is only a tyrant, whose authority is rejected. The power of dominion is a monarchical power, where sin rules alone; but the power of prevalency only is where another power is also; there are two armies on the field. The power of dominion is uncontrolable, the man sins without control; but the power of prevalency is a resisted power, where it meets with resistance unto blood. The power of dominion is an absolute power; but power of prevalency is a limited one, with respect to some particulars only. The power of dominion is a habitual power; but the power of prevalency is occasional only. And, in a word, the power of dominion is an entire power; but the

power of prevalency is a broken power, the head of it is broken, and the back of it is broken, though it prevail. Now, to find the prevalency of the enemy is not inconsistent with the believer's militant state, which supposes manifold inroads and incursions of the Canaanites upon him. And, indeed, they are capable not to find the joy of the victory, who never feel the strength of the battle; sin reigns in the wicked, and hath too peaceable dominion with them; iniquity cannot be said to prevail against them, but rather it prevails with them; it goes well enough with them, before and after their sinning. But, Oh! says David and the believer, "Iniquity prevails against me;" it is against my heart, against my will, against my desire, against my design, against my resolution, against my hope, against my faith, against my tears, against my prayers.

6. If you be soldiers on your march to the heavenly Canaan, then I would ask, Whether or not you find the power of the glorious Captain as necessary for your deliverance, upon every new assault of the enemy, as ever you found it before? For true Israelites, fighting their way to heaven, find more and more evidences of their own utter insufficiency, and more and more need of grace's all-sufficiency. Oh! the nations are as strong as ever, and the need of powerful succours and auxiliaries from heaven as great as ever. This is plain also from the text; it is the *Lord thy God* that begins the battle; and the *Lord thy God* that carries on the extirpation of the Canaanites, Do you find, then, as much need of his power to excite grace, as to work it at first; as much need of his fencing the rear, as of his leading the van? This mark excludes all these that have a power in their own hand, and never came out of themselves, both for righteousness and strength, into the Lord Jesus Christ: but it is encouraging to those who are saying, in the exercise of faith, "I will go in the strength of the Lord, making mention of his righteousness, and his only." O to be clothed with his righteousness, and girded with his strength, is the great desire of all true Israelites!

7. If you be soldiers on march to the heavenly Canaan, you may try it by this, you will not only be perfectly at a point in this matter, that the battle is the Lord's, and that without him you cannot give one fair stroke to the enemy; but also you will find to your experience, that, by little and little the conquest is carried on, and the Canaanites driven out; and that help and assistance comes from heaven by degrees, as the sovereign General is pleased to

order : though you get not all the great things you would be at, yet by little things you are carried through. Can you not say, believer, that such a place was a little Bochim, were you got leave to weep out your heart before the Lord, because of the prevalency of sin ; and such a place was a little Bethel, a house of God, where you had such a measure of divine presence, as strengthened you against the enemy ; such another place was a little Peniel, where you saw God face to face, as it were, and a sight of the Captain of salvation gave the nations of hell a dash ? And though, in the interval, your enemies and lusts, rise up again in fury, and rage against you, like to devour your soul, to devour your graces, to devour your comforts, and to devour your peace ; yet there comes another little recruit from heaven, that gives you a new occasion to set up an Ebenezer, saying, " Hitherto the Lord hath helped ;" and to sing with the church, Ps. cxxix. 1, 2, " Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say : many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, yet have they not prevailed against me." Many a time have these Canaanites vexed me, and foiled me, yet they have not prevailed to my utter overthrow ; for still, when I was brought to any extremity, the Lord was a little sanctuary to me, and communicated his grace by little and little to me, in a suitability to my need ; allowing me here a little crumb of comfort, when I was like to faint in battle : and there a little crumb of courage, when I was like to yield : and at another time a little crumb of wonderful deliverance out of the hands of mine enemies, after I was led captive by them. Why, what is the meaning of all this ? It is the Lord thy God driving out these nations before thee by little and little.

Use 4. The fourth and last use, shall be in a short address to two sorts of persons here. 1. To these that are at peace with the nations that stand betwixt them and the possession of the heavenly Canaan, and so are at war with heaven. 2. To these that are making war with the nations, and before whom the Lord hath begun to drive out the nations by little and little.

1st, To you that are at peace with the nations of hell, at peace with the devil, at peace with your lusts ; I would speak a word to you. 1. By way of conviction, 2. By way of counsel.

1. For your conviction. Is it not evident that the most part are at peace with hell, being ignorant of the sin mortifying principles of the gospel, being slights of the means of conversion, living

in security under all the calls of heaven by the word and the rod, and living in enmity against the power of godliness, indulging themselves in many known sins, and knowing no restraint from sinning, taken from its nature, but from its consequents only. Are there not many here, that have nations of lusts swarming in their heart, yet were never convinced of, or made to know the plagues of their own heart? Some will say they have a good heart to God, even though their mouth be filled either with cursing, lying, swearing, and slan lering; or else with nothing but vain, frothy, carnal, worldly discourse. What! shall we think you have a clean heart, when you have such foul mouth? Does not Christ say, "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh?" When a man sees abundance of smoke coming out at the top of the chimney, he may say, for certain, that it is a sign of much fire in the hearth; so, when there is nothing but vain, worldly words in the mouth; we may say, there is much vanity and corruption in the heart. Carnal lips that are not shaped for any spiritual discourse, except in hypocrisy and deceit, discover a carnal heart. Oh! how many here are willing slaves to the nations, the Canaanites, the lusts of the flesh! Of all slaves, they are in the worst ease that are sold; of these that are sold, they are in the worst ease that are put in prison, of these that are in prison, they are in the worst ease that are bound and chained in prison; yet such slaves to sin and lusts are all here by nature shut up in close prison, bound and chained there; shut up under unbelief; and unbelief is such a cruel jailor, that, while you are shut up under it, it will not so much as suffer you to lift up your head, or to look up to heaven for deliverance. Oh! how miserable is this thralldom that you are under! For these nations that rule in you, and over you, and under which you are bearing arms against the God of heaven, will, at last, destroy you for ever, if they be not destroyed in time; if they be not put out of your heart, they will keep you out of heaven; yea, if they be not driven out of your heart, they will drive you to hell. If that legion of lusts, that you are in league with, be not cast out of your heart, by the power of that glorious Captain of salvation, that cast out a legion of devils out of one man; then you must lay your account with it, that, like the swine possessed of the devil, you will be driven down to the sea of God's everlasting wrath, and drowned in perdition. But then,

2. I would offer you a word of counsel. O will you break league with these cursed Canaanites, and come and take on with

our glorious Captain of salvation, that can drive them out before you? O sinner! man, woman: young and old; you that have been a slave to the devil all your days, a slave to the numerous nations of lusts, that, as sure as God lives, will keep you out of heaven, and drive you to hell, if they be not driven out; will you come and take on with our glorious Lord Jesus, whose office and work, as a Redeemer, is to force out the nations before you? Our Captain-general hath sent us, as officers under him, to cry in the public meetings and assemblies of this sort, saying, "Whosoever will let him come," and take on to be a soldier under the King of kings, and Lord of lords, against the king of hell and the nations of lusts, that would keep you out of heaven: and as we are warranted to declare them cursed with bitter curses, that will not join in this war, according to what is said of Meroz, Judges v. 23, "Curse ye Meroz; curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty:" So we are warranted to declare to sinners, that there are here the greatest encouragements that ever were offered to soldiers, to excite you to take on with him. Why, he offers you money to bear all your charges; "I counsel you to buy of me gold, tried gold:" he offers to take off your filthy garments, and to clothe you with change of raiment, the King's livery; yea, he offers you a coat of mail, that will defend you against the shot of death, and the shot devils; the robe of his own righteousness, a garment of salvation: he offers you further, that, if you be wounded in the war, he will give you a balm to heal your wound, the balm of his own blood: yea, if you take on with him, he offers to do all your works in you and for you: yea, to fight all your battles, to drive out all the nations before you, and then to crown you as a conqueror; yea, and more than a conqueror, even though you have done nothing of yourself. He offers to give you all the armour you need for the war: do you need the sword, the breast-plate, the helmet, the shield, mentioned, Eph. vi. He himself is the great magazine of all the military provision; and therefore, if you take on with him, you shall want for nothing that is necessary for carrying on the war to a complete victory. O come and take on with him for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; take on with him for armour, and strength and victory, and all.

But, say you, what mean you by taking on with him? I know

not how to take on with him. Why, sirs, to take on with him is to believe in him. But what am I to believe, say you, that I may take on with him ?

(1.) You are to believe, that he is speaking to you, and inviting you to take on with him ; even you, man, you, woman. Let none here say that there was not a word spoken to them at Carnock : nay, I take you all to witness, that have ears to hear, that the Lord is, by the poor mortal that is here preaching, speaking to every one of you, and saying, "To you, O man, do I call, and my voice is to the sons of men ;" and he is entreating you to take on with him. Believe that he is speaking to you, and that this gospel-offer is to you.

(2.) You are to believe that you cannot believe. This were one good step towards faith, to believe that you are an unbeliever, and shut up in unbelief as in a prison, which none can open but the Captain of salvation. And therefore,

(3.) You are to believe in him for grace to believe in him, or to come to him for grace to come to him, and to take on with him for faith, as well as for other things, because he alone is the Author of faith. He never called any to bear the expense of one jot, from the beginning to the end of the war, out of their own pocket ; and much less the expense of this great thing we call believing, which is the effect of the exceeding greatness of his almighty power. And then, having believed these things,

(4.) You are to believe his word, that he will not fail you in a jot of what he is offering to you. Take his word for it that he will do as he hath said unto you ; and trust him that speaks to you by us. To take on with him by faith, is to take his word, who is truth itself, for your security ; and lay the stress of the whole war upon him, saying, Lord, art thou calling me, even me, that have been a slave to the devil and nations of lusts ? Art thou calling me to take on with thee ? Content, Lord ; "Come thou and reign over us," as the trees said, in Jotham's parable, Judges ix. 10. Come thou and reign over me, and be thou my glorious Captain, to fight for me, and to slay all the nation of lusts in my heart. And if you, indeed, take on with him in this manner, he will do as he hath said ; he will put out the nations before you by little and little. May the Lord back his call with power.

2dly, To you that are believers, on the field of battle, making war with the nations, the spiritual Canaanites ; and before whom the Lord hath begun to drive them out by little and little ; I should offer you, 1. A word of Comfort. 2. Of Counsel.

[1.] For Comfort. O believer, though the nations be greater and mightier than you, yet the Lord hath engaged to drive them out; there is a power in Christ, the believer's Head and Husband, that will, in process of time, bring every power contrary to him in subjection; it is in Christ that believers shall be more than conquerors. It is very grievous to the believer to feel the assaults of sin, such as that of pride, filthiness, covetousness, unbelief, atheism, and enmity; but it is the privilege of the believer, that he hath such things that he may be humbled, not that he may be conquered and destroyed thereby. You know, a snake may be so handled, by taking out his sting and teeth, that it cannot hurt us, though it touch us; yet we abhor it for the nature of it, and are afraid to have it come near us: even so, sin is in such a manner handled by our Lord Jesus Christ, that it cannot hurt the believer in Christ: hence the believer is many times more afraid than hurt; yet it is very becoming the true believer to hate sin from the very nature of it, and stand at a distance from it. Meantime, you have the greatest encouragement in the world to fight against the nations of enemies, the nations of lusts: for the battle is the Lord's, he stands engaged to put out the nations, Deut. vii. 17, 18. Were there an uncertainty of the victory, you might be discouraged, and loath to undertake such a warfare. But now, when the Lord hath assured you of the victory, and that you have his blood, his Spirit, his faithful promise for it, there is no more ground of discouragement.

OBJECT. Oh! what comfort can I take, when I find the nations of enemies and lusts still living and lively; yea, strong, mighty, and prevalent, and even growing stronger and stronger upon my hand, instead of being subdued and destroyed?

ANSW. Perhaps it is so between battles, or single combats, that you have with your corruptions: but do you not find your Captain coming sometimes in to your assistance, and making up all that you lost, by his gracious, powerful, sanctifying, and comforting presence? And thus, do you not find, even after sin's victory over you, which makes you judge the nations are increasing on your hand; do you not find, I say, your hatred of sin increased, your self-abhorrence increased, your dependence on the Lord for strength increased, your desire to be rid of sin increased, and your heart longing for the final victory over the nations, and the full possession of Canaan? Why, what is this but the Lord your God putting out the nations before you by little and little? Meantime, during these battles, is it not ground of comfort,

(1.) That there is a sentence past in your favours against the nations, even a sentence of condemnation and destruction? and accordingly, sin is condemned in the flesh, Rom. viii. 3. And Satan is condemned to destruction, "The God of peace will bruise Satan under your feet."

(2.) Is it not ground of comfort, that the sentence past against sin and Satan is executed in part? Your old man is crucified; the head of the serpent is bruised; "For this cause was the Son of God manifested, to destroy the works of the devil; and, By death he hath destroyed him that had the power of death."

(3.) Is it not ground of comfort, that the day of full and final execution is at hand, wherein he will take vengeance on the nations? "For the day of vengeance is in mine heart; the year of my redeemed is come," Isa. lxiii. 4; the day of the Lord is at hand, wherein he will bring forth judgment into victory, and death shall be swallowed up in victory: Christ will reign till all his enemies become his footstool, "To him every knee shall bow."

[4.] Is it not ground of comfort, that the remaining power of the nations in the interim, shall never be able to break the relation that is betwixt your Captain-general and you, nor to cast you out of his covenant, out of his heart, nor out of his love? "My covenant will I not break," says he; "my loving-kindness will I not take away," Psa. lxxxix. 33, 34. He is still the Lord thy God; and, therefore, he will put out the nations before thee by little and little. I offer you,

[2.] A word of counsel. O believer, are you indeed engaged in battle against the nations? And has the Lord begun to drive them out before you? Then pursue thy victory, and fight out the good fight of faith, for the Lord thy God is he that does fight for thee: as the apostle says in a like case, Phil. ii. 12, 13, "Work out the work of your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Even so, fight out the battle against the nations; for, "The Lord thy God will put them out before thee, by little and little." And, since the battle is the Lord's, and your Captain goes before you to divide the spoil with the strong, go on courageously; and, that you may do so the more successfully, I shall branch forth this word of counsel in these particulars.

1. "Put on the whole armour of God," and go not forth against the nations in your own strength, otherwise you will find them too

hard for you ; but, "Go on in the strength of the Lord, making mention of his righteousness, and his only ; being strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might ;" and strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus ; having no confidence in the flesh, but always your confidence in, and dependence upon the Lord Jesus Christ, the Captain of salvation.

2. Search out the nations that are most invisible and hidden : for your greatest danger is from your most secret enemies ; you wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, and spiritual wickednesses. And there are spiritual lusts not easily discerned ; if these be neglected, and more open enemies only noticed, it is as if one should gaze upon the smoke, and neglect the fire that is within ; or, as if one should gaze upon the ulcer, but never consider the corrupt humour within.

3. Having found out the enemy, and discerned where the strength of the nations lie, then set upon them, and endeavour, through grace, to bring them into a consumption, and that both by starving and storming of them.

(1.) By starving them. O starve them, and keep them from their food ; "Make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof." Beware of every thing that may contribute to strengthen the nations. *Say not, A confederacy* with them : do not spare them, nor let their strong holds stand ; draw not up a league with them, nor border too near to them, It is said of Israel, "The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations." Keep not company with the wicked : be not too much conversant with the world : many bury themselves by digging too deep there.

(2.) As by starving, so by storming the nations. You are to consume them ; and you ought to storm them, by bringing them under the battering engines of the gospel, under the stroke of God's word, which is the sword of the Spirit ; under the stroke of the blood of Christ ; for, we overcome by the blood of the Lamb ; and under the stroke of the Spirit of Christ ; for, "If you, through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live."

4. Take all the advantages you can against the nations. Take advantage of the times and seasons, even when you are like to be overpowered with inward corruption, and under fear of falling one day by the hand of some strong lust ; then get to the mighty power of Christ, and reinforce yourself and resist : and, in resisting,

believe you shall overcome : remembering, for your encouragement, that the almighty Captain stands within sight, when you are fighting in the valley ; and he waits but a call from you, when distressed in the battle ; and he will come for your rescue. Jehoshaphat cried in the midst of the battle, and was helped ; how much more may you expect his aid in your spiritual combat ?

5. Watch against the nations, and resist the first onset of the enemy. Corruptions are the natives, and they are not wholly destroyed : if therefore you do not watch, nature will turn to her old bias. Native and natural inclinations are very forcible : as, bend the bough of a tree downward, if you let it go, it will start up by and by : so, if you give up your watch, the nations will return, and resume their power. Particularly, watch against, and resist the first motions of sin ; if you stop not the current of a wicked motion, it will soon land in a wicked action ; for, “ When lust hath conceived, it brings forth sin,” James i. 15. Great evils arise from small beginnings ; one spoonful of water will quench that fire, which afterwards whole buckets cannot abate ; therefore it is a good rule, *Principiis obsta*, “ Resist the beginnings of sin.”

6. Put the nations in the hand of the Captain, that he may destroy them ; and endeavour so to do, in the daily exercise of faith and prayer. O seek to the Lord Jesus that he would avenge you of these Philistines ; as in the parable of the unjust Judge, Luke xviii. 1, 8. The parable was put forth for this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint. The judge there mentioned was one that feared not God, nor regarded man : a widow comes to him, saying, “ Avenge me of mine adversary,” and through her importunity she prevailed with him ; “ And shall not God avenge his elect, that cry day and night to him ; though he bear long, yet he will avenge them speedily.” Therefore, go to a God in Christ, and cry, Lord, avenge me of my lusts, avenge me of my pride, avenge me of my unbelief, avenge me of my carnality, avenge me of mine enemies.

7. After all, rest not satisfied with any small victory obtained over the nations ; sit not down, as if you had no more ado ; for the nations are not all dead and destroyed at once ; you will have them to fight with, as long as you are on this side of heaven ; enemies will up again ; and, therefore, you must up again, and press forward to a complete victory. As the body of sin and death remains while you are here ; so, whatever particular lust you have

troubled with, you cannot expect a full and final victory while here, even though it hath been a mortified lust, a subdued lust. No doubt, Peter got his feet upon the neck of his sin of denying his Master when he went out and wept bitterly after Christ looked to him ; yet even that same corruption afterwards did stir in him by a partial denying of his Master, though not in the same degree ; as when Paul withstood him to the face, Gal. ii. 12. A particular corruption may, through grace, be subdued, and it may cease to stir so violently for a time ; yet you cannot say that it is wholly killed ; yea, it may afterwards rise up as violently as ever. A lust, that lay long dead, may revive again ; and therefore you little need to be secure, but much need to be sober and watchful, and still going on in the warfare, still depending on the Lord for new supplies of strength against new assaults. After one victory obtained, make ready for battle immediately ; when something is done, look to the Lord to do more ; after one stroke, seek another to be given ; for it is by little and little the victory is obtained. Think not strange, therefore, though the nations rally their forces again and again, and be not discouraged thereupon, but learn a daily, momentary, close, and constant dependence upon the Captain of salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ, that through him you may do valiantly. "It is he that girdeth you with strength, and subdues the nations under you."

8. In order to pursue the nations to death, pursue the claim you have to the victory over them, in the use of all appointed means, with an entire dependence upon the Lord Jesus Christ ; not depending upon means ; nay, nor yet depending upon sensible manifestations, nor relying even upon the graces of the Spirit, but upon the God of all grace ; pleading your right and claim, by virtue of the divine promise, saying, Lord, hast thou not interposed thy faithfulness, thy word, thy oath ? and is not thy promise sealed, sealed by the blood of Christ, sealed in the sacrament of the supper ? Hast thou not said, "Solomon shall reign ? though now, behold Adonijah usurps the throne." Hast thou not said, Grace shall reign, and sin shall not have the dominion ? Behold how it usurps. Well, put him to his word, and pursue your claim. Surely the Lord will not deny himself ; nay, JEHOVAH-JIREH, "In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen ;" though you have no strength, no might against this great multitude ; yet, let your eyes be toward him, who is mightier than the noise of many waters, and who hath wrapt in your interest

with his own glory, his own faithfulness and truth. Let your difficulties be never so great, your enemies never so many, and their power never so invincible, it is not you they have ado with, but Christ; and, can anything be too hard for him? "Wait on thy God continually," who hath here promised to accomplish the warfare gradually: "The Lord thy God will put out these nations before thee, by little and little."

SERMON CXXII.—CXXVII.

THE STRENGTH OF SIN; AND HOW THE LAW IS THE STRENGTH THEREOF, OPENED UP AND UNFOLDED.¹

"The strength of sin is the law."—1 Cor. xv. 56.

PERHAPS there was never a generation wherein the strength and dominion of sin did more discover itself, in the life and conversation of the people, than in this present age. Such is the mighty power thereof, that as all the children of men are slaves, so most of the children of God are captives to it. How are the thoughts, words, and actions of men and women, as so many slaves, captives, and drudges to sin! But, for as strong as it is, the strength of it is little seen, and few know where the strength of it lies. As the Philistines did not know that the strength of Samson lay in his hair, or in the locks of his head, which whenever it was shaved, his strength was gone; so the world little know this mystery, that the strength of sin is the law, insomuch, that till the sinner be shaved, as it were, with the sharp razor of the Spirit of Christ, so as to be cut off from the law, and united to Christ, *the end of the law*, the strength of sin remains, and the rule of it.

That I may come to the purpose I design, you may only notice, that as the apostle in the preceding part of the chapter, is treating the great doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, proving it from the resurrection of Christ, answering objections against this

(1) This subject appears to have been handled in six Sermons, preached on sacramental occasions, in the year 1727. The first two, at the Sacrament of Kinglassy, July 30th, 31st. The next two at Orwel, August 7th, 8th. The two last are an enlagement on the same subject; but when or where delivered is uncertain.

truth, and shewing what a remarkable change will be made upon the bodies of believers, both these that are dead and these that shall be living, at the sound of the last trumpet; so, in the context here, he is discovering the complete conquest that then the saints will obtain over death and the grave, and that then will be accomplished what the prophet Hosea says, chap. xiii. 14, "Death shall be swallowed up in victory; I will ransom thee from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death; O death I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction." What the prophets declare were to have their initial accomplished in the New-Testament days, the apostles declare are to have their full and consummate accomplishment at the day of judgment; yet, so sweet and satisfying is the begun accomplishment thereof in Christ Jesus, that the apostle, for himself, and in name of all believers in Christ, sings their ΕΗΝΙΚΙΟΝ, their song of triumph and victory, whereof these words are a part, saying, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, the strength of sin is the law; but thanks to God, that giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Death had a sting, even power to hurt and kill; and the grave had a victory; but now, where are they? In Christ they are spoiled and disarmed, so as they are not to be seen; where are they? And the day is coming, with respect to the saints, when not so much as the sign and vestige of death's power or the grave's victory will remain? where are they? "The sting of death is sin;" for sin gives power unto death, which would have no power to hurt, did not sin give venom to its darts; but Christ, by death, hath taken out this sting, made atonement for sin, and obtained remission; so that though death may hiss, it cannot hurt. "The strength of sin is the law;" for sin hath strength to condemn us, and strength to destroy us, from the law, and its curses, and threatenings; but Christ hath removed the curse of the law, by becoming a curse for us. Yea, the whole power and sanction of the first covenant, the law of works, was transferred upon Christ, and in him fulfilled and ended; so that sin is deprived of its strength and sting, by Christ's obedience unto death, even the death of the cross; therefore, though death may seize the believer in Christ, yet it can never sting him, nor hold him in its power: "Thanks be to God, then, that giveth us the victory, says the apostle, through Jesus Christ." By faith the believer shares of his conquest and victory; the victory is given through Christ to them, yet they are styled the overcomers:

“To him that overcometh, will I give to eat of the tree of life.” Who are the overcomers? Even they to whom it is given of God through Jesus Christ. Christ hath obtained it, and gives it. As heaven, and eternal life, is the gift of God through Christ; so the victory over sin, and death, and hell, and all enemies in the way to heaven, is the gift of God through Jesus Christ. Hence the apostle in the last verse, infers duty and service incumbent upon all believers: “Therefore, beloved brethren, be ye stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord,” teaching us, that there is no gospel-service, without the faith of victory through Christ; no gospel-holiness, till a person, being in Christ, hath victory in him over sin, death, and the law, which is the strength of sin; then he is in case to abound in the work of the Lord, from a principle of gratitude: knowing that his labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. The believer hath in view the recompense of reward; and this is the reward of grace, that as in the Lord he hath victory, in the Lord he hath righteousness, in the Lord he hath strength for work and warfare; so in the Lord his work and warfare will be crowned: he shall not obtain the crown, no more than the victory, by his own work and labour, nor because he or his works are worthy, but because of Christ, in whom he is worthy, and hath by his dying obtained the victory and the crown both; and his work of faith, and labour of love, is an evidence of his union to Christ, in whom he is blessed with grace and glory. Therefore he knows, according to the measure of his faith, that his labour is not in vain in the Lord.

But now, the verse where my text lies, seems to be an explication of the first part of the apostle’s song; he had said, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” But if any should ask, What mean you, Paul, by the sting of death? Why, says he, “The sting of death is sin;” so that, take away sin, and then death hath no sting; no strength to hurt or harm us. Well, but may it be said, Where lies the strength of sin? and whence hath it such strength? The answer is, “The strength of sin is the law;” as sin is the strength of death, so the law is the strength of sin. Sin puts arms in the hand of death, and the law puts arms in the hand of sin: “The strength of sin is the law.”

Where you may notice these three things following.

1. The grand evil that ruins all mankind, here spoken of, namely, **SIN**: this is that which makes us need a Saviour, whose name is **JESUS**, because he saves his people from their sin. The

apostle speaks not here of any transient act of sin, but even of the root and fountain of sin; the corruption and depravation of nature, together with the lusts and affections of the flesh.

2. You have here the quality of sin; STRENGTH is ascribed to it. There are several attributes this monster hath, particularly these two, guilt and filth; but STRENGTH is the compend of all its other qualities. It hath strength to defile, and strength to destroy; strength to kill, and strength to damn. The strength of sin makes us stand in need of a strong Saviour, and of that help which is laid upon One that is mighty.

3. You have here the accidental source or rise of the strength of sin, namely, the LAW; the law of works, commanding obedience as the condition of eternal life, and discharging disobedience on pain of eternal death. The moral law, under the form of a covenant of works, is the law the apostle here speaks of; and this law, as it is violated and broken by our apostacy and rebellion against God, for as this law is become so weak through the flesh, Rom. iii. 3, that it cannot justify nor sanctify a sinner nor save a breaker of it: so it is become powerful only to condemn, and powerful to damn the sinner; and this it does, by giving sin a power to ruin, condemn, and destroy the sinner. As sin, in a manner, took justifying strength from the law, so the law gives condemning strength to sin, leaving the sinner under its curse; and, because sin violated the holy command of the law, the law gives sin a commanding power over the sinner, and makes sin to rise, and rage, and reign over the sinner, so as it commands him to serve like a drudge and a slave. This the law does, both by virtue of its curse, and by virtue of its command; the power of sin being a part of the curse of the law, and consequence of the command. Not that the holy, just, and good law of God, that commands holiness, can possibly command sin or unholiness; but by reason of our corruption, which, like water, the more it is dammed up, the more it swells. The command of holiness excites and stirs up the rule and command of sin over us: which bears no more reflection upon the holiness of the law, than the stink of a dunghill, raised and excited by the heat of the sun, reflects any indignity upon, or in the least stains the purity of the beams thereof. The more pure and refulgent the beams of the sun are, the more influence it hath for stirring up the filthy vapours of the dunghill; so, the more holy that the law is, the more does it excite the filthy steams, and raise and exasperate the impurity of corruption. But in what respect the

law is the strength of sin, may be shewed more at large in the sequel.

Having offered this short view of the words, there are two doctrines might be treated from them.

- I. "That sin is a very strong and powerful thing."
- II. "That the strength of sin is the law:" Or thus, "That the law of works is the strength of sin to a sinner that hath violated and broken it."

I intend, through divine aid, to illustrate both these propositions; but shall confine myself to the first at this time. If we get right views of the strength of sin, it will commend the strength of a Saviour to us.

DOCT. I. That sin is a very strong and powerful thing.

In treating of which, I would essay to do the following things.

- I. Speak a little of the nature of sin; and shew what it is.
- II. I would inquire into the strength of sin in the qualities and degrees of its strength.
- III. I would shew how the strength of sin discovers itself.
- IV. Whence the strength of sin comes, and where it lies.
- V. Draw some inferences from this for application.

I. We propose to speak a little concerning the nature of sin. I shall confine myself to these two accounts of it, namely, (1.) That it is a transgression of the law, 1 John iii. 4. (2.) That it is an opposition to God the Lawgiver, and enmity against God, Rom. viii. 7.

1. Consider it as it is a transgression of the law; and all mankind are transgressors from the womb, ever since Adam and Eve began the rebellion; we daily transgress it in thought, word, and deed. It is strange to consider how many poor ignorant sinners expect to be justified by that law which they are daily transgressing, which declares that they know not themselves to be sinners and transgressors thereof. They say they are sinners, but they do not believe what they say; or, if they believe they are sinners, they do not believe they are such sinners but that the law may bear with

them ; for they cannot see such depravity in their actions, as that the law should condemn them ; and when once they imagine that the law will not condemn them, they fancy next that the law will justify them. Some whose lives and actions are not evidently gross and profane, may be filled with foolish ignorant thoughts of this sort, that the law hath little to say against them ; yea, that they have done all these things from their youth up. O dreadful arrogance and ignorance, for a brat of hell to imagine that he hath not transgressed the law by any wicked deed !

But if any be so grossly ignorant as to justify their deeds as being conform to the law ; let them set the law of God, and even their words in opposition to each other, and see if they have transgressed the law ; for, though in many things we offend all ; yet, " If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man," says the apostle, James iii. 2. But where is there even such perfection as this among the children of men, if you consider how every command of the law is broken by the ordinary speech of men ? Why, every word that savours of atheism, unbelief, and contempt of God, and carnal confidence, is a breach of the first command. Every word that savours of disrespect to divine ordinances, whether preaching, praying, reading, meditating, communicating, and the like, is a breach of the second command. Every word that tends to the abusing of God's name, by rash swearing, minced oaths, carnal praying, formal devotion, and hypocritical protestations and profession, is a breach of the third command. Every idle and unprofitable word on week-days, and especially on Sabbath days, whereon we are in a peculiar manner called to abstain from our own words, is a breach of the fourth command. Every disrespectful and dishonourable word of superiors, inferiors, or equals, and especially of parents and relations, whether natural, civil, or spiritual, is a breach of the fifth command. Every malicious, invective, bitter, offensive, and killing word, that cuts like a sword, is a breach of the sixth command. Every immodest, unchaste, sensual, and lascivious word, that savours of a vile, polluted mind, is a breach of the seventh command. Every cheating word, as in buying and selling, when you villify too much what you buy, and magnify too much what you sell, is a breach of the eighth command. Every railing word, every reproachful, backbiting, lying, and false accusation, whether to or of your neighbours, is a breach of the ninth command. And, finally, every murmuring and fretful word that savours of dis-

content, grudging, and envy, is a breach of the tenth command.

You, then, that hope for justification by the works of the law, if you be not conscious of your ill works, what say you of your words? If in word you have offended, know that by your words you shall be condemned. Why, say you, Who are they that want their faults of that sort? But, whatever words escape me, yet I hope I have a good heart to God. Alas, man! will you examine that heart of yours with the good law of God, and see if it be a good heart or not; and if it be a transgressor of the law, then the fountain is defiled, and never call it good again. If you be chargeable with any of these transgressions of the law, that I have named, whether in your works or words, know that the heart is the very fountain of these evil words and actions; for out of the heart they proceed, Mat. xv. 19; and if the fruit be evil, the root cannot be good; if the streams be bitter, the fountain cannot be sweet. The smoke of vain words and evil actions, that comes out at the chimney of your daily conversation declares that there is a fire within doors, a furnace of corruption in the heart.

But, more particularly, will you set your heart and the law together a little, and see what it is. Compare your heart with the first command, and you will find it to be nothing but a throne of iniquity, a receptacle of false gods, where a thousand other gods are worshipped. Compare it with the second command, and then you will see it to be nothing but a chamber of imagery, filled with so many images and misrepresentations of God. Compare it with the third command, and you will find nothing else but a bench of blasphemy, issuing forth indignities and affronts to the name of God. Compare it with the fourth command, and you will find it to be nothing but a dunghill of profanity, a playhouse of idleness, and a sacrilegious waster of holy time. Compare it with the fifth command, and you will see it to be nothing but a palace of pride, and a tower of self-exaltation, setting yourself above all others. Compare it with the sixth command, and here it will be found to be nothing but the devil's shambles, and a slaughter-house of malice and murder; for, "He that hates his brother in his heart is a murderer. Compare your heart with the seventh command, and you will find it nothing but a cage of unclean birds, unclean thoughts, vile affections. Compare it with the eighth command, and then you will see it to be nothing but a tabernacle of robbers,

though your hand should be free of theft and robbery : but if you have stolen all that your heart went after, many a horse and cow hath it stolen ; yea, many a fine house and yard hath your heart robbed your neighbour of. Compare it with the ninth command, and you will find it to be nothing but a fountain of calumny, either inventing ill tales of your neighbour, or exaggerating and magnifying any false report; or tickled with and glad of any occasion to cast a blot upon his name. Compare your hearts with the tenth command, and you will find it also to be nothing but a temple of idolatry, for “Covetousness is idolatry,” says the apostle. As many objects as the covetous heart pursues after, so many idols does it fall down before. And now, tell me, after all, Is that a good heart? Nay, alas! every imagination of it is evil, and evil continually; yea, it is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.

Thus sin is a transgression of the law, whether in heart, speech, or behaviour; and thus we are all transgressors; yea, though we could free ourselves of actual sins, which is impossible, and say that we are clean in thought, word, and action: yet as we have sinned in Adam, Rom. v. 12, so our very natures are sinful and corrupt, and destitute of conformity to the law; as void of righteousness as Christ was free of sin; and altogether filthy, as Christ is altogether lovely. The law requires holiness of nature, heart, and way, and curses every one that continues not in all things required therein, Gal. iii. 10. Why, then, the meaning of that word to a sinner “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments,” is as much as to say, O sinner, you have forfeit eternal life by your not keeping the commandment, and thou art doomed to eternal death, which, as sure as God lives, will be your everlasting lot, if the law get not a better keeper than you in your room and stead; the reason, then, why I declare you transgressors of the law is, that I may recommend Christ the more to you as the end of the law for righteousness. “Sin is a transgression of the law.”

2. Consider it as it is an opposition to God, the Lawgiver; it is called enmity against God. Some have a notion of sin, that it is a transgression of God’s law, and yet not a due sense of sin in the intrinsical evil of it, as it is an opposition to God’s nature; as every actual sin, whether of omission or commission, is a walking contrary to God, Lev. xxvi. 27; so sin in its nature is a contrariety to God’s nature, and a despising of him, as well as displeasing to him, 1 Sam. ii. 30; yea, nothing is so opposite to God as sin. God is

wisdom, sin is folly ; God is holiness, sin is filthiness ; God is justice, sin is iniquity ; God is goodness itself, sin is badness itself ; God is faithfulness, sin is treachery ; God is light, sin is darkness ; God is life, sin is death ; God is beauty, sin is deformity ; God is majesty, sin is baseness ; God is love, sin is enmity. Sin is so opposite to God, that if the least drop of it should get into his nature, he would cease to be God. The wicked think, because God is patient and long-suffering, therefore he approves of their sin, and is of the same judgment with themselves ; “ Because I held my peace, thou thoughtest that I was altogether like thyself ; but I will reprove thee, and set thine iniquities in order before thee,” Psalm l. 21. Know, when you have any such thoughts of God as this, you do blaspheme God ; for, if God did approve of your sin, he would cease to be God, he would be God no longer : why so, think you ? Even because then God would not be infinitely holy ; now, holiness is his being ; therefore, if you should cease to be infinitely holy, he would cease to be God ; so opposite is sin to God, that if he did not hate sin as much as he does, he would cease to be God. If his hatred of sin were less than it is, then he would not be infinitely holy ; and infinite holiness must needs have infinite hatred against sin. This is the very thing that makes sin to be an infinite evil, objectively considered ; and whatever some may think of sin, surely we cannot speak enough of the evil of it. You that have but light thoughts of sin, you have light and slight thoughts of God ; and you that have light thoughts of sin, have light thoughts of Christ ; it cannot be a light matter, that the eternal God gave his eternal Son to be a sacrifice for, otherwise we had been eternal sacrifices to his incensed justice. The more dishonourably that we speak of sin, the more honourably must we speak of Christ, the Saviour that saves from it. Nothing exposes sin so much as the gospel of Christ, declaring him to be the sacrifice for sin ; which says, that the infinite hatred that God bears to sin is equal to the infinite love that he bears to his own son ; and that his hatred to sin is as deep as his love to Christ is high ; and that the depth of the one, and the height of the other, are both equally infinite. As Christ’s death is the great sacrifice for sin, that we commemorate at this occasion ; so the view of the infinite value thereof, relates to the infinite evil of sin. As there would be no need for Christ, as a Saviour if there were no sin ; so there would be no need for such a Saviour as he is, if sin were not such an evil as it is ; and as the

guilt of it cannot be expiated without such an infinite ransom as he gave; so the power of it cannot be destroyed but by such an almighty arm as he hath, who alone is able to save to the uttermost. But this leads me, having thus far touched the nature, to speak next of the strength of sin.

II. The Second Thing proposed here is, to enquire a little into the strength of sin. The devil is called the strong man, yet he is without; but sin is the strong man within; or, as the apostle calls it, the old man, Eph. iv. 22, where he exhorts even the saints to put off the old man. Sin is no child, but a man; it is no young strippling, but an ancient, strong, old man; one that is grown in years, and carries power, command, authority with it in the best of God's children; and if it many times powerfully prevails in and over them how powerfully does it reign in the rest of the world? But, that the strength of sin may be farther opened, I shall lay before you, 1. Some of the qualities of the strength of sin. 2. The degrees of its strength, positive, comparative, and superlative.

1st, As to the quality of the strength of sin: what sort of a strength it hath, may appear in these ten qualities and bad properties of it.

1. Sin hath a commanding strength, requiring obedience, and obliging its servants, to obey it in the lusts thereof, Rom. vi. 12, 16. Indeed, the commands of sin are very unlawful and unreasonable; yet it commands men to go, and they go: to come, and they come; and men obey the commands of sin, by disobeying the commands of God; for, when they do not what God enjoins them, they do what sin requires them.

2. Sin hath a condemning strength: as sin is a great commander, so the commanding power of sin, when yielded to, delivers us over to the condemning power of sin. Now, what this condemning power of sin is, the apostle shews plainly, Jam. i. 15, "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Sin is a faithless and shameless tyrant and tempter; for, at first it promises life and immunity from death, saying, like the devil that sinned from the beginning, "You shall not surely die:" yet, no sooner does a man obey the command of sin, than it condemns him to death; "The wages of sin is death," Rom. vi. 23. Hence,

3. Sin hath a deceiving strength. See Heb. iii. 13, "Exhort one another while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin:" hence the lusts of the flesh are

are called deceitful lusts, Eph. iv. 22. Sin powerfully deceives, by blinding the mind, corrupting the judgment, hardening the heart, alluring the affections, and persuading the sinner that there are some things forbidden in the law that are good and profitable, and may be done without any scruple of conscience. Sometimes it will persuade the greedy-minded worldly man that is thinking how to enrich himself, that to do it by the subtilty of his pate, the forgery of his tongue, the villainy of his hand, and by violent means, is an easier and sweeter way than to toil and labour to enrich himself by honest means. Sometimes it will persuade the sinner that there is no hell, no fear of punishment; or, if there be, yet he may afterwards repent, and prevent it; and so he is emboldened to sin, and deceived.

4. Sin hath a working strength. "When we were in the flesh, the motions of sin that were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death," Rom. vii. 5. And, verse 8, "Sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence." Sin, then, and natural corruption, is no idle thing; no, by no means: it hath an affecting and working power, to bring forth evil notions. Hence, James i. 15, "When lust is conceived, it bringeth forth sin;" and the flesh is said to lust against the Spirit, Gal. v. 17. By reason of corruption, there is an inclination and a proneness of all the faculties of the soul to that which is evil.

5. Sin hath a conquering and captivating strength; the children of God themselves are many times brought into captivity to it; "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members," Rom. vii. 20. And if it sometimes carry all before it in a manner, where there is grace, how must it be where there is no grace, and where the man is under the law, and not under grace? Surely it carries them whithersoever it pleaseth, except in so far as the man is under the restraint of providence.

6. Sin hath a defiling and polluting strength; "To the pure all things are pure, but to them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure, but even their mind and conscience is defiled," Tit. i. 15. Sin defiles the mind, defiles the conscience, defiles the will, defiles the affections, defiles the memory, defiles the imagination, defiles the thoughts, defiles the words, defiles the actions, and defiles and stains all the duties the man puts his hand to: it defiles his hearing, de-

files his reading, defiles his praying, defiles his meditating, defiles his communicating, defiles his conferring with others; and, in a word, defiles soul and body, inward and outward man; yea, defiles and infects neighbours, friends, strangers, and all that come near to it.

7. Sin hath a dementing strength, to make people mad: "They are mad upon idols," Jer. l. 38. Sin makes men nothing but mad fools, and beside themselves. We reckon him a fool that would drink a cup of poison: that is what the sinner does. Is he not a fool that would despise his food? So do sinners, that despise Christ and the gospel. Is he not a mad fool that would prefer a shadow to a substance? So are they that prefer earth to heaven, and the things of time to these of eternity. Hence also,

8. Sin hath a transforming strength, insomuch, that when it comes to a height, it turns the soul to a devil. This must be a great strength, that can turn a man to a devil. What are wicked men, in whom sin reigns, and rages, and is come to a height, but like so many devils? It can even turn disciples into devils: "I have chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil," John vi. 70. Yea, such is the strength of it, that it can, in some respect, turn a saint to a devil, at least to act the part of one: hence Christ says to Peter, a saint, "Get thee behind me, Satan." The godly man, out of a mistaken affection to his Master, spoke the language of Satan; and therefore received this sharp reprimand from his Lord. Ye need not wonder at this, for sin turned angels to devils; the sin that the angels did commit, presently turned them to devils; therefore you need not think strange, if sin hath such a transforming power, as to turn men and women into devils.

9. Sin hath a weakening and wounding strength: it weakens the hands even of saints, that they cannot do what they would, Rom. vii. 15. How much more is the Christless sinner under an utter inability and incapacity to do any good thing. Nay, we are by nature without strength; for the strength of sin hath taken away the strength of man. So weak by reason of remaining sin and corruption is the saint, that he is not sufficient of himself to think any thing as of himself, but his sufficiency is of God, 2 Cor. iii. 5. What then can a Christless sinner do? Let Arminians, who magnify the power of nature, tell. Sin hath weakened our hands; yea, and wounded us to death. For,

10. Sin hath a killing and slaying strength: "Sin, taking

occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me," Rom. vii. 11. Every sin we commit, is a wound and a stab to our souls. And, oh! my friends, we have wounded ourselves with sin, and rendered ourselves liable to eternal death. Let us not remain and die in our wounds, without searching and seeking for recovery, relief, and redress. As the smart of a wound sends us to the surgeon, may the smart of our sins send us to the physician of souls, to Jesus Christ; his precious blood alone can cure that deadly wound. The Son of man is lifted up, like the brazen serpent among the Israelites, that whosoever look to him may be healed of the deadly wound. If you say, what warrant have I to look to him for healing? Why, you need no better than his own call and command, "Look to me, and be saved." But, will I come speed, and be successful? Yea, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." Even so, him that looks to me, I will not fail to save.

But, say you, my wounds are old and festered, and, I fear, incurable; I have had them now these many years. If I had come to Christ in time, perhaps he might have cured me; but now, I think he will not.

To this we reply: It is indeed very dangerous to fight many years under Satan's banner, where you shall get scar upon scar, and wound upon wound, to the hazarding of your soul's everlasting death. The danger is exceeding great, and it will be a wonder of mercy, if Christ undertake the cure: but since wonders of mercy are many times performed by him, therefore, be your wounds old or new, it is all a matter to him, and to the Father's infinite, boundless, bottomless mercy in him; and therefore, in a way of looking to the mercy-seat, sprinkled with the blood of Christ, there is yet hope in Israel concerning you. If you say, such is the strength of sin that you have been speaking of, and the strength of unbelief, that I cannot come, I cannot believe, I cannot turn to God in Christ. Why, sirs, for what end do we point out the strength of sin to you, but that you may see your utter inability to save yourselves, and that you may look to him, in whom almighty strength is, for working faith, and drawing you? Therefore, O cry to him, and plead with him, that the right hand of the Lord may do valiantly, in delivering you; but rest not satisfied in saying you cannot come, while the matter is, you will not come; you have no strength, because you have no will. If you were willing, strength is at hand; the day of your willingness is the day of his power: "Thy people

shall be willing in the day of thy power." When the will is gained to Christ, the power of Christ hath been there, and will be more and more. But, that you may see still the more need of the strength of Christ, take a further view of the strength of sin.

2dly, In the degrees of its strength. And here you may consider the strength of sin in a positive, comparative, and superlative manner.

[1.] Positively, sin hath a manifold strength. If we look further into the scriptural account thereof, you will find that,

1. Sin hath the strength of a law, hence called the law of sin and death, Rom. viii. 2. What this law requires that men do by their commissions; and what this law forbids that men forbear by their omissions. And what is required by this law? Even all acts of enmity against God. And what is forbidden by it? Even all acts of duty towards God.

2. Sin has the strength of a king. Where there is a law, there is a lawgiver, a legislator; and sin is both law and lawgiver, for it reigns like a king: hence sin is said to reign, Rom. vi. 12, "Let not sin reign in your mortal body."

3. Sin hath the strength of a conqueror. Some kings are weak and impotent, and cannot be styled conquerors: but sin is both a king and a conqueror, a victorious conqueror. All the myriads of fallen angels that are now devils, and all the millions of fallen men that have been, and are in the world, are so many black trophies of the conquest thereof.

4. Sin hath the strength of a tower and stronghold: and hence the weapons of the gospel-warfare are said to be mighty through God, to the pulling down these strongholds, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. And many a pull do they take before they be pulled wholly down, even though every pull that does any execution, must be a pull of omnipotency.

5. Sin hath the strength of an army. Sin, even in believers, is compared to an army; they are said to have in them a company of two armies, an army of lusts, and an army of graces: and the former army sometimes prevails against the latter. How strong must the army of hell be in these that want grace, and have no army to oppose it.

6. Sin hath the strength of a mountain, the advantage of the ground, even in the children of grace; their corruptions, like the Canaanites, have possession, old possession, and they keep the moun-

tain ; yea, sin and corruption themselves, are compared to high and strong mountains, mountains of Bethel, and hills of separation. When Christ comes, he is said to come skipping on the mountains, and leaping over the hills. "Who art thou, O great mountain? Before our Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain."

7. Sin hath the strength of a prison : it is a dark prison, a close prison, a strong prison ; and sinners are called prisoners ; and hence the work of a Saviour is called the opening of the prison, Isa. lxi. 1.

8. Sin hath the strength of a chain. Of all men, slaves are in the worst circumstances ; of all slaves, prisoners are worst ; and of all prisoners, these that are in chains and fetters. Sinners are not only slaves, but prisoners ; not only prisoners but in chains within their prison, held in the bond of iniquity, shut up in unbelief, as in a prison and chain ; and so strait is the chain, that their hands are in chains, they cannot work ; their feet in chains, they cannot walk ; their head chained down, that they cannot look up to God for mercy ; their heart in chains, that they cannot so much as desire the Lord Jesus to loose, and save, and deliver them. But then,

[2.] Consider the strength of sin comparatively, and you will find it stronger than many strong things.

1. Sin is stronger than all the children of men ; for it hath made them all its captives ; yea and willing subjects. As it is said of Christ, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power ;" so, such is the strength of sin, that we may say, it hath made millions of willing subjects and slaves to it in the day of its power ; and the day of its hellish power is always till a day of divine power come to conquer it.

2. Sin is stronger than affliction, no rod will drive it away ; Isa. xi. 13, "The people turn not to him that smites them, neither do they seek the Lord ;" nay, they are apt to revolt more and more ; Isa. lvii. 17, "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him ; yet he went on frowardly in the way of his heart."

3. As it is stronger than affliction, so it is stronger than conviction. Many go to hell with a bosom-full of convictions ; and, does not sin hurry people to run its errands by a multitude of wicked actions, and that over the belly of a thousand convictions, conscience flying in their face for omitting such a duty, or committing such a trespass ; yet sin masters it.

4. Sin is stronger than warnings, calls, and all external means ;

for it makes men slight all these as trifles, and stand out against them. Sin is not daunted with the threatenings of hell and wrath: "Because sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed, therefore the heart of the children of men is set in them to do evil." Neither can it be allured with the promises of the gospel; "Who hath believed our report?" Again,

5. Sin is stronger than resolutions, vows, and promises. Perhaps you have resolved an hundred times, and solemnly vowed against such sins; but all your vows and resolutions have been but like flax or tow before the fire of a new temptation. Your legal weapons of warfare against sin are too weak; your leviathan lusts, they but laugh at the shaking of your spear. Again,

6. Sin is stronger than the world. The frowns and flatteries of the world are very strong, very deceitful and ensnaring; but sin in the heart is yet more strong and deceitful: "The heart is deceitful: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Sin is stronger than all the good examples, and good education of the world, let be the evil things in it.

7. But no wonder that it be stronger than the world; for it is stronger than the devil, the God of this world. The devil may tempt, but he cannot compel, as sin does; he may work upon the fancy, but he cannot conquer the will, as sin does; sin does all that work to his hand, and so his work is the more easy.

8. Sin is stronger than death and the grave. Death itself cannot kill sin: death hath destroyed millions of millions of men and women, but it never destroyed one sin. The power of death is very great, insomuch that none among mere men could ever yet either withstand the arrest of death, nor break the prison of death, which is the grave; yet it is easier to bring a dead body out of the grave, and to raise it to life; than to raife a dead soul out of the grave of sin. The dead bodies will not resist, as the soul dead in trespasses will do. Yea,

9. Sin is stronger than hell; for all the flames of hell cannot burn out the dross of sin and corruption: all the torments of the damned will not make them cease from blaspheming the name of God, Rev. xvi. 9, 11; where you may learn, that all the torments of hell will not make a man repent, but rather increase his impenitency and augment his blasphemy. What shall I say?

10. Sin is not only stronger than the sufferings of hell, but stronger than the suburbs of heaven; I mean, it is stronger than

real grace, which is the beginning of heaven. It is not only stronger than common grace, for common grace can hardly stand before a common temptation; but stronger than real habitual grace. Peter had a large stock of habitual grace, yet sin was stronger, and brought him down to the ground by a base denial of his Lord; Paul had a great measure of true grace, and yet he was led captive to the law of sin that was in his members, Rom. vii. 23, till a new recruit of auxiliary grace came from the Lord Jesus to him. Sin is not only stronger than the common motions of the Spirit, which men through the power of sin do resist every day; but it is stronger than special influences, formerly received, till new supplies of influences come from the glorious Head; stronger than former influences, till a new communication come; stronger than former communications, till once a new manifestation come; stronger than former manifestations, till new divine aids still succeed. Thus it is stronger than the very suburbs of heaven; and you need not think strange of this, for, what if I shall say, and prove, that sin is stronger than perfect holiness, and the formal immediate vision of God in heaven, when it is possible for sin to get in its hand there, as you know it did once among the glorious angels? Notwithstanding of the strong bulwark of perfect holiness and formal vision of God that they were blessed with, sin brake in upon them, and brought down legions of them: it overcame them, so as now they are devils, under the rule and government of sin. If sin then brought devils and men from their excellency while they were in their best estate, you need not think strange that we say sin is stronger than that which may be called the suburbs of heaven; and therefore, little wonder that you find sin to be so strong, that it is much stronger than your prayers and tears: may be, for this you besought the Lord thrice, as Paul did in a like case; yea, perhaps, three hundred times, and yet the bow of sin abides in strength. Alas! sin is stronger than prayers and tears, stronger than sighs and groans; it is stronger than afflictions and enlargements, stronger than sermons and sacraments. Oh! a greater strength than all that is requisite for pulling down the strength of sin; and if you get a view of the strength of sin this day, so as to be led out of yourself, and out of your duties, and a little further than means and ordinances to the strength of the Redeemer, it would be a very good communion-season.

[3.] Consider the strength of sin superlatively, or in the superlative degree. I must tell you, sin is not only a strong thing, and

stronger than many things that I have named, but also it is the strongest thing in nature, the strongest thing in hell, and the strongest thing out of heaven. Particularly,

1. Sin is the strongest weight and burden, the strongest pressure that ever was, the most burdensome thing in the world; for it is a burden to the great God: No wonder then that the whole creation groan under the burden of it; for it is a burthen to God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: God is said to be weary with it, speaking after the manner of men; "Ye have wearied me with your iniquities," Isa. xliii. 24. It was a burden to Christ, that made him sweat great drops of blood; it is a burden to the Holy Ghost, therefore called a vexing, grieving, and doing despite to him. What a burden will it be to men that die in it? And what a burden do the people of God find it? Nothing presses them down so much as this?

2. Sin is the strongest sting, the strongest torment; it is the sting of all stings, the sting of sorrow, the sting of affliction, the sting of desertion, the sting of death, as here in the context, "The sting of death is sin." The pains of death are nothing to the sting of death: the pain is tolerable, but the sting is intolerable.

3. As it is the strongest sting, so it is the strongest poison; if but a drop of that poison could possibly get into the nature of God, he would cease to be, as I formerly noticed. What a mighty poison would it be, that if one drop of it were cast into the ocean, it would poison the whole ocean? So it is here; and little wonder then when some of this poison entered the human and angelical natures, it poisoned them, and turned them to devils and monsters. There is no antidote against it, but the blood of Christ.

4. Sin is the strongest plague and disease that ever was; you that know the plagues of your own hearts, will know this. Sin is the mother of all maladies and soul diseases, and is a compound of all. The worst fever in the world is the inflamed lusts of the flesh; the most dangerous tympany is the towering pride of the heart, and swelling of the vain mind: the most fearful flux is the bloody flux of sin and corruption. O what divine power is requisite for drying up this bloody issue! What dropsy is so deadly as that of drinking in iniquity as the ox drinketh water! What apoplexy and palsy is so direful as that by which people fall into mischief, and hinders all spiritual breathing and motion! And what lethargy so lamentable as that of spiritual security and stupidity! The world is

an hospital of diseased souls. O if the Physician Jesus Christ would come and heal!

5. Sin is the strongest tyrant, and the most cruel. It hath a tyranny most lawless and intolerable. There is not any other oppressor but will give some rest sometimes, at least to these that are under his slavery; as cruel Pharaoh gave the Israelites leave to refresh themselves with meat and drink, and sleep; but sin gives no rest to its miserable captives and slaves: for, whether they eat, drink, or sleep, it always exacts of them the service of sin. Augustine, speaking of the tyranny of sin, even over the people of God, "Many times, says he, sin does that when they are sleeping, that it cannot do when they are waking." And if sin be so tyrannical towards the children of God, how great is its tyranny towards its slaves? Surely there is no peace to the wicked, no rest for them, Satan put it in Judas's heart to betray Jesus: and behold he would not let him rest till he had performed that evil suggestion; the devil was so strict with him, that he would not let him eat his meat but hastened him from the table to the treason. Thus Ammon, being incited by his own devilish lusts to defile his sister Tamar, was so inwardly vexed, that his very flesh wore away, and his mind had no rest; he could not eat or drink, or sleep, till he had satisfied his lust. What an intolerable tyrant is the man's inordinate affections, giving him no rest day nor night! As it is said of some, Prov. iv. 16, "They sleep not except they have done mischief;" their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall.

6. Sin is the strongest witchcraft; Gal. iii. 1, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, says the apostle, that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you?" People think it a terrible thing to hear that such a body is bewitched or possessed of the devil: but I must tell all you who will not receive the gospel, you are bewitched, sin hath bewitched you; and to be bodily possessed with a legion of devils, is not so great a misery, as to be under the power of one sin. A man possessed is an object of pity; thus Christ pitied the man whose name was Legion: but sin makes a man the object of Christ's hatred. When God gave up Job's body to the devil, why did not the devil take possession of him, says one of the fathers? "Why, he says, because, though he had taken possession of his body, and made him fret and tear himself, it had not been his sin, but his affliction; whereas to bring him to sin, and curse God, was the great thing he

sought after." Therefore, to be given up to sin, is a greater evil than to be possessed. Ye that are parents, and have children whom you have cause to fear that they are given up to the power of sin, know, it is worse than if they were possessed with the devil; therefore, such should come more earnestly to Christ with their children, than these in the gospel that brought to Christ their children possessed with devils; they are worse than bewitched.

7. Sin is the strongest waster. Oh! how mightily, does sin waste you! Sin wastes your soul and body: it wastes your time, and wastes your talents; it wastes your opportunities, it wastes your strength, and wastes your spirit, and all to no purpose. Oh! how many wasted Sabbaths, sermons, wasted communions, wasted meals, and wasted mercies, all wasted and abused by sin!

8. Sin is the strongest death. Sin itself is spiritual death, and spiritual death is the most strong and powerful death; inasmuch as the soul is superior to the body, so much is spiritual death more powerful and terrible than temporal or bodily death; and insomuch as the cause is more considerable than the effect, so much is spiritual death more powerful and dreadful than eternal death; I mean, sin is more dreadful than hell itself, as it is a place of torment; for, as the strongest cord that draws people to hell is sin: so the strongest flame to torment the sinner there, is sin. The wrath of God would cease, if sin did not seed and increase it. Thus much of the strength of sin.

III. The third thing here proposed was, To shew how the strength of sin discovers itself. Here I may show you, 1. At what seasons especially does the strength of sin discover itself. 2. By what effects.

1st, At what seasons more especially does the strength of sin discover itself?

1. When men should be most holy, sin readily discovers itself to be most strong. In the unregenerate, sin is equally strong at all times, but not equally evident. Some will say, Oh! my heart is never so ill as on the Sabbath day: why, perhaps it is just the same thing at other times, only the strength of it may be more evident then. In the regenerate, sin is sometimes stronger, sometimes weaker; but ordinarily it discovers its strength most when they would most gladly be quit of it; "When I would do good, evil is present with me," Rom. vii. 21. It is in this case many times as with the children of these that observe the worship of God daily in

their families, they find their children most fretful and ill-natured in time of worship, when they ought to be best. Perhaps it may be so, indeed; and the tempter may have a hand in it for disturbing the worship of God; but, for ordinary, it is not then that they are worst, but then they are most noticed.

2. Sin discovers its strength most, when a heart-change comes to be sought after. It is easy to wear Christ's livery for a while, by a fair profession; but when he comes to seek the heart, there is no hearing on that side of the head. People may soon be induced to give some compliment to Christ, to give him the outward man, to give him the hand; but to give him the heart, is another matter; for, when it comes to that, the strength of sin appears. And then,

3. When a darling lust is demanded, then the strength of sin appears; for the man will quit anything for Christ but that. Naaman will part with anything save a bow in the house of Rimmon: the young man in the gospel will hold on with Christ, till Christ touch him on the sore, and strike upon his covetousness; then he goes away sorrowful.

4. When long custom hath taken place, then the strength of sin appears; for, "Can the Ethiopian change his colour, or the leopard his spots? No more can ye that are accustomed to do evil, learn to do well." It is hard, yea, extremely difficult to pull up an old tree by the roots.

5. When a time of spiritual drowsiness takes place, then the strength of sin discovers itself. Take the heart while awake, and it can then pray, and wait, and praise, and worship; but let drowsiness come on, it cannot watch with Christ one hour, for all his in-treaty; for the eyes are heavy; then is the hour and power of darkness. When the believer is waking and watchful, believing and holy, then the power of God appears; it is the hour of God's power; but when spiritual drowsiness comes on, then the power of sin appears; the soul cannot stir hand nor foot.

6. When a time of temptation comes, then the strength of sin appears. The person will be very meek, very modest, very chaste, very moderate, very devout, and very innocent like, when there is no temptation, no opportunity for sin's working; and at such a time sin will be very silent, very quiet, very still, and fast asleep: but let a strong temptation, and a strong lust meet together, then the strength of sin stirs up itself. Sin is like a thief, who would seem

to be a very honest man till a fit opportunity come, and then his hand falls to. "It is, as one says, like the spider, that never appears out of her hole till the fly be entangled in her net, then she appears, and destroys the poor creature, and carries it along with her." When temptation is at a distance, perhaps, you hope you will withstand it; you pray, and promise, and what not? and sin lets you be saying, and never a word from it, till the new temptation comes, and then it appears with new strength.

7. When a time of trial and temptation comes, sin discovers its power. It may be, you can preach patience and submission to others in affliction; but when it comes to your own door, then you will find the heart rebelling against the providence, and that it is easier to give an advice than to take it. The power of enmity falls a working, as against the preceptive, so against the providential will of God.

8. When difficult duties are pressed, then the strength of sin appears. When duties cross to flesh and blood, cross to self and self-righteousness are pressed, what! must I reprove even my superiors and great ones when they err? This, says sin, will expose you to their wrath and indignation. Must I profess Christ, even before a wicked company? Nay, says sin, this will expose you to shame and reproach. Must I bear with injuries and affronts? Nay, says sin, flesh and blood cannot bear with that. Must I deny myself, and all my best duties and righteousness? Nay, says sin, this is a hard saying, who can hear it? May I not hope that my duties will profit me as to my acceptance and justification before God? No, no; the heart casts out with God, and sin shows its strength in these cases. Again, in a time when all diligence in duty is required, as well as deniedness thereunto; and when the law is urged to be regarded as a rule of obedience, as well as renounced as a rule of acceptance. What! to be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; to make religion the constant trade; to be holy in duties, and holy in the intervals of duties: the strength of sin here appears in its mighty opposition to this kind of life. A man will be content to pray, and hear, and read, and sing, if he may be allowed a latitude when he is done; but to be always praying, always watching, and always waiting on the Lord, the carnal heart resists this like death; it may be restrained a while, like a stream that is dammed up for a time; but it breaks out with greater violence at last.

9. When the commandment comes powerfully, sin revives, and discovers its power, Rom. vii. 9. The spirituality of the law wakens up the malignity of sin.

10. In a time when gospel light shines most clearly, then the strength of sin appears most evidently. The law of works, and legal doctrine may be preached, and yet the strength of sin never touched, never truly discovered; yea, the legal heart may fall in with the legal strain, and comply with all the legal duties and means of life, and yet the strength of sin more and more increased, though hidden under a legal covert; for, "The strength of sin is the law;" and therefore sin does not differ with the law as it is a covenant of works. But, let the gospel light shine clearly, then sin will discover itself more evidently, and rage more desperately, unless it be conquered by gospel grace. Why, because though the law of works, or the works of the law and the power of sin, are no opposites, but friends that live and die together; yet the gospel of grace, and the power of sin, are direct opposites; for nothing in the world can destroy the power of sin, but the graces of the gospel; and therefore the strength of sin resists the grace of the gospel with main force. Gospel grace seeks no less than the very life of sin; therefore sin must now fight for its life. Wonder not that the world opposes the gospel so much, in conjunction with the god of this world, who blinds the minds of them that believe not, &c. Neither wonder if sin appear very strong, where the gospel shines very clear; or if there be the greatest opposition, where there is the clearest light. Men naturally understand something of the law, that says, "Do, and live," work, and get your wages: and this natural understanding is what men pride themselves in, so as in the pride of their heart they reject the gospel, which is wholly supernatural and divine, and wherein Christ is set up as the only Potentate that can demolish the strength of sin, by executing his saving offices in us. But, behold, pride of wisdom opposes him as a Prophet, and so man's folly is increased; pride of righteousness opposes him in his priestly office, and so the guilt of sin is increased; pride of strength opposes him as to his kingly office, and so the power of sin is increased; and thus, through an evil heart of unbelief, they depart from the living God. The gospel sets up Christ against the strength of sin, and therefore the strength of sin appears in arms against the gospel. Thus you see at what seasons, and on what occasion, especially, the strength of sin appears.

2dly, By what effects does the strength of sin discover itself? I am not here to run through all the sad effects of sin : otherwise I might show how it brought angels out of heaven, and Adam out of Paradise ; how it brought fire and brimstone upon Sodom, and a deluge of water on the old world ; and what confusion, calamity, and misery it hath brought into the world ; what temporal, spiritual, and eternal judgments it brings on : these are common topics, and too large a field for me now to insist upon ; therefore I confine myself to that effect of sin that the text and context leads me to. Know then, that the strength of sin appears in the STING of it, and the sting of death is sin ; there is the great discovery that the strength of sin makes of itself.

And there are two deaths I would here speak a little of, as the greatest discoveries of the strength of sin, namely, 1. The death of the sinner. 2. The death of the Saviour. Both these deaths discover the powerful sting and mighty strength of sin.

[1.] The death of the sinner discovers the strength of sin ; for, “ The wages of sin is death.” And here, first, Sinning angels were stung to death by their sin ; and hence we are told, Jude 6, “ That the angels that kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, are reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.” And next, sinning man was stung to death ; “ By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin ; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned,” Rom. v. 12. The death of the sinner, whereof death is the sting and strength, is threefold, namely, external, internal, and eternal ; external relates to the body, internal relates to the soul, and eternal relates to the soul and body for ever. Death external, or of the body and outward man, includes not only the separation of soul and body, to the privation of bodily life ; but also all the pains and sickness, public calamities, personal miseries, and grievous diseases that do attend a present life, or are the forerunners and attendants of death : all which are parts of this sting and strength of sin. Death internal, includes soul-defilement and pollution ; soul-debasement and degradation to the rank of beasts ; soul-disturbance, disorder, and confusion ; soul-separation from God, and alienation from the life of God ; the life of God being gone, and the candle of the Lord put out, so as nothing remains but the darkness of death and hell. Oh ! how great a loss is the loss of God, the loss of his favour, his image, his fellowship, and sweet communion with him !

All the life of the carnal man, who is but dead while he lives, is at best (instead of righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, which are part of the spiritual life) nothing but a little while's eating, and drinking, and playing, and laughing, and living in filthiness, and enjoying no better pleasure than brute beasts; but so much the worse, that, having an immortal soul, the issue is terrible, nothing remaining but torments and terror of mind and conscience whenever it begins to awaken. Death eternal, includes everlasting separation from the presence of God; indeed, the former deaths were not so terrible to the sinner, if there were not two sad words and sadder things following thereupon, namely, judgment and eternity, that tread upon the heels of death; for, whenever the soul is separate from the body, it must see the things it would never believe, nor seriously think upon, that verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth; and that, dying in sin, and out of Christ, it must receive from that just Judge a sentence of excommunication from the glorious and joyful presence of God, and that for ever and ever; besides the suffering of everlasting torment, as the due demerit of sin. Thus, in the death of the sinner, the strength of sin is discovered. But more especially,

[2.] The death of the Saviour shews forth the strength of sin above all other things; for sin was the cause of it, and the very sting by which he suffered unto death. Every life, whether it be the life of beast, the life of men, the life of angels, or the life of God, hath an excellency according to its kind; and the more excellent the life is, the more powerful, terrible, and hurtful is the cause of the privation thereof. "The life of a fly, says Augustine, is more excellent than the sun; because the sun, though an excellent creature, hath not life; but the fly, though little, yet it hath life; it shows the excellency of God to make such a living creature." But if the life of a beast, or insect, be so excellent, how much more the life of a man! And if the life of a man, or an angel, be excellent, what infinite excellency is there in the life of God! Now, the principal excellency of the life of man lay at first in this, that he was in the image of God, and how terrible is that sting of sin, that could deprive man of that excellent life, so as to strike at God's image in man, both to deface and destroy it! But if sin strike at God himself, and aim at the highest life, even the life of God; and if the stroke reach so far, as to kill and take away the life of that person who was God as well as man; then we may see and con-

clude, that the strength of sin is inconceivably more great and terrible than it can be seen to be in any other glass. But so it is, though God cannot die, and though the divine nature of Christ could not be touched with the sting, yet he, who was God-man in one person, was pressed down to death with the strength, and wounded even to death with the sting of sin. And this one thing makes a greater discovery of the strength of sin, than all the torments of the damned to eternity can do. In the red glass of the sufferings of Christ you may see more of the power and strength of sin, than if God should let you down to hell, and make you see all the tortures and torments of the damned. In order, therefore, to your having a clearer insight into the strength of sin, O sirs, look to a crucified Christ: look upon his agony and cross, when he was wounded for our sin. O see the sting of sin, and the strength of it, when it made the Son of God to say, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," Mat. xxvi. 38. There the sting was sticking in his soul, while he was under the apprehension of God's wrath, and was about to bear the wrath that sin deserved. Perhaps, upon the sight of sin, you content yourself with some little slight sorrow, saying, I am sorry for it; Lord have mercy on me; and so it passes away: but when the weight of sin was lying on Christ's back, it made his soul sorrowful, compassed about with sorrow, and sorrowful even unto death, and that for our sins. See the strength of sin in the sufferings of Christ, expressed also in that word, Mark xiv. 33, "He began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy;" amazed at the dreadfulness of that cup of wrath for sin, which he, as Surety, behoved to drink. He knew very well, and understood perfectly, what that wrath of God was; and this made him stand amazed. Many hear of God's wrath, but are never amazed at it, never affected with it, as all Christless sinners ought to be: but, alas! they do not understand it, they do not know what it is for a creature to stand before the wrath of an infinite Deity; they know not the power of his wrath, therefore they are not amazed. Christ saw to the bottom of that cup, and to the dregs thereof; and when he was to drink it, he stood amazed; how great then is the strength of sin, that procured this amazement of the Son of God! See again the strength of sin in Christ's sufferings for it, while it is said, he was in an agony, Luke xxii. 44; that is, as it were, in a COMBAT; in combat with the infinite justice and wrath of God, and with the dreadful threatenings and curse of the law, that sin brought upon him, when

he stood our Surety. How great is the strength of sin, that put the Son of God, the Strength of Israel, the Captain of salvation, into such an agony ! Again, it is said, Mark xiv. 35, that he fell down to the ground ; and Mat. xxvi. 39, that he fell on his face. Alas ! sirs, when he, that upholds the heavens and the earth by his power, fell grovelling on the earth, when the weight and burden of sin was upon him ; how strong must sin be ! Christ fell upon his face, and fell to the ground ; surely that weight, that made Christ fall to the ground, would have pressed all the angels of heaven, and men on earth to the bottomless gulf of despair. If all the strength of all the men that ever were from the beginning of the world, and of all the angels in heaven were put into one, and that person had the weight upon him that Christ had, it would make him sink to the lowest hell, and lie there for ever. If Christ had not been God, as well as man, he could never have borne it, but would have sunk down eternally : but though he was God as well as man, yet such was the strength of sin, that under its burden he sunk down to the ground. Again, the strength of it appears in that it made him to sweat great drops of blood, Luke xxiii. 44. The word signifies GREAT CLOTS of blood ; blood thickened into clots. Never was there such a sweat, and that upon the cold ground, in a cold winter night, and nothing else upon him to make him sweat but the burden of sin, and the weight of wrath that it brought upon him. But again, how does the strength of sin appear, in his crying under this weight, “ Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me ? ” And thus he cried three times. Why, this was the very end for which he came to the world, to drink that cup ; and he knew that the salvation of an elect world of poor sinners depended upon his drinking of it : and, was he now unwilling ? No, by no means ; but knowing the dreadfulfulness of it, when it was put to his head, he put it away, as it were, saying, “ Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me ; ” but now he sees, if he drink it not, all the children of men must eternally perish, therefore, he put it to his mouth again the second time ; but knowing the dreadfulfulness of it, he takes it away again, and cries, “ Father, if it be possible, let it pass away from me. ” But, because he could not see so many thousands of poor sinners perish eternally, he put it to his mouth again, the third time ; and yet, beholding the dreadfulfulness of it, he put it away again, saying, “ Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass. ” But, after all, his infinite love overcame his dreadful amazement ; and away he goes to the cross, to

drink that bitter cup of vengeance to the bottom: and while he was drinking it, he cries out with a more bitter cry than ever, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" This was such a cry from the Son of God, the Son of his eternal love, that heaven was not able to hear it without blushing, nor the earth to hear it without trembling, therefore, as the sun withdrew his light, and became dark and black at the sight; so the earth shook, the rocks clave, and the vail of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom. Meantime, the sting went to his heart, and stabbed him to death; and all this was done, that the sting of death, which is sin, and the strength of sin, which is the law, might be vanquished by him, and that poor sinners might be victorious through him.

However, the more we view here the strength of sin, the more sweet will be the song of victory. Dwell a little further upon this then; Christ is the Strength of Israel; but never was the Strength of Israel tried so much as by the strength of sin, when he had that to deal with, and when by the sin of man he was made a curse, Gal. iii. 13. What made the death and sufferings of Christ so dreadful to him, even before he suffered? Let me ask here four questions.

1. Did not Christ perfectly know all that he was to suffer, long before he suffered? What made it then so dreadful when he expected it? Had he any sin of his own to weaken him, or take away his strength? No; he had none, but by imputation. Had he any impatience? No; his patience was absolutely perfect. What then was the matter? Weakness of patience makes us cry; but Christ cried not from want of the strength of patience, but from the feeling of the strength of sin, the whole power and force of the fiery law.

2. Was not Christ the Captain of all that were to suffer afterwards? How came the martyrs to suffer with joy, and yet the Captain to fall to the ground, and cry out of exceeding sorrow? Was it not through the strength of Christ, that all that ever did suffer, were enabled to suffer for his name what they did? Yea, but the matter was, he had some other thing to suffer than they had; he had even the wrath of God, and the strength of sin to grapple with, which they had nothing to do with, he having thus taken it away.

3. Did not Christ know what infinite good his sufferings would do, that he was to save so many thousands of thousands of sinners, and that thus he was to reconcile God and man, to glorify his

Father, and to do the greatest work for God that ever was done, and to bring in a tribute of eternal praise from men and angels? And did he not know, that though his sufferings were extreme, yet they were to last but a few hours, and then he was to be glorified? Why then was his suffering so dreadful to him? Why, because then the whole strength of sin was pressing him, the whole strength of a broken law.

4. Had not Christ the strength of an infinite Deity to support him? the divine nature to support the human? Was there not a personal union betwixt the divine and human nature at that time? Was he not God-man in one person? Yea, why then was his suffering so dreadful to him? Why, the strength of sin lighted on him with its whole weight, and the strength of sin brought on him the strength of the law, the strength of the broken law brought on him the strength of offended justice, the strength of infinite justice, brought on him the strength of infinite wrath and vengeance for sin; and therefore, though his strength was the strength of God, he behoved to cry and roar, and die under the strength of sin.

O my dear friends, you cannot conceive how infinite wisdom, though inventing a way from all eternity, to discover the strength and dreadfulness of sin, could do it so much to the life, as it is discovered in the death and sufferings of the Son of God. If ever you see the evil and strength of sin here, you will see it to be sin indeed.

IV. The fourth head proposed was, to show whence the strength of sin comes, and where it lies. I shall very shortly speak to this, in these four particulars.

1. As the strength of a tree lies in the root of it, and the strength of the water lies in the fountain; so the strength of sin lies in the root and fountain of sin, viz., The original violation of the covenant of works, by our first parents; the righteous imputation of that guilt unto us; and the total depravation of our nature. issuing from thence, and called, "A body of sin and death." Hence, no less power can destroy the strength of sin, than that power that can pull up the root, and dry up the fountain of sin.

2. As the strength of an army lies much in their general; so the strength of sin and lusts lies in their commander the devil. I said before, that sin is stronger than the devil; and yet the devil may be said to be the strength of sin, as a general or commander is the strength of an army: for, though the army may be stronger than

the general that commands it, yet his skill and management may be the principal cause of their victorious power, while his leading and directing them gives them great advantage against their enemies. Thus the devil is commander in sin's army, and the great quartermaster that fills the sinner's heart, as it is said of Ananias, Acts v. 3, "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?" It is the devil that fills the hearts of the people to lie, and drink, and swear, and do other acts of wickedness; for he rules in the children of disobedience, Eph. ii. 2, and the god of this world blinds the minds of them that believe not; and so holds them under the strength of sin, in chains of darkness and ignorance. No less power, then, can subdue the strength of sin, than that power that can destroy the devil and his works.

3. As the strength of Samson lay in his locks, and the strength of a society lies in their unity, or the strength of a company lies in their conjunction; so the strength of sin lies in its union with the sinner, and in its conjunction with and relation to him; the strength of sinful lusts lies in their oneness with, and relation to ourselves. And for a man to destroy his lusts is to deny himself: they are such a part of a man's self, that they seem to be the best part, and the most powerful part of himself; his right hand, his right eye, his most useful and powerful members; "Mortify therefore your members that are upon the earth," Col. iii. 5. The power then that can destroy the power and strength of sin, is such as can pull down self, and all the members of it, and divide one member from another. The power that is necessary for destroying sin, is that divine power that can divide and separate a man from himself, and even destroy nature itself by a new creation.

4. As the strength of a kingdom lies in the constitution and government thereof; so the strength of sin in the law of works: "The strength of sin is the law." Now, to shew how the law is the strength of sin, is the subject of the next doctrine, which I design to treat of afterwards. In a word, as the command of the law irritates sin, and gives it a commanding power over the sinner; and as the threatening of the law curses sin, and gives it a condemning power over the sinner; so the power alone that can bring down the strength of sin, must be such as can give full satisfaction both to the precept and penalty of the law of works. And whereas sin draws its commanding strength from the violated precept, and its condemning strength from the incurred sanction of the law, and yet the precept of the law derives its strength from the

holiness of God, and the sanction of the law derives its strength from the justice of God ; therefore, the power that can vanquish sin, must be such as can give infinite holiness all the obedience it commands in the precept, and infinite justice all the satisfaction it demands in the threatening of the law : consequently no man is freed from the power, strength, and dominion of sin, till he be unbottomed from the law as a covenant of works, united to Christ the second Adam, and invested with his everlasting law-biding righteousness.

V. The fifth thing proposed was, to make some application of this doctrine. Is it so, that sin is such a strong and powerful thing as I have shewn ? Then hence we may learn,

1. That it is no easy matter to be delivered from the power and strength of sin. Let Arminians magnify the power of man's nature and free-will as they please ; yet let us hence see the need of the power of God, and magnify the power of sovereign grace. If any man think so proudly of himself, that he can, at his own will and pleasure, deliver himself from the bondage of corruption, he is both ignorant of the strength of sin, declaring himself to be under the power of it, and running on in the way to his own eternal ruin ; yea, by such a conceit as this, sin gathers more and more strength, and holds sinners so much the faster under its power ; for thus they are hardened in a continuance in that course which they fancy they can reform when they will ; and hence, though their time of returning to God is always, even when they will ; yet that time never comes. To will is present with a child of God many times, Rom. vii. 18. when he finds an opposing power of sin withstanding him : but a present will to come to Christ, and forsake all sin, is never present with a natural man. A future will he may have, thinking that after such or such a time he will repent, and reform, and come to Christ ; but that future will is a present nill and denial. The strength of sin remains in the will, and will remain there, unless a day of power come to make him willing.

2. If sin hath such a strength, then see the miserable thralldom of Christless sinners ; they are slaves to the basest master in the world, namely, sin ; and if they live and die in that slavery, they are to have the fearfullest wages, and that is death. As nothing is more base than sin, so nothing is more bitter than death. You have heard of the misery of galley-slaves among the Turks, who use to chain them to their seats, and scourge them cruelly with

rods; how sweet is it to be delivered from such bondage! But, alas! what is a Turk to a devil? What is the labour of oars to the service of sin, and the torments of hell?

3. If sin hath such a strength, then see the necessity of regeneration, and the power of grace to break the power of sin. It was the speech of one to a skilful philosopher, that upon the calculation of his nativity, had foretold him some specialities concerning his future state; he answered in this manner, "Such, perhaps, I was born at first; but, since that time, I have been born again; and my second nativity hath crossed my first." Some will excuse their sin from their birth, and excuse their wickedness by their natural inclination, saying, I am born choleric, I am born covetous, I am born amorous, or born thus and thus vicious: why, indeed the power of nature is a plausible plea for these that acknowledge no power above nature; but for a professed Christian to excuse his sin from his nature, is an apology worse than the fault; for, wherefore serves the power of godliness, but to subdue the power of sin, and to govern nature? We are so far Christians, indeed, as we have the power and government over ourselves by the power of regenerating grace; and religion without this is nothing but form and speculation.

4. If sin be so strong, then conversion is a miracle, an inward miracle. Outward miracles cannot convert a man, when there is no inward power accompanying them. Ten miraculous plagues could not convert Pharaoh; the thunder, and hail, and frogs, and flies, and lice, and locusts, were destroying the land of Egypt, but could not destroy Pharaoh's pride and obstinacy: nor could all the miracles that Christ wrought destroy the Pharisees' pride and infidelity. And do we not daily see from sad experience how the strength of sin makes men break through the thousands of means, that might be thought would be effectual to conversion, such as vows, promises, mercies, crosses, sickness, convictions, terrors, sermons, warnings, challenges; yea, and break through them all into hell? It is some internal miracle only that will do the business; and indeed the strength of God is in nothing more known, than in subduing the strength of sin, which requires the exceeding greatness of his power, Eph. i. 19, even the power of his power. Hence believers are said to be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might; that is, in the power of his power, the very quintessence of power. Was it a miracle for God to make a world out of nothing? It is yet a greater miracle for him to make a saint out of a sinner, that was under the

power and strength of sin. Indeed, miracles are not ceased, so long as there are any converts in the world.

5. If sin be so strong and powerful, then see the happiness of believers in Christ, that are delivered from the sting of death and the strength of sin. The least branch of that vine that is in Christ is too high for Satan's reach; yea, while there is sap in the root, they shall not want it; they will not want the Spirit, that through the Spirit they may mortify the deeds of the body. There is a power in Christ which will bring down every contrary power and disannul the law of sin. Christ hath so handled that snake, by taking out the sting and teeth of it, that, though it hiss, it cannot hurt. Though sin be not killed outright in the children of God while here, yet it is so maimed and so weakened, that, like the proud king Adonibezek, when once his hands and toes were mangled, and he fast in chains, he could not endanger Israel in any thing; so neither can sin or Satan with respect to the children of God: "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under their feet shortly." Strong is the devil, but stronger is the Captain of their salvation; great is the power of sin, but greater is the power of Christ, whose strength will be perfected in their weakness.

6. If sin be not strong, then see to whom salvation from sin is to be ascribed, and in whom it is to be sought, namely, Christ the valiant conqueror. It is so mighty and so glorious a work to defeat his strength, that our glorious Lord thought it not unbeseeming omnipotency to meddle with it: "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help." Our perdition is of ourselves; but our salvation belongs to the Lord, and to the Lamb that sits upon the throne. No part of the glory of this work must be ascribed to any else; "His glory will he not give to another." The believer's song, therefore, will be as in the context, "Thanks be to God, that giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ;" Not by our own righteousness or our own strength; nay, "In the Lord only have we righteousness and strength; Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." And hence,

7. If the strength of sin be so great, then, how great is the strength of grace that can conquer sin! "By grace we are saved, from the power of sin, through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast." It is the sin pardoning grace, the sin subduing grace, the free mercy of God in Christ, offered to sinners in the gospel, that is mighty,

through God, to the destroying of the power of sin. All hearers of the gospel that are not believers are impenitent sinners: and they that will venture to say that it is an affront to God to offer pardon to the impenitent, they know not what they say; for it is by offers of pardoning grace and mercy to impenitent hard-hearted sinners, that God breaks their heart, and destroys the strength of their sin and impenitency: "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Why, what influences such a sinner to turn and repent? Even the offer of pardoning mercy; "For our God will abundantly pardon," Isa. lv. 7. He will multiply to pardon. O sirs! when the impenitent sinner gets an ear to hear such an offer as this, that God will multiply pardons even upon one that hath multiplied transgressions, this goodness of God leads him to repentance, and melts his heart. If any thing in the world break the strength of sin, it will be the strength of grace, and of God's love and mercy, through Christ, held out in the gospel.

8. If the strength of sin be so great, then hence I infer that there can be no gospel repentance before faith: No repentance, or turning from sin to God, till a man come to Christ for righteousness and strength against the strength of sin. It is another piece of the new and odd divinity of some in our day, that gospel-repentance, or some acts of it, are before saving faith: but this doctrine of the strength of sin declares the contrary; for, when true gospel repentance takes place, then the strength of sin is broken, and the man is actually in arms against it. But where got he his armour, if he never came to Christ by faith for strength? Repentance is a turning to God, but who ever turned to God without taking Christ by the way? For no man comes to the Father but by him. Much hypocritical, and feigned, and legal repentance there may be without faith; but true, actual, gospel repentance is always the fruit both of Christ's look to the soul, as he did to Peter, whereupon he goes out and weeps bitterly; and also of faith looking to Christ; "They shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and mourn." And this, by the bye, may serve to gloss several abused texts of scripture, where repentance is first named before faith, which never import that true gospel repentance is before faith; but only, as we may first speak of the end, and then of the means to accomplish that end; so repentance may be the first named, which is the end, even

turning to God ; and then faith comes in as the mean to that end. Thus, "Repent, and believe the gospel," there is the end ; repent and turn to a right mind, by turning to God. Why, he must even come to Christ by believing the gospel, otherwise he will never repent so as to turn unto God : thus we read of repentance towards God, and then faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ ; where, though repentance towards God be first named, yet faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, without which there is no coming to God, is first acted. If I should say, Go up to heaven, and climb the ladder ; though going up to heaven is first named, yet the mean of this, though last named, must be first used, for who will ever win up to heaven unless they get up by the true Jacob's ladder, the Lord Jesus Christ ? In a word, the strength of Christ must be improved by faith, and set against t' e strength of sin ; otherwise no part of its strength is in the least broken.

9. If the strength of sin be so great, then hence I infer that our Lord Jesus Christ is the great and eternal God, because he alone could destroy the strength of sin, and through him alone we can have complete victory over it. Oh ! cursed Arianism ! that would diminish our only strength, by denying the supreme Deity of our Lord Jesus. If he had not been a true God, essentially one with the Father, as well as personally equal to him, when the strength of sin and the whole power of it was laid upon him it would have destroyed him. The power of sin, which strikes against an infinite Majesty, brought the power of infinite vengeance upon him, which would have ruined him to eternity, if he had not been God ; but, because he was the infinite and eternal God, he was able, by his death in the flesh, to condemn sin in the flesh, Rom. viii. 3, and so to destroy the strength of sin. And hence,

10. If the strength of sin be so great, see the duty of poor sinners that are captives to the power of sin, viz., to look to him who is the Strength of Israel, that they may be saved from the strength of sin, Isa. xlv. 22, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth ; for I am God, and there is none else." None else can save from the strength of sin, set the strength of angels against it it will be too hard for them, the strength of means and ordinances, the strength of ministers and sermons, the strength of duties and prayers will not do of themselves. I have already shewed that sin is stronger than all these ; but here is a strength that is able to save to the uttermost from it, even the strength of Christ ; therefore, "Let him take hold

of my strength, Isa. xxvi. 3. But say you, why desire you one that is under the strength of sin, to lay hold on the strength of Christ? The strength of sin weakens me, so that I have no ability to lay hold on his strength. It is true, you have no strength, nor ever will have strength in yourself, or power in your own hand, while you are in this broken state; but as you are called to lay hold on his strength, so you are called to go out of yourself, for strength to lay hold on his strength; if you had strength in yourself to lay hold on him by faith, Christ would never be presented to you as the author of faith, as well as the object of it. Therefore, when you are called to believe, you are not called to bring strength out of yourself for that end, but to say, with your soul, Oh! I have neither righteousness nor strength; but, "Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." And though it be almighty power alone that can make you say that with the heart, and believingly; yet, while you cannot say it, though God be offering Christ to you for your righteousness and strength, you are saying, in effect, It is a lie that God says; I cannot believe it; he is not offering any such thing to me; I cannot take it to me; I cannot trust his word for it; and so, by unbelief, you make him a liar.

Oh! sirs, cast yourselves on the Lord Jesus, for salvation from sin, and from all your sins, and from the strength of all your lusts; for he is freely offering himself and all his grace to you, saying, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk, without money and without price." Why, what means this, *Ho, every one?* Why it is even as Christ should say, *Ho, every guilty person, come to me for pardon; Ho, every filthy sinner, come to me for cleansing; my blood only cleanseth from all sin; Ho, every naked sinner, come to me for a robe of righteousness to cover you; Ho, every needy sinner, come to me for supply out of my infinite fulness; Ho, every faithless, unbelieving sinner, come to me, as the author of faith, that I may give you faith, and help your unbelief, and then increase your faith; Ho, every impenitent sinner, hard-hearted sinner, come to me, as to a Prince exalted by the right hand of God, to give repentance, and to give you the heart of flesh promised in the covenant; Ho, every great sinner, come to me for the great salvation from your great sins, and from God's great wrath; Ho, every graceless sinner, come to me for grace and glory, and eternal life. Why will you not come to me, that you might*

have life? To come to Christ for life, supposes death: and how can the dead come to him for life? Why, it is his call, who is the Lord of life, and can make the dead to hear and live; therefore, *Ho*, every powerless sinner, in whom the strength of sin and lusts is stronger than hell and the devil, come to me for strength, and look to me for strength: "For I am God, and there is none else." None else but the mighty God can save from the might of sin, which, if he save you not, is mighty to defile you, and mighty to destroy you. But, what is the Mediator's name? His name is, "Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God;" and never did he appear more mighty than in destroying mighty lusts, and subduing the strength of sin; all the strength of men and angels could have done no more against sin, or the wrath of God that it brought on, than if you should set a piece of paper against a mighty flame. Such is the wrong that sin hath done to God, that all the created power of heaven and earth coming in betwixt God and man, to satisfy for that wrong, had been but like a piece of dry thin paper, betwixt you and a mighty devouring flame. But, behold, Christ, who undertook to remove the strength of sin, and the power of wrath that it entails, is the mighty God, the infinite God, able to expiate that infinite wrong that sin had done to God: and as he hath discovered his ability, by pouring out his blood to save meritoriously; so he is ready to discover his ability, by pouring out his Spirit to save efficaciously. *Ho*, every powerless sinner, then, here is a powerful Saviour, ready to save you freely, without money and without price: having no merit but only this, that you merit hell and damnation; having no power but this, that you are under the power and strength of sin. If you could merit any good, you would have no need of Christ to save you by price; if you had power to help yourself, you would have no need of Christ as a Saviour to save you by power; and, therefore, it is even because you have no merit, no power, no grace, no good, that this all-sufficient Saviour is offered to you, and boding himself upon you so freely.

If the strength of sin could be broken any other way, the strength of a Saviour would not be thus freely offered by the great God unto you. God would not expose his great eternal Son to contempt, by offering him thus to poor sinners, if they could be saved without him. But, though you have contemned him all your days, to your own shame, in despising your own mercy, yet now again he is offering himself anew to you, as fully and freely as ever; and

think not the less of sin, that salvation from it is so freely offered to you, and so freely boded upon you by this gospel: for, I declare to you, in the Lord's name, that this free dispensation of the grace of God to you, is a greater business, and more momentous, than the tongues of men and angels can express; for God to come and offer his Christ, and for Christ to come and offer himself, to save you from the strength of sin, is more than if he should offer you ten thousand worlds.

There is more of the glory of God in one word of the gospel, in one line, one sentence of the gospel, than in all heaven and earth beside: more of God's glory shines in this gospel of grace, wherein he freely offers his pardoning and purifying grace, to take away the guilt, and filth, and power of sin; more of his glory shines here, than shines in the making of heaven and earth: for here the great Counsel of God, working from all eternity, is displayed. In the work of creation he opens his hand, as it were; but in this gospel-dispensation he is opening his heart, and discovering his deep design, especially of redeeming love through Christ, to the glory of all his perfections, in destroying sin and saving the sinner.

Think not the less of sin then, that salvation from it is offered so freely, and at such an easy rate; for as you cannot have it at all, unless you have it freely, considering your lost, doleful, and destitute circumstances, so the thing offered to you is most becoming to infinite Majesty to offer, and most declarative of the infinite evil of sin. For the things offered amount to no less than an infinite price to save from the guilt of sin, and infinite power to save from the strength of sin: for Christ, in all his fulness of merit and Spirit, is laid to your hand. And therefore, lay your hand to your heart, and see if it be panting after and welcoming a Saviour or not, and closing with him for righteousness and strength. Say not, the strength of sin is great, the strength of enmity, the strength of unbelief, the strength of other sins stand in the way: for the strength of sin is the very reason for which Christ is offered to you, and the very thing which he is offering to take away by his almighty strength. What say you, can he not do it without me? Yea, but he will not do it without your consent: it is his stated method of saving; he does not save against their wills, but by making them willing, and gaining their consent. And, what is the meaning of this free offer, but to gain your full consent?

Well then, O sinner, is it come to this with it, "What wilt

thou that he should do unto thee?" Wilt thou have Christ to pull down the strength of sin, and of all your lusts and idols? Is your heart saying, O welcome, Jesus, to save me a poor sinner, not only from the guilt of sin, by thy pardoning grace, but from the strength of sin, by thy sanctifying grace? Why then, there were ground to conclude the work of power is begun: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." If you have no manner of will that Christ should save you from the strength of sin, alas! then, who is to blame that you die in your sin, and perish under the power of it?

But, perhaps, the case of some one person or other may be this, Alas! I not only feel the strength of sin that you have been speaking of, but also a strength of unwillingness to be saved from it; and if I were willing, and so and so disposed, I might be welcome: but while it is not so, is there any hope for me?

I answer, 1. This strong Redeemer is offered to all the hearers of the gospel without an *if*. The covenant of works is a covenant of *ifs*; if you do, you shall live; if you be so and so qualified, you shall be so and so blessed; but it is not so in the absolute promise of the covenant of grace. And as the promise of the covenant is without an *if*, so the offer of the gospel is without an *if*, to whosoever will, whosoever pleases. It is true, he only that believes shall be saved; but as they are different questions, Who they are that shall be saved? and, Who they are to whom salvation is offered? so, seeing salvation is of faith, that it may be by grace, the meaning of these words, "He that believes shall be saved," is, He that will have salvation freely by grace, and without any *if*, he may have it.

2. If you feel the strength of sin, I hope the strength of a Saviour will be the more welcome to you; and if the strength of unwillingness to be saved be your plague, the healer is at hand, the strength of a strong and mighty Redeemer is at hand, in the offer and promise, saying, "He gives power to the faint, to him that hath no might he increaseth strength." Let Christ therefore get the glory of conquering your will: put your unwilling will into his able hand, saying, Lord, make me willing; O subdue the rebellion and resistance of my will, and subject my will to thy will. They that are willing to have Christ, bending and bowing their will, are both convinced of their natural enmity, and partly cured of it. However, whether your willingness to part with sin, and join with Christ, be

cured or not; whether you be willing or unwilling, the offer of Christ is come to your door, insomuch that you are invited freely to come to him. Christ's complaint is, "You will not come to me, that you might have life;" which says, that though they were unwilling to come, yet they were invited to come. The gospel invitation then is to all poor sinners to come, be who they will, and be the strength of sin that they are under never so great, that the Son may make them free, and then they shall be free indeed.

But if this call be slighted, I have this to tell you, that the strength of sin never exerted itself so much in all the sins that ever you committed to this day, as it does in rejecting a Saviour. Ye may think, if sin should excite you to murder, and adultery, and blasphemy, and other horrid things of that sort, then the strength of sin would be great: very true, so it would: but I must tell you, whether you think it or not, that there is a thousand times more of the strength of sin put forth in your slighting of Christ and his offered salvation, than is put forth in all the horrid villainies besides that can be committed: for, as all your sins would lose their strength by your laying hold on Christ for righteousness and strength, so your refusing Christ to be your strength, is the sin that is the strength of all your other sins; they have strength to command you, and strength to condemn you, because of your unbelief, which strengthens every sin; yea, and is the very strength of the strength of sin; all your departures from the living God flow from the evil heart of unbelief, Heb. iii. 12. The faith of the gospel would be the death of sin, but unbelief keeps you under the law, which is the strength of sin.

Perhaps, some may say, Though Christ be offered to me for righteousness and strength, and I am called to believe in him with application, as the Lord my strength; yet how shall I believe thus in him for strength, unless I feel his strength?

Why man, to feel his strength, is sense and not faith, and imports the presence of the thing believed, and the enjoyment of the thing promised; but there is a vast difference betwixt believing the promise, and enjoying the thing promised; to believe the promise of strength in the Lord Jesus, is to take his word, even when you want the thing promised, or want the feeling of it; for, "Faith is the evidence of things not seen," nor felt; for, if they were seen and felt, they would not be the object of faith, but the object of

sense. Faith's proper object is nothing else but the word of the God of truth.

Why, say you, but can I believe that Christ will be my strength, without getting strength to believe.

I answer, Strength to believe is one thing, and to believe in Christ for strength is another; strength to believe is God's enabling one to the act of faith; but to believe for strength, is faith's acting upon Christ the object held up in the word of promise. And again, though none can believe, without getting strength to believe, yet it is one thing to get strength to believe, and another thing to get the feeling of that strength; for, though faith cannot be acted without the feeling of that power and strength of God within the man; yea, so far is the believer many times from feeling any strength within him when he believes, that he feels nothing but want and weakness, utter inability and impotency, which makes him go out of himself, and look to the strength of Christ that lies in the gospel-offer and promise. Nay, the very language of faith supposes that the man hath no feeling of strength in himself, but believes his strength to be in the Lord. Faith is not acted in the sense of strength, but in the sense of weakness, saying, "In the Lord only have I righteousness and strength."

But, say you, If I felt the strength of sin broken, then I might believe in him as my strength, and take him for such; but, how can I believe in him as my strength, and persuade myself that he is so, according to the offer and promise of the gospel, when I find the strength of sin still remaining?

ANS. 1. The work of God, in breaking the strength of sin, and the feeling of that work, is the fruit of faith; and the reason why you do not feel that work of God, is because you do not believe his word: "If you would believe, you should see the glory of God."

2. The word of God, wherein he offers and promises to be your strength, is the ground of faith upon which alone the persuasion of faith is to be founded. Beware of confounding the ground and foundation of faith with the fruits, marks, and effects of it. The sensible decay of the strength of sin, is a mark, a fruit, and effect of faith, and might yield a persuasion of sense; but God's word alone is the ground and object of faith; and to build the persuasion of faith upon it, is the very means of producing all these fruits of faith that are the objects of spiritual sense. To say, therefore, that you cannot believe in Christ as your strength, till you feel the strength

of sin once broken, is the same as if one should say, I cannot lay the foundation, till once I see the house is built ; I will not come to the physician, till once I see the disease healed. Nay, if you saw the house well built, what need would there be of laying the foundation ? If you saw your plagues healed, what need would there be of coming to the physician ? If you felt the strength of sin removed, what need would there be of employing Christ for strength ? Nay, the very feeling of the strength of sin, which you make the reason why you cannot believe, is the very reason why you should believe, and lay stress upon the divine testimony concerning Christ, with particular application of him to you as your strength.

My friends, Christ puts himself in a promise for your use : he puts his righteousness in the promise, his strength in the promise, his grace in the promise : and Christ hath put himself there, that faith may seek him there ; therefore, seek the Lord and his strength ; otherwise the strength of sin will be your death. There are but two ways wherein it can be supposed the strength of sin may be broken or removed ; either by the law, or by the gospel. As to the law, as a broken covenant, it may well discover sin and condemn it, and you for it ; but it is so far from giving strength against it, that sin gathers strength from it : “ The strength of sin is the law ; ” which is the subject I purpose to treat of in the next doctrine. Therefore, it is only in the gospel, and the promise thereof, that strength is to be found ; and the strength that is in the promise, is the strength of Christ, in whom all the promises are Yea and Amen ; and hence when you quit the promise by unbelief, you quit the strength of Christ ; when you rely on the promise by faith, you rely on the strength of Christ. Cursed unbelief, then, gives strength to sin ; whereas faith sets the strength of Christ against it. O may this gospel come to you, not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost.

Let me close this purpose with a word to you that are believers, and have fled for refuge from the strength of sin, to the strength of a Saviour. If this hath been your course, I must tell you, though the free offer of the gospel was your warrant to take that course, yet the great power of God was the thing that determined and enabled you thereunto : therefore, bless him that gave you counsel ; for now the strength of sin is broken.

Alas ! may one say, that hath fled to Christ for strength, if the strength of sin be broken in all that have fled to Christ, then I

think, I am a stranger to him; for I feel the strength of sin more than ever.

Ans. Sin is not always strongest, when the strength of it is most felt. The world, that are under the power and dominion of sin, have no sense or feeling of the power of it, because it is their element: even as a man that is in the water, feels not the weight of it, because he is in the element of it; but, bring him out of the water, and put a tub full of water on his head, he will then find the strength and weight of it, because he is not within its element. The wicked world feel not the strength of sin, because they are under the power of it, and within the very element of sin's strength; but, believer, thy beginning to feel the strength of sin, says, thou art getting out from under the power of it; yea, the prevailing power of sin may sometimes take place, where the killing and domineering power of it is broken: "Iniquity prevails against me," may the believer say; and yet, "Sin shall not have dominion over him; for, he is not under the law, but under grace." But though the strength of sin be broken in you, believer, yet even the broken strength of sin may be so great, as to break your heart, and break your back, and break your peace, and break your confidence and courage; therefore, as you have begun to flee to Christ for refuge from the strength of sin, so you must hold on, living by faith on him as your strength, and that in the course of all his appointed means, such as reading, hearing, meditating, watching, and praying, and guarding against all the motions of that strong enemy, and particularly against the first motions of sin, and the first beginnings of it; great evils arise out of small beginnings; one spoonful of water will quench that fire, which afterwards whole buckets cannot abate. Therefore, resist the beginnings of sin, as you would resist the devil. When sin does not seem to be shewing all its strength, that which it aims at, even in its weakest assaults at first, is to put forth its utmost strength: "Watch, therefore, and pray, that ye enter not into temptation;" and let not down your watch; for if you watch one half-hour, and think you may sleep safely the other half, The Philistines will be upon you, Samson. Whenever you begin to sleep in security, sin will waken upon you in its strength and fury, though it were upon the back of a saving manifestation; yea, if you have been upon the mount with God, even upon the top of the mount, Satan, if he can, will throw you down from the pinnacle of the temple; therefore, keep near to your Lord, your strength.

And whatever means you use, beware of going back to your old husband the law; for, as I design to show in the following doctrine, the law, instead of helping you, will hurt you. If you wind up a clue of legal performances, expecting to overcome sin that way, you will find it vain labour, and that you must wind it off again, and begin upon a new bottom, namely, Christ the Lord, your righteousness and strength. To work hard in the duties of religion without faith in Christ as your righteousness for acceptance and strength for assistance, is as vain labour as for a weaver to throw the shuttle from one side of the web to the other without a thread in the shuttle. Why, let him work never so hard with feet and hands, it is lost labour, he will never make out his web that way; yea, he but wastes his strength in doing nothing. Therefore, being divorced from the law, as a covenant of works and condition of life, and married unto Christ, live upon your new husband Jesus Christ, and live near him by faith, that you may bring forth fruit unto God. The more you live under grace, the more free will you be from the strength of sin; but the more you live under the law, the more will you be under the dominion of sin; for, "The strength of sin is the law."

SERMONS CXXVIII, CXXIX.¹

"The strength of sin is the law."—1 Cor. xv. 56.

[The Third and Fourth Sermons on this Text.]

THAT sin hath a great strength will be denied by none but such as are wholly under the power of it, and have utterly lost the understanding of their own miserable condition. There are two arms of sin, by which it puts forth and exerts its power, and by which it attains to its unlawful dominion; the one is fraud, the other is force: the fraud of it is so great that it is dreadful above all things; and the force of it is so violent that, like a mighty torrent, it carries down all before it, with respect to which it is promised, Psalm lxxii. 15, concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, in behalf of the poor and needy that cry to him, "He shall redeem their soul from deceit and

(1) The two Discourses following were delivered at Orwell, August 7th and 8th, 1727.

violence ;” and how he redeems them from the strength of sin, when it takes and holds them with these powerful arms, is here discovered in this triumphant song, “ O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ? ” When a powerful enemy is to be subdued, the great and leading inquiry is, where the strength of the enemy lies, that so it may be attacked in its principal strength : but if the ignorant world, that are strangers to the grace of God revealed in the gospel, should be examined and asked, Where does the strength of sin lie ? They would never answer it as our apostle does here ; yea, it would be a hard question, a difficult catechism to the most part of gospel professors, especially such as are under the powerful influence of a legal spirit. It cannot but be a mystery to their understanding, to hear that the strength of sin is the law. If the apostle Paul had been living and preaching in our day, it is likely, upon his delivering such doctrine as this, he had been taxed as a ringleader of Antinomians and enemies to the law : and it is plain from his epistle, he did not escape from this reproach, which therefore we find him wiping off, Rom. iii. 31, “ Do we then make void the law through faith ? God forbid ; yea, we establish the law.” Why, but is it possible to establish the law, and yet assert, that the strength of the law ? How can this be ? Yea, it may be asserted in a consistency both with the honour of the law, and with a casting the greatest contempt upon sin : and therefore it is an essay to open this mystery, that, through grace, I would endeavour at this time, namely, That the strength of sin is the law.

After a communion solemnity, the battle is to be expected ; for even in the banquetting house the banner of love supposes a battle at hand ; yea, a battle present, as well as a battle to come ; now, the strength of the battle, to be sure, is to be against the strength of sin. Believers, that know what it is to be brought to the banquetting house, do also know that sin is the great enemy they have to combat with : and if it be asked, on the one hand, Where the believer’s strength lies ? Surely it lies in the Lord Jesus, his righteousness and strength, and in the banner of love and grace that he spreads over his people, who are not under the law, but under grace. And, since the apostle sets the law and grace in opposition to one another, and since the love and grace of God in Christ is the banner and strength of the believer, it is no wonder if it be asked, on the other hand, Where the strength of sin lies ? Then the apostle answers it in this manner, saying, “ The strength

of sin is the law." Hence Christ and the law are the two main strengths here opposed: "The strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, that giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Surely there is a greater mystery in sin than the world can imagine, particularly in that it could, in a manner, get the law of God upon its side, and set the law and the Lawgiver at variance, insomuch that the main battle stands betwixt them, as being the two great contending parties and opposing powers; for, as the strength of the believer is Christ's, so the strength of sin is the law. * * *

Having elsewhere finished the first doctrine I laid down from these words: I come now to the second doctrine proposed, which was,

DOCT. "That the strength of sin is the law:" or thus, "That the law of works is the strength of sin to the sinner that hath violated and broken it."

The method I premise, after proving that the law is the strength of sin, is the following:—

- I. To inquire what law is the strength of sin.
- II. What strength it is that sin hath from the law.
- III. What sin the law is the strength of.
- IV. How and in what respect the law is the strength of sin.
- V. Whence it is that the law is the strength of sin.
- VI. Make application of the whole in several uses.

I am first to prove that the law is the strength of sin. You may see a cluster of proofs for it, Rom. vii. 5-9, compared with Rom. vi. 14, where you see that the reason of man's being under the dominion of sin is his being under the law, which plainly proves that the strength of sin is the law. But it is needless to insist in proving what is expressly asserted in the sacred text.

I. The first question I proposed was, What law is it that is here said to be the strength of sin? For, understanding this, you would consider that the law is taken two ways.

8. More largely, for the whole revelation of the will and mind of God in the word; "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this, it is because they have no light in them,"

Isa. viii. 20. It is not in this sense that you are to understand the law here ; for thus the law is not the strength of sin, but is rather the means of light, life, and strength against sin, Psalm cxix. 1, 2, 3, &c. For, in this respect, it contains not only precepts to obey, but also promises of strength ; and the whole covenant of promise, which is the mean of conveying spiritual life and strength. Now, in this sense, it is not opposed to the gospel of the grace of God, but contains the gospel in it ; and therefore the law, under this consideration, is not here intended.

2. More strictly, the law is taken for the old covenant rule of perfect obedience, and under this form, *Do and live*. In this sense it is the strength of sin, as being opposite to the gospel, or to grace, which believers are said to be under : “Ye are not under the law, but under grace.” “All men besides are under the power, rule, conditions, and authority of the law as a covenant,” says Dr. Owen, even all men who are not instated in the new covenant through faith in Christ Jesus, who set up in them and over them the rule of grace ; for all men must be, one way or other, under the rule of God ; and he rules only by the law, or by grace ; and none can be under both at the same time.”

But for further clearing what this law is, that is here called the strength of sin, you may consider it,

(1.) In its distinction ; it is to be viewed formally, as a covenant of works, and materially as a rule of life. The law, materially considered, is the matter of the covenant of works, the simple precept of obedience relating to the abstaining from what is evil, and doing what is good ; this is continually and eternally binding upon all rational creatures. The law, formally considered, is the form of the covenant of works, commanding all duties, with a promise of life upon our obedience ; and forbidding all sin, with a threatening of death in case of disobedience. Thus it is a covenant of life or death upon doing or not doing. In this respect the believer is not under it ; it is not binding upon him : he is, indeed, bound to do what is good, and shun what is evil, because he is still under the law, materially considered as a rule of life ; but under no obligation to it formally as a covenant, as if he were to be justified upon his obedience, or condemned upon his disobedience. No ; he is not under the law as a covenant, to be either justified or condemned. But then,

(2.) Consider it in its parts, namely, the command and the sanction : the command of it as a covenant is not simply *Do*, or yield

obedience ; for this was incumbent on man before ever there was a covenant of works made with him, the law as a rule of holiness being written on the table of his heart, in his first make and constitution, before ever God entered into covenant with him ; but the command of the covenant of works was that same *Do*, in its connexion with the sanction of the promise of life upon doing, and threatening of death upon not doing ; *Do and live* : if thou do not, thou shalt die.

(3.) Consider it in its properties ; it is holy, just, and good, says the apostle, Rom. vii. 12. Holy in its command ; just in its threatening ; and good in its promise. The command of holiness is a holy command, the threatening of death is a just threatening, the promise of life is a good promise. The holiness of the command, requiring perfect personal obedience, flows from the holiness of God, and the purity of his nature ; the justice of the threatening of eternal death against sin, flows from the justice of God, and the demerit of sin ; the goodness of the promise of eternal life upon man's obedience, issued from the sovereignty of God, that was pleased to make such a promise, not from the merit of that personal and perfect obedience, though it had been performed ; no creature obedience, whether of man or angel, hath any merit of condignity ; all the merit that could take place, even in a state of innocence, was a merit of paction ; for, though man had obeyed perfectly, he did no more than what he was bound to do, and so could never merit ; and therefore the promise of life, annexed to obedience, was a good promise, shewing forth the sovereign goodness of God. Now, before this law was violated and broken by sin, it could never be the strength of sin to man in these circumstances ; nay, it was rather, in every part and property of it, a bulwark against sin ; the command was a bright glass wherein the beauty of holiness shined ; the threatening of eternal death was a flaming sword to make sin terrible ; and the promise of eternal life, upon obedience, was a golden bait to make duty delectable. But now,

(4.) Consider this law in the violation of it, and as it is a broken law, a violated covenant ; and under this consideration it is, that the law is the strength of sin, namely, to the sinner that hath violated and broken it ; and so it became the strength of sin to Adam upon his fall, and to all his posterity, for failing in the obedience and righteousness therein required. We have forfeited the life therein promised, and incurred the death therein threatened ; “ By

one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin ; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned," Rom. v. 12. And thus the life of God in man being lost, through his being alienated from it, the life and strength of sin must succeed. The law then, that is the strength of sin, is the law of works, violated by the sinner. It could not be the strength of sin to the keeper ; but it is so to the breaker of it. To the perfect keeper of it, it is life ; but to the least breaker of it, it is death ; and if the law be death to the breaker, it must be, of consequence, the sting and strength of sin, according to our apostle here, "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law." Now, the *sting* and the *strength* of sin is much the same, even as the strength of the bee lies in the sting of it ; and therefore the strength of sin must be the law, which, to the least breaker of it, is death. The perfect keeper of the law is safe, if such an one could be found ; for it says, "The man that does these things shall live by them," Rom. x. 5. And this safety and life flows from the promissory sanction of it, *Do and live*. But every breaker of the law is a dead man ; the law that he breaks is his death ; for it says, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things, written in the book of the law, to do them," Gal. iii. 10 ; or, the man that does not these things, shall die in and by his sin and disobedience ; and this death issues from the minatory sanction of the law ; "If thou do not, thou shalt die." The strength of sin then, is that violated law, that made death the wages of sin, by the penal sanction of it. But more of this sin afterward.

II. The second thing promised here was, To shew what strength it is that sin hath from the law. In general, all the strength it hath is from that violated law of works ; it would have no strength to enslave us ; no strength to ruin us, if there were no law violated thereby ; Rom. iv. 15, "Where no law is, there is no transgression," no sin ; and where no sin is, there is no strength of sin ; consequently, where a broken law is, there is sin and its strength ; and so the strength of sin is the broken law ; thus, whatever strength sin hath, it is from the law. But more particularly, I name only a six-fold strength that sin hath from the violated law of works, viz.,

1. The commanding strength of sin is from the law ; hence sin is said to have dominion over all that are under the law, Rom. vi. 16. For it is there declared, that it shall not have dominion over them that are not under it ; and just it is, that man, who would not remain under the command of God, should be put under the com-

mand of sin ; yea, it follows necessarily, that these who cannot be subject to the law of God, must be subject to the law of sin. Sin receives from the law a kind of title to the dominion and rule over all the breakers of it, that remain under it, and through unbelief abide out of Christ, the end of the law for righteousness. How the commanding strength of sin is from the law, may appear more clearly afterwards ; only, it cannot be otherwise, if you consider it as a broken law. Where the law is not broken, the law hath a command ; but where the law is broken, which is a transgression of the law, there sin hath the command. It is true, the commanding power of the law still remains in point of obligation, insomuch, that all that are under it are obliged to obey it upon pain of death ; but the transgressor of the law is under the commanding power of sin, in point of subjection ; insomuch, if he is enslaved to it, and willingly captivated by it ; the broken law then is the strength of sin, because the breaking of the command of the law necessarily brings a man under the command of sin. Though he remain under the command of the law, in point of original, righteous, and indissoluble obligation ; yet he is under the command of sin, in point of subjection ; hence the strength of sin to command, is the law as it is broken by sin ; the refusing of subjection to the law of God, is a chusing of subjection to the law of sin : to break the command of God, is to give the command to sin ; and, therefore, the commanding strength of sin necessarily issues from the law, as it is broken by sin.

2. The condemning strength of sin is from the law, this is more easy to be understood, therefore I insist not much upon it ; sin would have no strength to condemn us, if the law did not condemn sin, saying, Cursed be the breaker of it, Gal. iii. 10. Now, all men are included under sin ; therefore, all are under the curse that remain under the law. The law hath past a sentence of condemnation upon all sinners ; and this gives sin a strength to condemn. It is true, sin hath no strength to condemn a believer ; “ There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ,” because the law is satisfied, both in the commanding and cursing part thereof, in and by their head Jesus Christ ; yea, they are not under the law, but under grace, being united to Christ, the end of the law ; therefore, though the law still condemn their sin, yet it cannot condemn their person, nor involve a member of Christ under the curse. They may be afraid of condemnation through unbelief ; but they are more frightened than

hurt. But as to all that are out of Christ, sin hath a condemning power over them; and this it hath from the law, which not only condemns their sin, but their person; the condemning sentence lights and terminates on the sinner, that hath no covert to secure him therefrom.

3. The working strength of sin is from the law: sin is no idle thing in the sinner; nay, it is a working thing, and whence its working strength flows, see Rom. vii. 5, 8, "The motions of sin that are by the law, did work in our members, to bring forth fruit unto death." Why are the motions of sin said to be from the law, and these motions said to work in our members, but to shew that the working strength of sin is from the law? And how that is, the apostle explains, verse 8, "For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence." Hence,

2. The warring strength of sin is from the law; hence, Rom. vii. 23, it is called the law in the members, warring against the law in the mind; yea, it wars and wins both; for it conquers and captivates even the children of grace, leading them captive to the law of sin and death. This warring strength of sin issues out of the working strength of it, for the work of it is the warfare of it; therefore, if the working strength of it be from the law, so must the warring strength of it be; and if it work and war in believers, how powerfully does it work and carry all before it in these that have no true grace, and when it meets with no opposition? It is true, the strength of it appears most, where there is most opposition to it; but yet they are most under the strength of it, to whom the strength of it does least appear.

5. The wounding strength of sin is from the law. Whence comes a wounded spirit, but from sin? Whence comes the wounded strength of sin, but from the law? "A wounded spirit who can bear?" Why, what makes it intolerable? Even because the broken law presents the intolerable wrath of God, the interminable wrath of God, the everlasting wrath of God, as the native fruit of sin; and when eternal wrath and eternal death is stinging and tormenting the man's conscience, what is then a-doing? Why, the matter is, "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law;" and that sting is sticking in the heart, and wounding the spirit. Many, indeed, are not wounded by sin, because sin is sleeping, and the guilty conscience sleeping: but the less they see of the wounding strength of sin, the more wounds are abiding them, when sin revives and conscience wakens.

6. The killing strength of sin is from the law, and the destroying power thereof; for the wages of sin is death by the law, Rom. vi. 23; soul death as well as bodily death; and the text says, that as sin is the sting of death, so the law is the strength of sin. And thus the law not only hath a condemning strength, that it derives from sin, but a damning and destroying strength also; sin could not damn the sinner, if the law did not damn sin, and give a damning strength thereunto. All that die out of Christ, and under the law, will lie under the damning and destroying strength of sin for ever, which it derives from the law. Thus the most part are miserably slain by sin to eternity. There are some few, that are mercifully slain by it in time, as the apostle says, Rom. vii. 11, "For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me:" it slew him, and put an end to his self-righteous life; "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died," ver. 9. This is when the Spirit of God shews to a man the spirit of the law, that had studied nothing before but the letter of it, and so kills all his hopes of life and justification by the deeds of the law. Thus you have a hint at the strength that sin derives from the law; and whatever other strength it hath, is reducible to these particulars named.

III. The third thing proposed was, To shew what sin the law is the strength of. In general, the law is the strength of all sin, whether original or actual. The apostle speaks here of sin in general; "The strength of sin is the law." More particularly,

[1.] The law is the strength of original sin, whether imputed or inherent. Imputed original sin, you know, is the guilt of Adam's first sin, which is ours by imputation; inherent original sin is the total want of original righteousness, and the corruption of the whole nature, which we have by derivation from Adam. Now, the strength of both is the law, and the strength of both remains in all that are under the law, and out of Christ; for, while men are under the law, they are members of the first Adam, in whom as their federal head, they stand guilty, of the first sin, the violation of the law, or covenant of works; and from whom, as their natural root, they derive the whole deprivation and corruption of their nature: for, "By the offence of one judgment came upon all men unto condemnation;" and, "By one man sin entered into the world," Rom. v. 12, 18. The strength then of this original guilt and corruption flows from the violated law; all

that are under the law are guilty and filthy by nature, before ever they be capable of actual sin. The most innocent-like children that are born, and come of Adam, are nothing but a generation of vipers by nature; the venom of the serpent is in them.

[2.] The law is the strength of all actual sin: it is not only the strength of the root, but the strength of the fruit; and, indeed, being the strength of the fountain, it must be the strength of the streams. The fountain of sin is the strength of sin; and if the law be the strength of the fountain, it is the strength of the streams of sin. While a man is out of Christ, the strength of sin remains, even though it were possible that he had not been guilty of any actual sin; because the strength of original sin, both imputed and inherent, remains, while he remains under the power of a violated law. But with respect to actual sin, both inward and outward, the strength thereof is this broken law, that men remain under, while they remain in unbelief, and out of Christ. For instance,

1. The strength of atheism arises from the broken law that men are under: hence, all that are without Christ, are said to be without God [or Atheists], in the world, Eph. ii. 12. The power of Atheism is never broken, while people are under the law; because, as the broken law can give them no right notions of God, being never designed of God as the mean of the saving knowledge of God to a sinner, so it fills the sinner with wrong notions of God, who is not to be found in the law, but in the gospel. Since the violation of the law by sin, God, in a manner, is gone out of the law, and is to be found no where but in Christ and the gospel. Now, when the sinners, that are under the law, cannot apprehend God, or seek him any where but where they themselves are, namely, in the law, and under the law; and as he is not there to be seen and found, no wonder that they begin to think that he is no where, and consequently to say in their heart, "There is no God;" and thus atheism is strengthened: and hence the most part of men have no clear notions of God at all, because they are under the law, where God is not present with them; or, if they who are under the law have any clear notions of God, suited to the state they are under, it is a notion of him as a consuming fire to the breaker of his law. But this view of God, if it be not mercifully ordered and over-ruled, for making a man to flee to Christ for refuge, that he may not be consumed with that fire; if it be not thus mercifully over-ruled, I say, then, it is but a root of practical atheism; for, it makes him run away

from God as Adam did, and hide himself, where he atheistically dreams that God shall not see him.

2. The strength of unbelief arises from the broken law that men are under, and keep themselves under to their own ruin. Why do they not believe the gospel? They will not join in marriage with Christ, because they are married to the law: hence marriage to Christ supposes a divorce from the law, Rom. vii. 4. Men's legal faith, believing God will give them life and mercy upon their own obedience, or doing so and so, is the very strength of unbelief: for gospel-faith stands upon a quite other foundation, while it is a believing life and salvation to be had by the obedience of another, even of Jesus Christ. Now, while the law of works says, Come to me for life; or "Do and live;" and the gospel of Christ says, "You will not come to me, that ye might have life:" and the sinner's ears are open only to hear what the law says; he cannot believe what the gospel says, nor can fall in with it; because the remaining power of the broken law, which he is under, hath broken his courage and confidence in coming to God upon any other footing.

3. The strength of enmity arises from the broken law, which is the strength of sin, and which men are naturally under. It is the strength of enmity against God and Christ both, against law and gospel both. On the one hand, while a man is under the law that is violated by him, it says, that he is not subject to the law that he is under, as it is with all that are under the law; "The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be," Rom. viii. 7. He cannot be subject to the law he is under: and it is strange that men should naturally desire to be under the law as the covenant, which yet they cannot be subject to as a rule, by reason of their carnal mind and wicked nature. However, the enmity of the nature is not cured, but strengthened by the law; for, let God therein appear as a commanding God, we cannot obey him; let him appear as a threatening God, we cannot endure him; let the law thunder out vengeance, this may fill the man with slavish fear, but cannot create love; nay, it increases enmity. On the other hand, as the carnal mind is enmity against God in the law, so the legal mind is enmity against Christ in the gospel, Rom. x. 3. Men being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, do not, and will not, submit unto the righteousness of God. Hence,

4. The strength of prejudice against Christ arises from the broken law that men are under, and wedded naturally unto: the law of works, that they are under, can neither save them itself, nor will it suffer them to go to Christ to be saved by him. Though the law cannot save a sinner, but damns all that are under it; yet it points out no other way of salvation; it is the gospel does that; the law leads a sinner no where but to itself. It is true, the law is said to be a schoolmaster to lead unto Christ; or, as the word is, Gal. iii. 24, a "Schoolmaster unto Christ;" or, "until Christ come." At the school of the law, under the convincing influence of the Spirit men may come to see their need of a better master than the law, and so their need of Christ; but the law of itself, as it never revealed Christ, nor led to any other righteousness but that which is personal; so, as it is a covenant of works, it seeks no righteousness but the man's own personal obedience; and this being naturally impressed upon all men, they having some dim notions of life by doing are filled with prejudice against life, by believing in another for righteousness: hence, all that are wedded to the law, are filled with prejudice against the gospel, as if it were no friend to the holiness of the law; because forsooth, it decries their rotten righteousness, in order to lay another foundation on which true holiness doth grow; but this the man under the law cannot understand. For,

5. The strength of pride arises from the law; "Where is boasting then? It is excluded; By what law? Of works? Nay, but by the law of faith," Rom. iii. 27. As pride was the root of the first rebellion and breach of the law, while this temptation was yielded to, "You shall be as gods;" so, in the righteous judgment of God, the broken law is the root of pride. They that are under the law are proud of that which should lay their pride; proud of a trifle, proud of a nothing, proud of rags that cannot cover their nakedness; yea, of filthy rags that but defile them; they glory in their shame. Whenever a man comes in to Christ, he is ashamed of that which was his glory, and counts that but loss which he reckoned gain to him; but while he remains out of Christ, and under the law, he glories in that which is his shame. Is it not a shame for a man to glory in that which is but stinking dung? So do these secretly boast of, and pride themselves in some poor petty duty and righteousness of theirs; whereas the apostle calls all personal righteousness dung, when compared with Christ's imputed

righteousness, Phil. iii. 8, 9. But much more, is it not a shame for men to glory in their sins, as some do in their profane swearing, and drinking, and the like debauchery? Yet, even this is rooted in the violated law. For,

6. Even the strength of profaneness arises from the broken law, that men are under and remain under by unbelief. Though profane persons are evidently under no subjection to the law, yet even their profaneness proves that they are under bondage to it; for no man is under the bondage of sin, and under subjection to it, but he that is under the bondage of the law, both in its commanding and condemning power; and though the sense of their obligation to the law-command be of no force to bind them to obedience; yet the strength of their sin and disobedience discovers the strength of a legal temper, and the power of a covenant of works that they are under. You will think strange to understand, that there is a secret boasting of their law-righteousness, that even under the open contempt they are pouring upon the authority of the law; and this appears, either in their ignorant hope, on the one hand; or their foolish despair, on the other. On the one hand, their ignorant hope thinking either the law will justify them in their present impiety, or upon their future amendment and penitency; hence profane men will justify themselves in their cursing, and swearing, and drinking, though they swear by faith and conscience; why, say they, that is no swearing; and though they drink away their stock, or tittle away their time; yet if they have any sense or reason left, why, say they, that is no drunkenness: and as they justify themselves, so they hope the law will not condemn them; and so they expect it will justify them; there is part of their ignorant hope, Deut. xxix. 19. On the other hand, foolish despair may be latent at the root of their profaneness, which also discovers how much they are wedded to the law, even when they are breaking it. Perhaps they have essayed some duties, at a certain time of their life; or, at least, been conscious of the obligation they were under to obey the law; but having little hope of success, or coming speed that way, or of gaining life by their doing, they are become desperate; and the more they give up themselves to profaneness, the more desperate they grow, and hopeless of winning life by the law, or of paying the debt they owe to it; therefore, like desperate debtors, finding themselves out of capacity to pay it, they take on still more and more, concluding there is no hope, Jer. xxii. 25, and xviii. 12: Which

does not at all prove that they have no manner of inclination to pay debt, but rather their secret willingness to do it if they were able, but that they have no hope. Such is the case of many profane persons, they are desperately taking on more and more debt to the law by their sin, which is so far from proving them to be under the law, that as it declares them under the curse of it ; so it proves their secret inclination to do and live ; that it is through desperation they give up themselves to all wickedness, having no hope of life that way : and the more their profaneness increases, the more their desperation grows, whereby they take on more and more debt, being hopeless of ever paying it, and expecting no profit in obeying the law, Job xxi. 15. Thus there is at the bottom a strength of legal pride : because the man cannot win life by his doing, therefore he desperately fights against that law which he hath no hope of satisfying, and chooses rather to be damned in his unrighteousness, than be obliged to the righteousness of another.

7. The strength of hypocrisy and formality arises from the broken and mistaken law ; hence, they that are under the law, are under this delusion, that the law will be pleased with any service they may give it, though it be but outside conformity thereto ; like the Pharisees, of whose legal performances Christ says, "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, you cannot be saved. The legalist is a lover of himself, and his own righteousness ; and his self-love blinds him, that he secretly supposes anything that comes from him will be acceptable to the law. As the law is broken and violated, so it is but broken pieces of the law that he sees, because his understanding also is broken and blinded, he knows not the perfection thereof ; and therefore, making to himself an imperfect law, he doubts not but it will be satisfied with his imperfect righteousness : yea, he may think his righteousness as perfect as the law is, saying, with the young man in the gospel, "All these things have I done from my youth up." Thus hypocrisy and formality issue from the law as it is broken and abused, mangled and maimed by them that are under it.

8. The strength of security arises from the law, as it is broken and abused by men ; for they that are under the law, make their very obedience to it (however moral and external only it is) a handle for their security, contempt, and neglect of the law. Thus said the whore in Prov. vii. 14, "This day have I paid my vows, and offered my peace-offering ; come let us take our fill of loves." Her duty hardened her in sin and security ; and thus many go to the church,

they go to their prayers, they go to their duty ; and then they imagine that as they have made sufficient amends for what is passed, so they have made sufficient provision for preventing the bad effects of what is to come ; they may now indulge themselves in their pleasure, since they suppose they have satisfied the Law-giver with some obedience. What is this but the strength of security fostered by the law ? When men after such and such duties allows themselves a latitude, they draw strength to their carnal security from the law ; “ We shall have peace though we walk after the imaginations of our hearts.” And thus it is the strength of negligence also ; none are readily more negligent of the duties of the law, than these that boast of the law, and of winning to heaven by their good works ; whence is this, but from the law of works cutting them short of strength through their abuse of it ? Why, is it possible that men will neglect duty, and yet think to be justified by their duties ? Yea, and why so ? Because they make their own duty a salve for their sore ; and as they but seldom find their sores so they seldom make application even of their own salve. In a word, the law of works is thus the strength of all sin.

IV. The fourth thing proposed was, To show how and in what respect the law is the strength of sin. This is the main question and the grand mystery here to be solved ; for, that the law is the strength of sin, is plain from the text, wherein the Holy Ghost declares it in express terms ; terms that we durst never have used, if the Spirit of God had not used them before us : but how the law is the strength of sin, remains yet to be considered. Besides the hints that I have given before, there are these eight following respects, wherein the law of works, now violated and broken, is the strength of sin, ever since the original breach and violation thereof.

1. The law is the strength of sin, in respect of the extensive malediction and curse of the law, whereof the power and strength of sin is a principal part, and so the breach of it could not but necessarily infer the strength of sin. Death temporal, spiritual and eternal, was the penalty of the law, in case of the breach thereof. Now, spiritual death is nothing else but the power of sin ; and this power of sin, or spiritual death, being the main breach of the law threatening ; “ In the day thou eatest thou shalt surely die,” *Ezek. xviii. 4, Gal. iii. 10.* Now, this is the primary and radical respect wherein the law is called the strength of sin ; any other particular that I am to mention, is rather secondary and consequential unto this.

Let this therefore be remembered, as the main thing, the chief respect wherein the law is the strength of sin, that it cannot be otherwise in the nature of the thing, and according to the constitution of the law, or covenant of works, denouncing the leading judgment of spiritual death upon the breaker of it. No sooner was it broken, than mankind came under the curse of it; and all men, by nature, being under the curse of the law, they are by this very curse under the power and strength of sin, because the strength of sin is the main part of the curse of the law; man's being given up to the power of sin, is the main branch of the punishment of sin, and the chief death threatened in the law. Temporal death is nothing, if you take away the strength of sin; it hath no sting, no strength to harm. Eternal death would have no being: and, as it lies in mere torment, is but the consequential evil of sin, and nothing to the intrinsic evil and power of it in spiritual death. This being the main threatening, the main curse; to be under the curse of the law, and under the power of sin, is one and the same thing. In this respect then, especially the strength of sin is the law. Happy is the believer in Christ, that is delivered from the curse of the law: for, *ipso facto*, by this very mean he is delivered from the strength of sin: and sad is your case, that are Christless unbelieving sinners, and who have never fled to Christ for refuge; for you, being under the curse of the law, are necessarily under the power of sin: This is the main part of your cursed state, that the strength of sin is not felt, is not broken, is not weakened in you: but its commanding and condemning power both of them remain, and will remain while you are under the law, for the strength of sin is the law; and if you be not disjoined and divorced from the law, and joined and united to Christ the end of the law, the strength of sin will be your death and your doom for ever. But then,

2. The law is the strength of sin, in respect of its office, to discover sin, and make it known in the power and strength of it; Rom. iii. 20, "By the law is the knowledge of sin;" for without the law sin was dead, says the same apostle, Rom. vii. 8. Dead, and, as it were, destitute of life and strength, because the life and power of it was hid and out of sight; "For I was alive without the law," says he, ver. 9. Before the commandment came with power, discovering the spirituality of the law, I was, as it were, without the law; and so they that are without law are without sin; for, "Where no law is, there is no transgression." With-

out the law, then, sin was dead, and I was alive; the life and strength of sin did not appear; and I thought I had an innocent and holy life of it: "But when the commandment came," so as by the law I got the knowledge of sin, then the life and strength of sin appeared; sin revived, and I died. Before the law came with convincing power, might he say, sin was dead, and I was alive; but whenever the commandment came, giving me the knowledge of sin, then sin was alive, and I died; my carnal confidence died, my hope of life by the law died; for then I saw the strength of sin. Thus the law is the strength of sin, in respect of its discovering the life and strength of it, which without the law is dead. Why, may one think, if sin be dead without the law, then better want the law that gives life to it. To this we reply: The apostle here speaks of sin's being dead in point of the discovery thereof; and sin's being dead in this sense, and the strength of it hid, is no mercy but a misery. It is the misery of unconverted sinners, that the strength of it lies dead and buried, as it were, in the rotten sepulchre of their wicked heart and corrupt nature, where, like a stinking carcase, it is putrifying the whole soul: while yet the sinner, that is also dead in sins and trespasses, does not find the filthy smell thereof; for sin is nothing but death and putrefaction, but the dead man does not find the filthy smell of death and rottenness about him. The life and strength of sin is just spiritual death, and soul-defilement; and when this death is hid and out of sight to the sinner, and unfelt by him, the strength of that sin and death is not the less, but the more fearful and strong, that it is not seen and felt; therefore, as it is a mercy to get effectual conviction of sin by the law, so it is a misery to be under the power and strength of sin, and yet not to know it; for then the sinner, that is alive without the law, is but living in sin, and yet dead while he lives; the strength of sin being dead and hid to him while without the law, which is the strength of sin, in respect of its office to discover it.

3. The law is the strength of sin, in respect of its deficiency and weakness through our flesh to destroy the strength of sin, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh," Rom. viii. 3. The law is said to be weak through the flesh, or through our corrupt nature, insomuch, that it cannot justify a sinner, it cannot sanctify, it cannot save; the broken law cannot give life or strength to the breaker of it; there is

no help to be expected there against the strength of sin. Its commanding, condemning, enslaving, and ruining strength being from the law, is violated by us; surely no help against the dominion and rule of sin can come from the law: yea, the law was never ordained of God to convey grace, or spiritual strength, to the soul of man; had it not been so, the promise and the gospel had been needless, as the apostle argues, Gal. iii. 21. If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. If it could have given life or strength, then it would have produced righteousness, and we should have been justified by it. The law discovers sin and condemns it, but gives no strength to oppose it; it was never designed of God as his ordinance for the dethroning of sin, nor for the destruction of the power of sin. It was designed to declare the whole duty of man, but never had power to bar the entrance of sin, nor to cast out sin, when it is once enthroned; and the broken law hath nothing to do with sinners, but to judge, curse, and condemn them; it neither contains any grace, nor communicates any for the destroying of sin; therefore, they that are under the law, are under the dominion of sin. The law is holy, but it cannot make them holy that have made themselves unholy; the law is just, but it cannot make them just, nor justify them whom it does condemn; the law is good, but it can do them no good who have once broken it. Sin will never be dethroned by it, and will never give place to the law, either in its title to dominion, or in its power to exert the same. When the law presses on the conscience of these that are under it, perplexing or disquieting them; or when the commandment comes unto them, so as sin revives, and they die, as I said already; that is, when the law gives power to sin to slay the hope of the sinner, and to distress him with the apprehension of guilt and death; when the law is thus giving power to sin to disquiet and condemn sinners, then, being prest with a sense of the guilt of sin, and deprived of all rest and peace in their minds, they will resolve to cast off the yoke of sin, and endeavour it in some instances of duty and abstinence from sin. But, alas! the law cannot enable them hereunto; it cannot give them life and strength to go through with what their convictions press them unto; and hence they faint after a while, and grow weary, and at length give quite over, if grace come not in with that aid that the law cannot give.

4. The law is the strength of sin, not only in respect of its deficiency, for giving strength against sin; but in respect of its effi-

ency, in giving strength to sin through the corruption of our nature. As the law is weak through the flesh, and affords no strength against sin ; so it is strong through the flesh, for increasing the strength of sin. In the former it is deficient, in this latter it is efficient through the flesh ; hence it is said, Rom. iv. 15, " The law worketh wrath ;" that is, not only wrath in God against the sinner, that breaks the law ; but also wrath in the sinner against God, and enmity against him ; and both these go together. If the law work wrath in God against the sinner, the revelation of this wrath works wrath and enmity in the sinner against God. It is only the love and grace of God, revealed in the gospel, that works love ; " We love him, because he first loved us," 1 John iv. 19. Now, the law makes no revelation of the love, but only of the wrath of God ; and therefore the law, as it is the revelation of wrath, worketh wrath. Try it when you will, you will find that it is only the revelation of God's love that worketh love ; and that is the revelation of him in the gospel, as a gracious God, a promising God, a pitying, and sin-pardoning God, a reconciled God in Christ, this works love : but God, as revealed in the broken law, is merely a commanding God, a threatening God, a judging and avenging God, a terrible God, a consuming fire to sinners ; and this works wrath and enmity. Now, love being the fulfilling of the law, and the sum thereof ; enmity is the sum of all sin ; therefore, while the law works wrath and enmity, it is the strength of sin. The gospel works love, the law works enmity ; and as the faith of the gospel works by love, so legal faith, or rather unbelief, works by enmity ; and as the law works wrath and enmity, so it works fear and bondage ; slavish fear, and dreadful bondage, which is attended with disorder, disturbance, and despair.

5. The law is the strength of sin, in respect of its opposition to the gospel, wherein grace and strength alone is exhibited for the destruction of sin. " The law is not of faith," Gal. iii. 12. The law and grace are set in opposition to one another, in many places, as, Rom. xi. 6, " If by grace, then it is no more of work, otherwise grace is no more grace ; but if it be of work, then it is no more grace, otherwise work is no more work." The command of the law, as a covenant of works, *Do and live*, stands directly opposite to the call of the gospel, which is to lay hold on eternal life upon the doing of another ; the threatening of the law, and the promise of it also, stand directly opposite to the proffer and promise of the gospel,

the threatening of the law is a threatening of death to the sinner for his disobedience ; the promise of the gospel is a promise of life to the sinner through the obedience of the SURETY : the promise of the law was a promise of life to him that works for it, and works perfectly ; the promise of the gospel is a promise of life to him that works not, but believes on him that justifieth the ungodly, Rom. iv. 4, 5. The conditional promise of the law, whereof the condition is no less than perfect, personal obedience, is directly opposite to the free and absolute promise of the gospel, and the freedom of the grace thereof, which is to be had without money and without price. The righteousness of the law, and the righteousness of the gospel, stand also directly opposite ; the righteousness of the law is only for the perfect man, that never sinned ; the righteousness of the gospel is for a sinner, a sinner overwhelmed with sin ; the righteousness of the law is the righteousness of man, and the righteousness of the gospel is the righteousness of God ; it is a righteousness of another, and in another than ourselves ; it is a righteousness imputed without works, to a sinner believing in Christ, Rom. iii. 21, 22. The strength of the law for obedience, was the natural strength that God gave to Adam at first ; it was home bred, and yet but strength only in the stream, which is dried up, so as by nature we are without strength ; and sin hath the possession of all the strength of nature ; but the strength of the gospel is a borrowed strength, as well as the righteousness a borrowed righteousness, saying, " In the Lord have I righteousness and strength ;" and so it is the strength of the fountain, that can never be dried up. The law requires all to be done in our own strength ; the gospel expects nothing to be done but in the strength of another ; the law gives no ground of claim for life, but by debt to the doer ; the gospel gives no claim for it, but by grace to the sinner. Now, there can be nothing more opposite than law and gospel ; and therefore, in respect of the opposition of the law to the gospel of the grace of God, it may be called the strength of sin, since it opposes that which alone can destroy that strength.

6. The law is the strength of sin, in respect of its agreement with the natural impression that it hath left upon the heart of the children of men ; and by reason of which they stand out against Christ, in and by whom alone the strength of sin is broken ; I call it an agreement, because the law, though it will never accept of any work that a sinner can do, yet it requires the sinner to do what-

ever it required at the first, and that under the pain of eternal death, which he hath already incurred by sin ; and under the pain of forfeiture of eternal life, which he hath already forfeit by his failure ; for the law hath not lost its authority to command, though we have lost ability to obey. Now, the natural impressions that the law hath left upon the children of men, are agreeable to the original constitution of the law, or covenant of works. The law was the first liquor poured upon the vessel of man's nature, and the vessel smells of that liquor that was first put into it ; hence it is so natural for all men to expect life no other way but in a way of doing for it. And these legal impressions, left on our nature by the law, are the strength of sin in manifold respects, especially in their agreement with the law to oppose Christ in the gospel ; hence the legal mind opposes Christ as a Prophet, as it is ignorant of God's righteousness, and averse from being taught this lesson, taking up God as still dealing with it in the old-covenant way. The legal conscience opposes Christ as a Priest ; for, whenever it is awakened, it knows nothing of seeking peace by the blood of Christ, but natively looks to the law, and its own obedience for it, saying, O since I have displeased God by my disobedience, how shall I please him but by my obedience ? If I have offended him by my sin, how shall I pacify him but by my duty ? It is as natural for conscience thus to act and speak when it is pressed, as it is natural for a man to breathe in the air, or for a fish to swim in the water ; hence the natural conscience, instead of leading men to Christ, in whom alone God is well-pleased and satisfied, it leads them to the law, and so the quite opposite way to Christ. The legal will also opposes Christ as a King ; for, when he is rejected as a Priest, he cannot be received as a King ; for his spiritual kingdom is founded upon his Priesthood, insomuch, that they who receive him not for righteousness, cannot receive him for strength ; and consequently the strength of sin, both to condemn and command, remains. In a word, the will is unwilling to be saved in this way of grace, and the natural man cannot receive these things of the Spirit of God and the gospel ; men's legal notions and imaginations exalt themselves against the knowledge of Christ, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. And they are so high and mighty, that nothing can pull them down but the power of omnipotency, the weapons that are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God. Again, these legal impressions

left by the law, have a weakening influence upon the graces of the Spirit, where they are implanted ; for the implantation of grace does not wholly root out the impression of the law in time, such a deep-rooting it hath in our nature. These weeds of legal impressions, that grow up in the garden of the heart, draw away the sap and strength of the fruits of the Spirit, and weaken them. They either hinder or weaken faith, "For the law is not of faith;" it opposes both the doctrine of faith, and the grace of faith ; it hinders and weakens repentance ; for gospel-repentance issues from that faith which the law opposes ; it hinders and weakens love ; for the man cannot love that God, whom, by the law, he apprehends to be an enemy ; and hence it hinders and opposes joy in the Lord ; for the legal spirit is a spirit of heaviness, in opposition to joy ; and so it eats out the man's strength, for, "The joy of the Lord is our strength;" and consequently, when thus the law weakens and opposes the strength of grace, in this respect it is the strength of sin ; its agreement with the natural impression that it hath left on the hearts of the children of men, creates a natural disagreement betwixt us and Christ, betwixt us and the gospel, and the grace of the gospel. Pride of natural righteousness stands up against, and opposes the gospel-righteousness.

7. The law is the strength of sin, in respect of the irritating quality of its precept upon corrupt nature : "Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence," Rom. vii. 8. And here it is strange to think of the different effects of the law of works, in strengthening sin on the one hand, by its agreement with proud and self-righteous nature, as I have been shewing ; and, on the other hand, by its disagreeableness with, and opposition unto carnal and corrupt nature, which is irritated by the law. Sin takes occasion by the commandment, and so the law is the strength of sin ; as it is in the Latin proverb, *Occasio facit furem*," "Occasion makes the thief." Thus Achan : I saw such and such things, and seeing them I coveted them, and took them. The law does not, properly speaking, give occasion to sin ; but sin takes occasion from the law to be operative and working : yea, such is the corruption of nature, that the more God's law forbids sin, the more we break out into sin ; as a dam or bank made in the midst of a strong current of water, the more it is dammed up, the more it swells ; and when once it prevails, it breaks over with the greater violence : so here, the more God's law opposes sin, the more does

sin rise, and swell, and rage : *Nittimur in vetitum*, &c. Why this ? Even because there is such a contrariety betwixt God's holy law and our unholy nature. Again, in regard of righteous nature, now proud and selfish, they seem to agree, and do really so in some things ; for, according to the tenor of the covenant of works, man would have had a personal righteousness to have glorified in, if God had designed him life that way ; and proud nature abused that original constitution, which God never designed should stand but for a little, to be like a scaffold for building up a better covenant ; yet proud nature grips, as I said, to that wherein the law would have exalted it, if it had stood : but, in regard of corrupt and carnal nature, there is such an opposition to the very command of the law, that it is not subject thereto, neither can be ; nay, instead of subjection to it, it is irritate and increased by it. In this sense it may be said, that when the law enters, offence doth abound : for sin, like a mad horse, rages, and is the more furious, that it is checked with the bridle.

8. To name no more, As the law is the strength of sin, in respect of the irritating quality of the command upon corrupt nature ; so the law is the strength of sin, in respect of the severity of the sanction thereof, which, so far as it is regarded by us now in our obedience to the law, in these our sinful circumstances under a broken covenant of works, cannot but be the strength of sin and self, to all that are influenced in their obedience, with a respect thereunto. The sanction of the law, by which it was cast into the form of a covenant of works, was the promise of life upon our obedience, and threatening of death upon disobedience : now, to obey, or do, from a regard to that sanction, is to do duty, from the hope of eternal life by doing ; and to shun evil, from the fear of eternal death and damnation ; but for a man to be thus under the co-action and compulsion of the law, is to be under the power of sin, notwithstanding his best performances ; for the man that is acted and influenced by that sanction, cannot now be acted from love to God, which alone is true holiness, nor from a view to God's glory and honour, but merely to himself ; which is evident from his legal hope of heaven, upon his obedience, influenced by the promissory sanction of the law ; and from his legal fears of hell, upon his disobedience, influenced by the penal sanction of the law. This power of the legal sanction that he is under, keeps him under the power of sin : for, like a strong chain, it fetters him, that he cannot act freely and willingly, nay, he acts only in a mercenary and slavish way, like a slave to the law, and

not like a servant to God. Believers, so far as they are delivered from the law, act freely, and with a willing mind; not by the co-action and compulsion of the law, but without respect either to the law-promise of life upon doing, or the law-threatening of death upon not doing; being, by virtue of the new nature, ready to do the will of their God and Father in Christ with pleasure: this title to life, and security from death, standing allenarly upon the obedience and satisfaction of their Head and Surety. Therefore, there is no law-promise of life, or threatening of death, that they have to regard; and consequently their obedience must be cheerful, free, willing, and natural, without all legal compulsion. As the body needs no law-sanction to compel it to eat, drink, sleep, walk, or stand, or do any of the works of nature; even so, it is natural to the believer, according to the measure of his freedom from legal bondage, to act freely in the Lord's service, without the co-action of the law: being loosed from it, the strength of sin is broken, and he is at liberty to serve the Lord without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him. But such as are under the power of legal compulsion, and are acted and influenced by a regard to the sanction of the law-promise and threatening, and so under the power of legal hopes and fears; that is, the hope of eternal life upon their doing so and so, and the fear of eternal death upon their failure, they are, on this very account, under the power and strength of sin; where, if they remain, and live, and die, their hope will fail them, and their fears will come upon them; for, as their HOPE is a dead hope, that cannot purify the heart, so their fear is a slavish fear, that makes them depart from God. It is true, under the power of these legal hopes and fears, influenced by the promissory and penal sanction of the law, the poor sinner that is thus in bondage to the law, may perform a multitude of duties, and be very strict and devout, as if who but he? and yet, the more he does, the more he undoes himself, being entangled in that yoke of bondage, as the expression is, Gal. v. 1. The yoke but galls his neck, and holds him back from taking on Christ's easy yoke. Yea, in these circumstances, he can bring forth no fruit that is truly and spiritually good: for, as they only that are divorced from the law, and married to Christ, do bring forth fruit unto God, Rom. vii. 4; so they that remain thus under the yoke of the law can bring forth no fruit but to themselves and the devil. Thus you see how and in what respect the law is the strength of sin.

I proceed,

V. To the Fifth thing proposed, which was, To shew whence it is that the law is the strength of sin. From what spring and source does this arise? Whence comes it that sin should have a commanding and condemning power over a man that is under the law; and that, as the law cannot deliver him, so it detains him a captive unto sin? Several reasons of this doctrine are interspersed among the particulars on the former heads. But, beside what hath been said, I shall now offer the following.

1. That the law, now violated and broken, is the strength of sin, proceeds from the holiness and justice of the Lawgiver; "He is of purer eyes than that he can behold iniquity;" and, "Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne:" Therefore, when his holiness and purity, appearing in the precept of the law, is crossed by sin, his justice and equity declared in the threatening of the law, cannot but break forth against sin in the righteous punishment thereof. Now, sin being the greatest evil, and the greatest evil deserving the greatest punishment; and there being no greater punishment of sin than that of punishing it by sin, and giving up the sinner to the power and strength of it; therefore, this just and holy God makes the strength of sin to be the strength of the sanction of the law, to the greatest ruin of the breaker of it. There is no evil like the evil of sin, which is the transgression of the law; and no judgment like the judgment of being given up to the strength of sin; therefore, the most just and holy Lawgiver makes the penalty of the broken law to be the strength of sin. So that to say the strength of sin is the law, is so far from reflecting any dishonour upon the purity of the law, that it is a declaration of the holiness of the command, and the justice of the threatening both.

2. That the law is the strength of sin proceeds from the nature of the Law, in the office that God hath designed and assigned to it; and that is, not to be the ministration of life and strength against sin, but to be subservient to the gospel, which is the ministration of life and righteousness, 2 Cor. iii. 7-10. The law was never appointed of God to be the ministration of life, but of death, even spiritual death, and thereupon of further condemnation; but yet, as it is a ministration of death and condemnation, it is appointed to be a servant to the gospel; and hence law commands and law threatenings both, are brought into the gospel dispensation, to be subservient thereto, and to illustrate the glory thereof, and make way for its powerful efficacy, for the pulling down the strongholds of sin, to

which office the gospel only is appointed of God. And as the darkness of the night serves to show forth the brightness of the day ; so the strength of sin, that arises from the broken law, serves to illustrate and manifest the strength of grace, that is brought in by the glorious gospel.

3. That the law is the strength of sin proceeds from the very nature of sin, and its direct opposition and contrariety to the law. You know, when two are of a contrary disposition, they never agree together, but will ever be brawling and quarrelling one with another ; so, whatever agreement there be betwixt the law as a covenant of works, and proud self-righteous nature, yet such a disagreeable couple is God's holy law and our corrupt nature, that there is a direct contrariety betwixt them. The law of God bears the image of God ; it is perfectly just, perfectly holy, and like unto God the giver of it : but the corruption of our nature bears the image of the devil, being wholly unjust, and altogether unholy : so says the apostle, " The law is holy, but I am carnal ; in me, that is in my flesh, dwells no good thing," Rom. vii. 14, 18. Now, as natural philosophy teaches, that in winter time, the coldness of the air and frost, that may be about the fire, makes the heat of the fire more intense, so that it burns a great deal the faster and fiercer ; so God's law coming to, and meeting with our corrupt nature, certainly it makes corruption more intense and more violent. Hence, when the commandment comes, sin revives, and rises up in the fury of its strength ; as, when a deadly foe comes upon one, the person gathers all his strength together to oppose him. The strength of sin is not the less before the commandment come, or the law appear ; but when the law appears the strength of sin appears and exerts itself : As fire and water are opposites, though at a distance ; yet their opposition to one another is not so evident till they meet and come together, and then there is a mighty sputtering and striving between them ; so the holy law and the unholy heart are opposite, though they do not meet ; but when once they meet together, the heart rises, and rages, and opposes it like the devil. This appears whenever a man is convinced by the law, and the conviction is merely legal, so as the man sees nothing but the spirituality of the law command, and the severity of the law curse : I say, when the conviction is merely legal, the severity of the curse raises a trembling devil of fear in the awakened conscience, and the spirituality of the command raises a devil of enmity in the carnal heart.—And

thus, from the very nature of sin, the law is the strength of sin.

4. That the law is the strength of sin, especially to these that are under the gospel dispensation, arises from the nature of UNBELIEF, and the malignant influence thereof; as is evident from that word of our Lord Jesus, John iii. 18, "He that believes is not condemned; but he that believes not is condemned already, because he believes not in the name of the only-begotten Son of God?" He that believes not the gospel is condemned already by the law. Now, here consider what the law-condemnation is. I told you formerly that the leading and severest part of the law sentence of condemnation is just the strength of sin; so as, to be under the curse and condemnation of the law is to be under the power of sin in its commanding and condemning strength. But what influence hath the not believing the gospel upon a man's being thus condemned? Was he not in a state of condemnation though he had never heard the gospel? Why, then, does Christ say, "He that believes not is condemned already?" Why, it demonstrates that though all the world be under the power of sin by the sentence of the law; yet they that are under the gospel, and believe in the Lord Jesus, their condemnation is condemnation indeed; they stand under the condemning sentence of the law, and so under the power of sin more than ever, because the gospel news of freedom from that condemnation is rejected. It is not my office as a Saviour, might Christ say, to condemn them; "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved;" but it is the office of the law, as it is the ministration of death and condemnation to condemn them; so that they are condemned already by another hand; yea, condemned already by the law, because they believe not in me, who am not come to condemn them, but to save them. No sooner is this gospel salvation rejected but the law condemnation is strengthened and fortified; for then the law, which before was dumb and silent, as it were, after the gospel hath spoken a word of freedom and salvation from the strength of sin, and the man refuses and rejects it, the law opens its mouth, in a manner, saying in effect, I take instruments upon this refusal of yours, that under my dominion and power you stand by your own consent, and that the strength of sin shall not be abated, but increased; and let this stand registrated and recorded in the book of conscience to bear witness to the equity and justice of my final sentence, when the

books shall be opened at the great day. In a word, unbelief holds and detains the man under the law, by refusing Christ and the grace of the gospel: and as the law is the strength of sin, so unbelief strengthens the hands of the law, to kill, and condemn, and enslave the sinner under the commanding and condemning power of sin; and if the law be the strength of sin, and unbelief the strength of the law, then unbelief is the strength of the strength of sin, as it contributes to keep the sinner more under the law than ever. Thus you see how the law's being the strength of sin arises from unbelief, which rejects the strength offered in the gospel for destroying sin. And so much for the grounds of the doctrine.

VI. The Sixth thing proposed was, To make application of this doctrine. And this we shall essay in the following uses, viz., 1. In a use of Caution. 2. Of Information. 3. Of Examination. 4. Of Exhortation.

1st, The subject may be improved, we say, for Caution and Dehortation. Is the law the strength of sin, in the manner I have described?

1. The first caution I offer is, O man, woman, think not the worse or the less of the law, that it is the strength of sin; nay, you have reason to think the better of it, and to have the higher thoughts of it, as it is the eternal rule of righteousness; for, if it were not a holy law, it would not irritate and exasperate our unholy nature at that rate, so as to augment the commanding power and strength of sin: if it were not a just law, it would not condemn sin at that rate, so as to give it a condemning strength over the sinner. That the law is the strength of sin, in the respect I have named, is so far from being a reflection upon, or a detracting from the holiness and justice of the law, that it serves rather to illustrate the purity of the command of the law, as a rule of holiness; and the equity of the penal sanction thereof, as it is a covenant of works.

2. The second caution is, As you are not to think the worse of the law, so you are not to think the better of sin that the strength of it is the law. As you are to think the better of the law, that it makes the troublesome sea of corruption to rage, and binds over the sinner with strong bonds of heavy curses for his sin, such is the holiness and strictness of it; so you may think worse of sin, that turns such a good thing as the law to such an ill use, as to draw strength to itself out of it; like a venomous beast, a viper, that sucks poison out of the sweetest flower.

3. The Third caution I offer is, Think not to conquer sin by the law, or by your personal obedience to it. That law which is the strength of sin can never be the destruction of it; it gives strength to it, but cannot take strength from it. The labour in vain who think, by the strength of their own best endeavours, to subdue sin; for, do what they will, sin hath still dominion over them, because they are under the law, Rom. vi. 14; and all their endeavours are influenced by the law as a covenant of works; which makes their essays not only ineffectual for breaking the strength of sin, but rather effectual for augmenting the force and increasing the strength thereof.

4. The fourth caution we suggest is this, Think not that obedience to the law as a rule of life is needless or hurtful, because the law, as a covenant of works, is the strength of sin; beware of thinking that God's writing the law in the heart, and that gospel holiness and conformity to the law, as in the hand of a Mediator, is either dangerous or unnecessary; this were an Antinomian principle indeed; but know, of a truth, that, "Without holiness no man shall see God:" without holiness, and conformity to the law, as a rule, no man hath evidence of justification, or of freedom from the law as a covenant; without holiness there is no glorifying of God, nor edifying of man; without holiness no adorning of the gospel; without holiness no evidence of love to God or Christ, who hath said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

Use 2. The second use shall be by way of Information. There is a number of necessary lessons may be deduced from this doctrine, "That the strength of sin is the law;" such as,

1. Hence we may learn that there can be no justification before God by the deeds of the law: for, if the law be the strength of sin, then it can never take away the guilt of sin, Rom. iii. 20, "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh living be justified in his sight; for, by the law is the knowledge of sin." The force of this reason is very great; for, if it be the office of the law, under the influence of the Spirit of conviction, to give the knowledge of conviction of sin, and so to condemn the sinner, then surely it cannot justify him. And that it is the moral law the apostle here speaks of, is plain; for as it is that law by which men have the knowledge of sin, and of which the same apostle saith, Rom. vii. 7, "I had not known sin but by the law; for I had not known lust except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet;" which is the moral law; so it is plain,

chap. iii., from verse 9th to 20th, speaks of that law by which every mouth may be stopped, and all the world, Gentiles as well as Jews, may become guilty before God; or, as it is in the margin, "subject to the judgment of God:" so that it is a vain thing for any to allege that in these scriptures the apostle intends only the ceremonial law, and the deeds thereof.

2. Hence we may learn that, as there is no life or justification by the law of works, it being the strength of sin; so there is no new or milder law in the room thereof, by which life and justification is to be obtained: for no new law can mend the matter; because men remain under the strength of sin, by virtue of the old law, and in that condition cannot be justified by any law of God, being unable to perform any. Some cloud and darken the gospel, by making it a new or milder law, requiring faith, and repentance, and new obedience, instead of the perfect obedience required in the covenant of works. The gospel, properly speaking, is no law, but a promise; and it might be easily evinced that faith, repentance, and new obedience, are so far from being easier or milder terms, that they are harder conditions to us in our lapsed state than perfect obedience was to Adam in a state of innocence. And so the apostle argues against any such new law, Gal. iii. 21, "If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law;" or, as it may be read, "Verily righteousness should have been by a law." But there is no such law given to fallen man, as could give life to him; therefore, there is no righteousness, or justification, to be had by a law, but by a promise; no life by any new law, but by a new promise of mercy and grace in Christ Jesus; "By the works of the law, no flesh living can be justified. Eternal life is the gift of God, through Christ Jesus our Lord."

3. Hence see, that there is no justification before God, partly by the law, and partly by the gospel; or partly by our own righteousness, and partly by the righteousness of Christ; for, as this detracts from the glory, sufficiency, and perfection of Christ's righteousness; so it renders our justification lame and imperfect, and consequently void and null: for if the law be the strength of sin, and gives it a commanding and condemning power; then, till the law be satisfied with a personal, perfect, and everlasting righteousness, the strength of sin remains, and so the man under it remains under condemnation. Why, the obedience of

two put together to make up a perfect obedience, is vain: for, in that case, the obedience both of the one and the other is imperfect, and so not conform to the law; therefore cannot be accepted for righteousness: so that they who would be justified before God, must either bring to him a perfect and personal righteousness of their own, and wholly renounce Christ; or else they must bring the perfect, personal righteousness of Christ, and wholly renounce their own. It is one of the most soul-ruining delusions among the generality of professors in our day, that they are guilty of spiritual Bigamy; they think they must have two husbands, Christ and the law both: they suppose that their own duties and righteousness will not do their business alone without Christ's merit and righteousness, which they hope will make amends, and make up what is wanting, and wherein they are deficient; and so his and theirs together is the ground of their hope: this is a popery, which makes Christ's righteousness only a footstool on which self-righteousness mounts the throne; yea, this is a Bigamy which Christ will not relish and put up with. If we be not married to Christ alone, as the end of the law for righteousness, and divorced from the law, as a covenant, the strength of sin remains.

4. Hence see the excellency of the gospel, and the great advantage of a clear gospel dispensation. Why, the law is the strength of sin, but the gospel is the weapon that pulls down the strength thereof; for it is the power of God to salvation from sin; because therein is revealed the righteousness of God from faith to faith, Rom. i. 16. Therefore, says the same apostle, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down the strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." It is the gospel that is the revelation of divine grace; justifying grace, to pull down the condemning strength of sin; sanctifying grace, to pull down the commanding strength of sin. It is true, the gospel is not powerful this way, unless the Spirit of God accompany it as a Spirit of faith, causing us to believe the gospel savingly; but, whenever God saves a man from the strength of sin, as it is by hearing the gospel that faith comes; so, it is by believing the gospel that salvation from sin comes; Rom. x. 15, 16; Mark xvi. 15, 16, "Go, preach the gospel to every creature." What is that gospel? It is the good news of grace and

salvation to sinners, through Christ, the Lord our righteousness. Well, what will be the issue? "He that believes this gospel shall be saved; he that believes not shall be damned." O sirs, see then the excellency of the gospel, which, as it is the instrument of God's power for working faith; so, being believed, is the power of God to salvation from the strength of sin, and so from wrath and condemnation.

5. Hence see that sin, under the gospel, is strangely aggravated. They that are not only under the law, as all are by nature, but also under the want of gospel light, no wonder that sin reigns there, they cannot but live in sin, and in the perpetual violation of the law as a rule, who hear of no deliverance from the law as a covenant: but for these who live under the gospel, which is the only antidote against the strength of sin, their sin is dreadfully aggravated; their living in sin, and remaining under the strength of sin, is an evidence of their unbelief, whereby they reject the gospel, and so keep themselves under the curse of the law, of which curse the strength of sin is a leading part. The breach of the law, as a rule of obedience, is egregiously aggravated, where freedom from the law, as a covenant, is proclaimed through Christ. The sum of the moral law is love, the sum of disobedience is enmity; but, alas! how is enmity against God heightened, when God manifests such love, grace, and good-will towards sinners! Enmity against God, under the gospel, is enmity indeed; it is rendering him enmity for love. O! how do the offers of mercy heighten our malignity! And what a dreadful and dangerous thing is it to live in sin, under the dispensation of grace! An evil heart of unbelief, neglecting the gospel, and so the great salvation tendered therein, is the spring of apostacy, and departing from the living God. You will say, Ah! I have a wicked heart, a wandering heart, a vain heart, a loose heart, a black heart; yea, but the worst thing about it is, that it is an unbelieving heart; for your unbelief keeps you under the curse of the law, and the law curse keeps you under sin's power.

6. Is the law of works the strength of sin? Then see the necessity of union to Christ, as the end of the law for righteousness, in order to freedom from the strength of sin. If Christ be the righteousness of any he is their strength also, and because he is their righteousness he is their strength, and both in a way of union to him, "Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength, Isa. xlv. 24. See also 1 Cor. i. 30, "Of him are ye in Christ

Jesus, who of God is made unto us righteousness and sanctification." It is the character of believers in Christ, that they walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, Rom. viii. 1, 4. Now, how comes this sanctification of heart and way, and freedom from the strength of sin, to take place? Why, the root of it is, the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in them, by virtue of their union with Christ. The weakest saint in Christ hath perfectly satisfied every demand of the law: he hath completely paid every penny of debt that he owed to the law. Why, being united to Christ, they are like man and wife; as man and wife are one flesh, so Christ and believers are one Spirit: and as man and wife are one person in law, so, Christ having perfectly fulfilled the law, the believer hath perfectly fulfilled it in him. And so the righteousness of the law being fulfilled in the believer, the commanding and condemning strength of sin, derived from the law, is broken; and consequently he is in case to walk spiritually, and to evidence his freedom from the law, as a covenant, and his being a perfect fulfiller of it, by his walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

7. Hence see, That justification is the root of sanctification, and justifying faith the root of a holy life, and is necessary, in order of nature, before it: seeing, as there is no conformity to the law, as a rule of holiness, till once the person get freedom from the law, as a covenant, which, to the transgressor, is the strength of sin; so, in justification, the believer being no more reputed a breaker, or transgressor, but a perfect fulfiller of the law of works, it ceases to be any more the strength of sin unto him: whereupon the removal of the strength of sin lays a foundation for a life of holiness, both habitual and actual; habitual, consisting in the immediate principles of action, in contradistinction from the remote principle infused in regeneration; and actual sanctification, whether privately, in the mortifying or killing of sin, or positively, in the quickening of the soul to a newness of life: and that both internal, in the exercise of grace, and external, in the performance of duty. And hence, as justifying faith is said to have a purifying virtue, Acts xv. 9, so the whole life of the believer is said to be by faith in the justifying righteousness of God, revealed in the gospel, Rom. i. 17. On which account, the gospel is said to be the power of God to salvation, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek; for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, "The just shall live by faith;" that is, faith in this righteousness of God. No man, therefore, can live a holy life, or walk abroad in

the duties of the law, as a rule, in a course of sanctification, till once his feet be loosed from the fetters, and his soul liberated from the prison of the law, as a covenant, through justification by faith; and then, and not till then, is he in case to live a holy life by faith; yea, were he never so just and righteous, in respect of personal imparted righteousness; yet he cannot live but by the faith of this imputed righteousness of God; renewed acts of faith thereupon tend to quicken his soul from time to time. The just, even the just, shall live by this faith; for, without it, all his own justness, righteousness, and personal holiness, would languish and die, and give up the ghost. What makes the obedience of a multitude of professors vain and unacceptable; yea, and all their duties sinful and hurtful? Why, they begin to yield obedience to the precepts of the law, by doing and working out a righteousness of their own, before they be delivered from the curse of the law, by believing and laying hold on the righteousness of Christ; and hence, the strength of sin being a grand part of the curse of the law, and they not being delivered from that curse, all they can do is cursed of God, because the strength of sin remains. But, say you, may not this discourage professors from obedience? No, it only directs them to the right and acceptable obedience, and not to dream that they shall ever yield any acceptable obedience to the precept of the law, as a rule, till they be delivered from the curse of the law, as a covenant; and consequently, that their first duty is to come to Christ, as the end of the law for righteousness; and then, being delivered from the strength of sin, they shall be in case to perform duties of obedience acceptably.

8. Hence see, That the fruit of Christ's merit, and the fruit of his power go together; for, as a being under the law, and under the strength of sin, go together, so freedom from the law, through the law-biding righteousness of Christ, and freedom from the strength of sin, go together: so that the fruit of Christ's merit and righteousness, imputed for freeing a man from the law of works, and the fruit of his power exerted in freeing a man from the commanding, as well as the condemning power of sin, go hand in hand together. It is worth our notice, my friends, that there is a fruit of the merit of Christ's death and resurrection, and that fruit is called redemption and justification; and there is also a fruit of the power of Christ's death and resurrection, and that is called likeness and conformity, Rom. vi. 5; and these two go together. The fruit of the merit and

righteousness of Christ in his doing and dying, is never reaped by any soul, without the fruit of the power thereof also, which is the heart's being moulded to a conformity to his death and resurrection, by dying to sin, and arising again to newness of life. Now, there is a twofold struggle and opposition in every heart by nature against both these two things: there is a struggle against the merit and righteousness of Christ, and that is by self-righteousness, which cannot endure to be shut out of doors: and there is a struggle against the power of Christ's death, and that is by lusts and corruptions, which cannot endure to lose their strength, rule, and dominion. But, whenever the merit of Christ, and his righteousness, is effectually applied, for shutting self-righteousness out of doors, there also the power of Christ is effectually exerted, for pulling sin and corruption down from its throne and dominion, and divesting it of its ruling power and strength. Hence, true faith closes with Christ both for righteousness and strength. As true obedience is called universal obedience, having a respect to all God's commandments, so, true faith is an universal faith, having a respect to all the offices of Christ, and to all the capacities wherein he is held forth. It receives a whole Christ, without exception either of his righteousness or strength, merit or Spirit. Some have but a partial faith, relishing Christ only for freedom from the wrath of God, and not also for freedom from the power of sin: this is an evidence of a rotten heart; for true believers prize Christ, not only as a Surety, for paying their debt, but also as a Root, for feeding them with the sap of spiritual life, as a root feeds the branches; and they relish Christ, not only as one that appeases God's wrath, but one that purifies the soul from sin. To this purpose, read Exod. xxiv. 6, 8, "And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basons, and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And then took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold, the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words." There you see that the blood of the covenant, part of it was sprinkled on the altar, and part of it on the people: the blood was, as it were, divided two ways, signifying that the blood of Christ works partly upward, for pacifying the wrath and satisfying the justice of God, in paying the ransom and price for lost souls; and partly downward upon the people, for sanctifying, sprinkling, cleansing, and purifying them, that their defiled souls may be made clean.

9. Hence, if the law be the strength of sin, we may see what it

is that hinders the success of the gospel for pulling down the strength of sin. Why, the law stands in the way of every natural man, his not submitting to Christ offered in the gospel. The fig-leaf covering of self-righteousness hinders men from putting on the white robe, the glorious garment of Christ's righteousness. As the spider hath a web, and the snail hath a shell, and these are their strongholds; so every man hath his stronghold that he flees unto for shelter, and something that his heart sets up as a ladder, by which he hopes to be saved, and climb up to heaven; and though the law be a broken ladder, and Christ alone the true Jacob's ladder, that reacheth from earth to heaven, and which the gospel points at; yet the man will not quit the broken ladder, the law of works; and, the more they climb that ladder, the further they go away from Christ. Hence the greatest zealots for the law are the greatest enemies of Christ; witness Paul before his conversion; he was one of the best men for his righteousness in the law; and yet one of the worst men we read of for his opposition to Christ. Think it not strange, sirs, to see some very grave, sober, moral, and devout persons, and touching the law blameless and innocent outwardly, and yet these very persons, heart-enemies to Christ, and violent opposers of the gospel: why, even like Paul, the best legal man may be the worst gospel man; and hence the Gentile is brought in before the Jews, Rom. ix. 26; yea, the publicans and harlots before the self-righteous Pharisees, Matt. xxi. 31. But you would consider, that it is not merely these that are by profession and outward practice zealous for the law, that are the only opposers of the gospel; but there is an underhand dealing with the law, that mars also the success of the gospel, and that by two sorts of persons, which are not suspected to be in such friendship with the law of works, namely, 1. Professed breakers of the law. 2. Professed believers of the gospel.

(1.) There are professed breakers of the law: I mean, profane, wicked, and ungodly persons, who declare their sin as Sodom, and are in a manner professors of profanity, drunkenness, whoredom, swearing, Sabbath-breaking, and debauchery; being graceless, prayerless, godless persons, with a witness, that have no regard to the law as a rule of life, yet we will find they have an underhand dealing with the law, and a natural regard to it, as a condition of life, or covenant of works, and thereupon reject the gospel. Now, their regard to the law, as a covenant, appears partly when

they are outwardly challenged by conscience, and partly, when they are outwardly challenged by men for their sin; when inwardly challenged by conscience, if at any time it be awakened, why then, they flee to the law for relief, saying with themselves, Oh! I hope, I will be a better man before I die; I will take up myself, and turn a new leaf; and so they build upon the law of works, hoping they will do something that they may obtain life by, and saying in effect, "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all;" and thus they reject Christ, the Surety of the better testament. Or, if such meet with no inward checks, and have no challenges inwardly for their sin; yet their zeal for the law will sometimes appear, when outwardly challenged by men: why, the profane swearer either takes the reproof with a jest, and laughs it over; or, if he find the reprover in sad earnest with him, then he will fall a justifying himself upon a law-bottom; Why, says he, what take you me to be? do you think that I am an atheist or an infidel? Nay, whatever be my faults, I was never such an ill man as you take me to be; and, therefore, I hope in God that he will have mercy on me. What is this but the profane breaker of the law, underhand, building his hope of mercy upon the law, as a covenant, to the greatest dishonour of the law, and contempt of Christ, the end of the law for righteousness, and hereupon living in the open neglect of the great salvation offered in the gospel?

(2.) There are professed believers of the gospel, that yet have underhand dealing with the law for righteousness, to the neglect of the gospel, which yet they profess to believe, insomuch that Christ is but a stumbling-block to them; such were the Jews, Rom. ix. 31, 32, "But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness; Wherefore? because they sought it not by faith, but, as it were, by the works of the law; for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone." These words, *as it were*, are of great significancy, shewing, that they did not profess to seek righteousness by the law, or by their own works, but by Christ, the promised Messiah, to whom they were directed by their sacrifices that typified him, and by the Old Testament prophecies and promises that pointed him out; but while they professed Christ the Messiah, and faith in him for righteousness; yet they closely and underhand pursued their own righteousness, seeking life and salvation, not professedly and directly, but, as it were, by the works of the law, and secretly rested in the law and the works thereof, and so miscarried; and this was their

stumbling-stone, under a bright profession that they made to the contrary. Thus many profess the doctrine of justification by faith, and not by the works of the law; yet secretly and underhand closely pursue and go about to establish their own righteousness, if not directly, yet, as it were, by the works of the law; laying more stress, for example, upon what they call their sincere heart, sincere obedience, sincere endeavours, than ever they did upon the perfect obedience of Christ for justification. But whether a bottle be stopt with gold or dung, yet being full, whatever water you pour upon it, it will all run aside: even so, the water of life, freely dispensed in the gospel, runs aside like water spilt upon the ground, because men's hearts are stopt with the law, their own legal righteousness, which they esteem as gold; but Paul compares it to dung; Christ can get no admittance, because the soul is full already. But then,

10. If the strength of sin be the law, hence we may see, That the law can never pacify the duly awakened conscience; and that so far is any man from being able to stand before God, in the best of his own righteousness, that he cannot so much as stand before his own conscience in the best righteousness of his own. Some go to the law for satisfaction to their conscience; they rock and lull their consciences asleep in the cradle of some outward duty; they go to church, and attend some ordinances; they say some formal prayers, and others go to greater lengths, merely to gratify conscience; but if conscience were duly awakened and convinced, it would not be pacified with anything less than that which pacifies infinite justice: nor would it be satisfied with anything less than that which fully satisfies the law; so long as the law finds any fault with or any defect in our righteousness, so long does it curse us, Gal. iii. 10; and so long as the curse remains, the strength of sin remains; and consequently the law cannot give relief to the awakened conscience by any the best righteousness of our own, whether of inward graces, or outward duties; for the awakened conscience will witness against us, judge and condemn us, in the best of these.

(1.) Suppose you have inward graces and good qualifications, the best of these will not give conscience peace when God awakens it; I shall suppose you have faith; well, but have you not unbelief also, and more unbelief than faith? And may not conscience condemn you for that, as Christ did his disciples, "How is it that ye have no faith," while you carry in many cases as if you had none

at all? Suppose you have repentance, yet have you not impenitency also? May not conscience condemn you many times for a hard impenitent heart; so hardened from God's fear, that neither the word nor rod of God does make impression on you; yea, neither mercies nor judgments do you lay to heart as you ought? Suppose you have humility; yet is there not pride also in your heart? and may not your conscience accuse you of much self-elevation and self-confidence? Suppose you have love to God: yet, have you not much enmity also? and may not your conscience condemn you, that you love not God with all your heart, with all your soul, mind, and strength; and that your heart goes more out after the creature than the Creator, at least some times, and in many instances? Suppose you have sincerity; yet, may not conscience witness against you, that your sincerity is mixed with hypocrisy? Suppose you have zeal; yet, will not conscience witness that you have too much lukewarmness? Suppose you have a fixed heart upon God, and Christ, and heavenly things at some times; yet, will not conscience accuse you of innumerable wanderings of heart? Why, then it seems your best righteousness even of inward graces will not pacify conscience. Nor,

(2.) Suppose you have outward duties to add to your inward graces: suppose you pray in your closet, in your family, and in public, which is well done; and suppose you hear the word carefully, and joyfully, and perform all other duties; yet, will not conscience witness that sin mixes itself with your best duties? And when you pray, yet you are not always praying in the Holy Ghost; when you worship, yet you are not still worshipping God in the Spirit; when you hear, you are not always hearing in faith: when you receive the word and sacraments, you are not aye receiving Christ therein; and when you communicate, you are not aye communicating worthily; may not conscience condemn you for these things, and put you to cry after all, "Lord, be merciful to me a sinner?"

Well then, when you cannot stand before your own consciences in your best righteousness, either of internal qualifications or external performances; how can you think to stand before God, who is greater than conscience, and knows all things, and sees more sin and wickedness in you than ever you saw? He sees the errors you cannot see, Psal. xix. 12, "Who can understand his errors?" and the heart's wickedness you cannot discern, Jer. xvii. 9, 10. "The heart

is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, and try the reins, to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." Now, O man, woman, if you cannot stand before the bar of your own heart and conscience, but you must be condemned, though it knows not the thousandth part of your heart wickedness that God knows; how will you stand before the bar of God, whose understanding is infinite, and who is of glorious holiness and dreadful justice? Oh! his fiery law will burn up all your filthy rags, if you have not another covering, when death, judgment, and eternity stare you in the face! Is it not your duty and interest then, to seek after a better robe, even that of Christ's everlasting, law-biding righteousness? that alone can pacify conscience, because it gives the law all its demands, and quenches the fire of it with his blood. O seek then to be under this covert of the blood of the Lamb of God, that purple covering of the new covenant chariot, that is paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem.

11. Hence see, why it is that sin hath a reigning power over the ungodly, and a prevailing power over the godly; even because the former are wholly under the law, and the latter partly under it. On the one hand, sin reigns over unbelievers, because they are under the law; men being in bondage to the law, are in bondage to their lust. Whence is it that all manner of sin and profaneness rages in our day, and so much practical opposition to the law as a rule of holiness? Even because people being under the law, as a covenant of works, the gospel is slighted and disparaged; grace, in effect, is cried down, and the law is cried up in opposition to it; therefore God leaves men to all lawless impiety, as a righteous punishment of their contemning of grace, by which alone the law can be honoured both as a covenant and a rule, Isa. xlii. 21, Matt. v. 17. Rom. iii. 31. On the other hand, why does sin prevail so much over believers? why are they so unholily and untender in their walk? Even because they are partly under the law. It is true, they are not under the law, but under grace; in point of right, the law of works hath no authority over them; but yet, in point of possession, it maintains a great sway, while unbelief remains; and hence, though sin hath no rightful legal dominion over them, yet it continues to have great actual prevalence, while they do not make use of that grace they are under, Rom. vi. 14. When they let the grace of

God out of their mind, then they are discouraged, and sin gets advantage; they are apt to trust partly to their own works, and endeavours, and frames: and, therefore, like the woman with the bloody issue, they lose both their time and pains, and spend all on physicians that do them no good, till they come back to Christ and grace again. Sometimes even believers, instead of using grace aright, are ready to misuse it, and make it a cover for sloth, under pretence that Christ must do all. They are thus in danger of practical Antinomianism, and turning the grace of God into wantonness; they pray not, watch not, and therefore they have nothing, because their hands refuse to labour; and they do not study, in all appointed means, to keep themselves under the droppings of grace, which would make their duties their pleasure; but, being under much legal bondage, it makes their duties their burden, and a wearisome task; which, being thereupon slighted and slighted, sin gets advantage. But, Oh! if believers did but believe their privileges, and rightly use the grace they are under, it were impossible for them to be long under the feet of their enemies. If they by faith were reckoning themselves to be what they are, according to Rom. vi. 11, "Likewise reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord;" what a happy and holy life would the believer have, if by faith he were reckoning himself to be in Christ? For he should not conceive of God out of Christ, nor of himself out of Christ, nor of Christ and himself as two, but as one mystical person, by virtue of the mystical spiritual union betwixt Christ and him. If he were reckoning that he is a member of Christ, and can do all things through him; and reckoning that Christ is in him, and he is in Christ; reckoning that he is dead in Christ unto sin, and alive in Christ unto God; how would his spirit be raised, elevated, and nobilitated to the life of religion, looking to himself, not in himself, but in Christ, by virtue of marriage to him?

If the believer were saying, by faith, O! I am complete in Christ; I am perfectly righteous in Christ, and accepted as righteous in the sight of God, only through the righteousness of Christ; I was once bound to the fiery law, the terrible law, and thousands in hell are paying that debt of satisfaction to it, and cannot pay it to eternity; but I have paid every farthing, and the law can ask no more; yea, in Christ I have magnified the law, and made it honourable. Here is one of the greatest mysteries in the world, behold

a man who sees himself so sinful, that he thinks none in all the world so black, and ugly, and sinful as he, can, in this respect, reckon himself as righteous as Abraham or Paul: yea, perfectly righteous; and see himself in that gospel glass, that says, "Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee." Why, the believer being clothed with the Sun of righteousness, he is righteous in the sight of God: to be righteous in man's sight is nothing to this, hypocrites may arrive at that; but to be righteous in God's sight is to be so righteous, that infinite holiness, infinite justice, can find no blot, no spot, no hole, in the garment of righteousness with which the man is clothed. O believers in Christ, you that are perfect through his comeliness, you do not view sufficiently your privileges, otherwise it would elevate you above corruption, and fill you with holy triumph over all your lusts and idols, and make you think shame to sin; if you were reckoning what you are in Christ, you would reckon it below you to tread in the dirty steps of the world; but when unbelief darkens your gospel privileges, and grace is out of view, you faint in duty, and are discouraged and disheartened in your works, so as sin recovers its spirit and strength.

12. Hence we may see, that whatever opposition and resistance to sin, hypocrites and unbelievers may make, yet still they are *under* the strength of sin, because *under* the law; and whatever prevalence sin may have over believers, yet they are *freed* from the strength of sin, because they are *not* under the law. This twofold inference lays a foundation for resolving two difficult cases.

First Case is, Seeing hypocrites may *resist* sin, what resistance of sin is consistent with the *dominion* thereof? Hypocrites and reprobates do not always sin peaceably but with some reluctancy; they forbear many sins, and get victory over them: how then may this be cleared? and how does it appear that they may make resistance against sin, and yet the strength of it never broken?

I answer, for clearing this, in these two assertions.

(1.) The first assertion is, That there is indeed a resisting of sin, which is consistent with the power and dominion of it, as I would clear in a few words. A person may solemnly resolve and swear against sin, and yet be under the power of it, as it was with Israel, Ps. lxxviii. 37, and Josh. xxiv. 18. People may confess their sins, and repent of them with tears; as Esau, and Judas, and Saul, Heb. xii. 17, Matt. xxvii. 3, 4, 5, 1 Sam. xxiv. 16, 17, and yet be under the power of it. People may separate some time.

for special fasting and humiliation, on the account of sin, and yet be under the power of it ; as Ahab, 1 Kings xxi. 29. People may be zealous opposers and reformers of sin in others, and yet be under the reigning power of it ; like Jehu, 2 Kings x. 1--31. People may resist sin unto suffering and blood ; as Alexander, mentioned, Acts xix. 33, and 1 Tim. i. 19. People may resist all motions, inclinations, and temptations to sin, so far as never to break forth into any gross outbreaking thereof, and be in all things blameless before the world ; as Paul was before his conversion, Phil. iii. 9. And yet all this while they may be under the power and dominion of sin : Why ? because their resistance of sin proceeds from wrong principles ; such as fear of God's judgments, as Ahab, when Elijah threatened him ; fear of man, like Herod ; affectation of human applause, like the Pharisees ; and because their resistance is but partial, chiefly bended against gross out-breakings, while heart-lusts are welcomed and entertained ; the outside of the cup being clean, while within it is full of corruption, Matt. xxiii. 24. Thus, I say, there is a resisting of sin that is consistent with the power of it.

2. The second assertion is, That the power of sin is never broken in a hypocrite ; why, because the nature of an hypocrite, the reigning sin, which is the sin of nature, and which gives life and breath to all his other sins, is never discovered, never groaned under ; though some actual sins get a stroke, yet this remains in power ; and hence, the opposition that a hypocrite or graceless man finds in himself sometimes to sin, is not the opposition of the Spirit to the flesh, but rather the opposition of one sin to another. As if two noblemen strive together in a kingdom, the king's power is never a whit weakened thereby, he rules absolutely notwithstanding ; so two sins may cast out with one another, and yet the reigning sin, which is the sin of nature, remain in power ; hence a man's pride and prodigality will differ with his avarice and covetousness ; a man's self-love may discord with his sloth, and put him upon several duties. Though one sin contend with and cast out another sin, it will not say that sin is exauctorate ; the sin that prevails will yet do homage to the reigning sin ; but while the reigning sin remains untouched, sin hath dominion and power. The taking of a few villages does not much weaken the strength of a king, but when his royal city is taken, and himself confined, then his power is gone ; even so here, the forbearing, resisting, and down-bringing of some sins, does much abate the power of sin ; but if once the reigning sin

of the nature be taken, then the power of sin is gone. Now, Christ gives the body of death in every saint a deadly wound; he does not only bruise Satan's heel, but his head; when a man comes to see his wicked nature, his opposition to God and Christ, and all his ways in every thing, and mourns for this as the greatest evil, and comes to the Lord Jesus, and employs him for power against it, and renounces its dominion; though he cannot rid himself altogether thereof, yet then is the power of it broken and gone. But here notice further, The permission to do some duties, and to leave off some sins, does not evince that the power of sin is broken, because this may be done with sin's authority and consent; yea, and with Satan's leave; for if the devil see that Christ is like to get a profane soul from him, and that the man is like to break off from him, he compones, he suffers him to leave many sins, and to do many good duties; as a man that hath no will to quit his lands, he pays a composition for it; so sin makes a composition with many, whereas it reigns over some very absolutely, yet it reigns over others so as to permit them to pay some acknowledgement to God, and yet sin still reigns. Many a man's conscience is awakened for sin; they confess and mourn for it, they seek pardon, and yet keep their sins still, and hold them fast; many will tittle and drink, and live in covetousness, and sloth, and unbelief; O but their desires are good; they pray privately and in their families, and confess their sins, and are sorry for them! What is this? Alas! this is nothing but the composition made betwixt Satan and you; you still hold of sin, and it reigns still; even as your lands hold of such a person of quality, it may be of the king, or of a nobleman; well some lands are under greater servitude to the king, or other superiors, than others; yet all hold of them; so, perhaps, your slavery to sin is not so great as that of others, but yet you hold of sin; sin is your superior, and it hath the power. So, some ministers in the late times, after the king's supremacy was established, when the king found and apprehended many to be dissatisfied with his absolute government, he offered and they accepted of an indulgence from him, giving them leave to preach in such and such places and circumstances; this acceptance, many maintained, was such a sin, as that thereby they did hold their ministry of the king, and homologate or approve of his supremacy in matters sacred as well as civil; or that the king

(1) *Viz.*, CHARLES II. The Supremacy was established by the Parliament, 1661, and the Indulgence granted by the Privy Council, 1669.

was still supreme over all causes, as well as persons : so it is here ; sin perceiving that many begin to entertain a great dissatisfaction with such an absolute form of government, or ruling in such a manner, resolve to alter their method and way of living, and to offer indulgencies : perhaps, Satan ruled before in a way of drunkenness, swearing, whoredom, and profanity ; but now he will rule by pride, formality, covetousness, and setting up of men's own righteousness ; here is an indulgence offered and accepted, it is no change of government in the substantial of it, it is no change of the power of sin, only some are indulged to do more than others. Sin and Satan indulge some to do many things, while sin is still king, only it rules in a different manner. Thus, I say, that the power of sin is never broken in hypocrites, as it is in the believer who is under grace.

The Second Case was, In what respects are believers freed from the *strength* of sin, while yet they are sensible of the *prevalency* thereof? For sin remains in them, and acts, and works, and strives in them, and they are led captive thereby, Rom. vii. 23. Therefore, though they be not under the law, but under grace, it would seem that they are not freed from the power, dominion, and strength of sin ; for the strength of sin is what they daily feel and complain of ; how then, and in what respects, are they freed from it ?

ANSW. There are these following respects, wherein the believer is freed from the strength of sin.

(1.) In so far as they are under grace, it is sure they are not under sin's power. Indeed, if believers would take hold of the shield of faith, they would find little of the power of sin ; but they many times cast this shield away by discouragements, and run into the law through unbelief, and so they sink ; hence, casting themselves out, as saints may do for a start, from under the influence of grace, they may, like Peter, begin to sink, because they begin to fear and doubt ; so that it is true thus far, namely, so far as they are under grace, and through grace keep themselves under the influence of grace, they are not under the power and dominion of sin.

(2.) Believers are freed from the power of sin, in so far as they are intitled to the promise, which says, Their sin shall be subdued, and that sin shall not have dominion. It is to be noticed, that it is not said in the context, sin hath NO dominion or power over them,

but it is said, It shall NOT have dominion ; now, in regard the time is coming, when all sin shall be taken away, in all these that are under grace ; its power and dominion is to be cut off, though for a while it rages. There is a counsel and determination against Babylon ; God hath decreed and ordered, that sin's dominion shall expire, Rom. xvi. 20, "The God of peace will bruise Satan under your feet shortly ;" and he will turn judgment unto victory ; but how long the believer may fight and groan under the prevalence of it, cannot easily be determined.

(3.) Believers that are under grace, are freed from the power of sin, in regard it hath no righteous and lawful power and dominion over them ; the first husband is dead, and they are married to Christ, the second Husband, Rom. vii. 4 ; and, therefore, they are not debtors to the flesh to live after it, Rom. viii. 12. Though the flesh may compel and crave them to obey, yet it has no just power so to do. Sin's just authority is exauctorate ; and Christ, by satisfying the law, which is the strength of sin, hath condemned sin, Rom. viii. 3. So that it being now condemned and exauctorate, though it keep possession, yet there is a sentence and decret of ejection obtained against sin. The believer hath law upon his side, whereas sin hath no law, no right concerning him. Sin hath a sort of right to reign in wicked men, and these that are under the law ; for it hath a right of conquest over them, and they are servants, because, by their actual obedience, they have homologate the right of conquest that sin had ; but in believers, who are under grace, and delivered from sin by the Lord Jesus Christ, who satisfied the law, which is the strength of sin, and now renouncing the service of sin, and taking on with Christ as their Lord, who redeemed them by his blood from sin, and overcame and condemned sin, sin hath no pretext of title any more. It is true, it actually exercises authority ; yet that is but an usurped authority ; sin rules by no lawful title. You will say, If sin rule, what is the matter whether it hath a title or not ? I answer, Yea, it is a great matter ; for the just Lord of heaven and earth, upon the believer's complaining of unjust oppression, will right him, and deliver him from such an oppression and oppressor in due time ; and he hath encouragement, in opposing sin, that he shall prevail, seeing his cause is just, and that he hath just matter of pleading with the righteous God, that sin shall not have power over him. The believer may go to God, as Bathsheba did to David, when Adonijah did usurp the kingdom, saying, "My

Lord, O King, did thou not swear, saying, Assuredly Solomon shall reign? and yet, behold, Adonijah reigneth." So may the believer go to God, and say, Lord, hast thou not said that sin shall not reign, but that grace shall reign? And, yet behold, sin and corruption usurp the power; and, to be sure, he will take order with this matter.

(4.) Believers, that are under grace, are freed from the power of sin, in regard sin hath no power to condemn or damn such as are under grace; its authority is so far broken in them, that though they sin, and though sin may force them to some acts of obedience to it, yet it cannot condemn them to hell, as it may do these that are strangers to Christ, and not under grace, in whom sin is said to reign unto death, Rom. v. 21, and chap. vi. 23. Now, whatever way it may reign and rule, yet it reigns not unto death in them that are under grace, and in Christ; for, "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ;" and against such there is no law, Gal. v. 23. As when the Romans conquered the Jews, though they left some authority, yet they took from them the power of life and death, as they acknowledge, John xviii. 32, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death," so, when Christ hath conquered sin, though he did in his wisdom not altogether destroy the power of sin, yet he took away the power of life and death from it, so as sin cannot now condemn any believer; and this is a comfortable privilege.

(5.) Believers under grace are freed from sin, in regard they have renounced the dominion thereof, and their allegiance thereto; hence that word, 2 Cor. iv. 2, "We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty." Why, by closing and engaging with Christ to be his, and coming to him for protection from, and power against sin, they have declared that they renounce sin, and all allegiance thereto. Christ hath engaged all his servants in heart and practice against sin directly and indirectly; there is war declared against sin in all the saints. You know, it was a great impairing of Rehoboam's power, 1 Kings xii. 16, when the ten tribes revolted, and said to him, "What portion have we in the son of Jesse? See to thine own house, David: to your tents, O Israel;" and so shook off his authority: whatever, therefore, sin does in believers, whatever obedience it extorts from them, or entices them to yield to it, yet there is war irreconcilable denounced against sin. This is a great matter, when a people shake off the authority of a prince, and declare

themselves free from his authority ; however he be seeking to reduce them to obedience again, yet he hath, for the present, no dominion over them ; so it is here, though sin may endeavour to bring the believer into subjection, yet it hath not absolute sway over him.

(6.) In regard sin hath not that power over such as are under grace, as it had formerly before they were under it ; for, notwithstanding that sin prevails, yet it prevails not as it did before, when the strong man kept all his goods in peace, 2 Pet. iv. 4. They run not to the same excess of riot ; there is some more in them that opposes sin, and sin does not rule so absolutely and peaceably in them as it does in these that are under the law. Formerly the strong man kept all in peace, while the man committed sin with greediness, but now there are always protestations and uprisings against it : sin hath not absolute, peaceable, and voluntary dominion.

(7.) Believers under grace are freed from sin, in regard sin, in its principal design, is broken ; its chief strength is taken away ; as when two great parties are competing and striving with one another, there is a fort or principal city of the kingdom ; and whosoever of them can make themselves master of that, they are fair to carry the whole kingdom ; therefore both strive to gain it, and he that first gains it, has much weakened his enemy's power ; so it is here, the great design of sin and Satan is to keep the soul from closing with Christ ; he hides their need of Christ from them so long as he can ; and when they come to see their need of Christ, he seeks to comfort and save them by the law, or by their legal endeavours : when this miscarries with him, then, by a multitude of objections, he scares them from Christ ; all his forces and might are bent upon this, as his chief and only design, to keep the soul and Christ from joining together ; for then he knows he hath lost them for ever. Now, when the Lord Jesus, in a day of power, hath so far overcome Satan, that he hath broken his chief design, and maugre all the opposition of the devil and corruption, hath made the soul to come to him and believe on him, and so hath put the soul into a state of reconciliation, life and grace, then he hath very much delivered them from the power of sin, especially the mother-sin of unbelief, John xvi. 9.

(8.) In regard that sin hath got a deadly wound by the power of converting grace, of which it never heals again till it totally die. There is such a plot laid in the day of believing and conversion, as sin will certainly be blown up with ; having got a death's wound,

it will die ere long. Indeed, it may be like a man in a malignant fever, that hath strength of humours, and in whom the strength of nature is overcome; he seems to be very strong, so as three men perhaps cannot get him kept in the bed; yea, all this is but only the raging of his humour, and nature's last attempt; for within a few hours the man dies. So, after sin hath got a death's wound, it may rage for a little, but dies at last; like an ox felled on the forehead with an axe; how does he leap and stamp, and put forth power with violence for a while? but at last falls down and dies. Thus the first draught of the water of life that the soul by faith drinks, proves poison to sin; and, the more of this water that the soul drinks, the more is the power of sin abated; there is a trap laid for sin. You have a word, Obadiah, verse 7, they have laid a wound under thee;" there is a train laid for sin, that cannot fail to be its death. Why, what for a train? why, the believer, by faith, sets all at work against sin; not only prayers and tears, and all means and duties, under the conduct of new-covenant grace; but the special train is the word and promise of Christ; the grace and fulness of Christ; the blood, righteousness, and merit of Christ; the power, grace, and Spirit of Christ; are all employed to knock down sin, and all clapt upon sin's head; so that its power must cease, and it cannot but die.

SERMON CXXX.—CXXXI.

"The strength of sin is the law"—1 COR. xv. 56.

[The fifth and sixth Sermons on this text.]

MY friends, we need to seek salvation from sin, elsewhere than in and by the law, and the works thereof; for the law of God cannot save or justify the least transgressor of it, otherwise it must condemn itself, which is impossible; "Cursed is every one, says the law, that continues not in all things written in the book of the law to do them;" and we are obliged to say Amen to that curse, as every way just and righteous; "Cursed is he that confirms not all the words of this law, to do them; and all the people shall say," AMEN, Deut. xxvii. 26. It is the very nature of the law to condemn

(1) Where the two following discourses were delivered is uncertain.

the least transgressor of it, whatever after works of obedience he may perform ; for, "Whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all," James ii. 10. Therefore the highest act of obedience, even of the saints in heaven, cannot expiate the least breach of God's law, neither can any duty performed, take away the fault of a sin committed. Sin therefore retains its strength to enslave, and strength to destroy the sinner, by virtue of the broken law that he is under, so long as he hath not wherewith to repair the honour of the law, the honour of the precept of the law must be repaired by a perfect obedience, and the honour of the threatening by a complete satisfaction, otherwise the strength of sin remains ; but, whenever a man is clothed with the obedience and satisfaction of Christ, then being reputed no transgressor, but a perfect keeper and fulfiller of the law, it is no more the strength of sin in him ; for, according to our doctrine from this text, the law of works is the strength of sin, only to the sinner, by whom it is broken, not to the believer, by whom it is fulfilled in his glorious Head.

Having already, elsewhere discussed the doctrinal part, finished the first use of caution, and deduced twelve inferences for information ; there are still many more lessons may be learned from this doctrine, besides what I have already deduced ; such as,

1. Hence we may see the dangerous and damnable influence of legal doctrine, that tends to keep sinners under the law : for thus they are under the power of sin. The legal strain, under covert of zeal for the law, hath a native tendency to mar true holiness, and all acceptable obedience to the law, insomuch, that the greatest legalist is the greatest Antinomian, or enemy to the law ; the gospel is slighted and disparaged by many, as if it left men to a lawless liberty, and the law is cried up in opposition to it ; and therefore, God leaves men to all lawless impieties, as a righteous punishment, of their contemning of grace, by which alone the strength of sin can be broken, Rom. vi. 14. Why does the devil, in all generations, oppose himself so much to the gospel, and to the doctrine of grace, and raises up all the calumnies in the world against it ? Even because it is the doctrine of grace that destroys his kingdom ; for the devil knows, that while men are under the law, they are under his power, and under the power of sin ; therefore he hath not great ill-will at legal doctrine : but if one preach up grace, and nothing but free grace, then he will raise a hue after him, as an enemy to the law and holiness. Why, what ails the devil at the soul ? Even

because nothing spoils his market among souls so much, as the gospel, when it comes with power; for, it is the gospel, and not the law, that is the immediate instrument of conversion, Gal. iii. 2, and of true holiness, Tit. ii. 11, 12. And what is it that makes the gospel the power of God to salvation, and the powerful instrument of converting sinners to God? Even because therein is revealed the righteousness of God, from faith to faith, Rom. i. 15, 17, and therein the righteousness of God, without the law, is manifested, Rom. iii. 21. What was the reason, that, in the beginning of our glorious Reformation such great multitudes were quickened to spiritual life, and made fruitful in the ways of God? Why, God raised up some instruments to publish and illustrate the doctrine of grace, and their preaching wrought wonders, the power of God attending the publication of it; they harped most upon this string, to clear the doctrine of justification by grace, without the works of the law, and in opposition to the damnable doctrine of the church of Rome, which sets up men's works, as the matter of their justification; but as all the Reformers harped sweetly upon the string of grace, so this article, says Luther, reigns in my heart, "That we are justified freely by grace, through the redemption that is in Christ." But now-a-days, we are become so far ashamed of the gospel of Christ, that as all imaginable methods have been taken to disparage the preaching of it; so some that have but a faint inclination to preach it are discouraged from meddling too much with this theme; and others betake themselves to a legal strain; or, if they preach grace, it is in such a hampered way, and with so many cautions and circumlocutions, as if there were a great danger in preaching free grace, but no danger in preaching the law. Is there need of caution in preaching of Christ, and no caution to be used in preaching Moses? I am not against suitable caution on all hands; but it is to be feared there will be little revival of a Reformation, till the doctrine of grace vent more freely under the conduct of the Spirit, giving such an appropriating faith and persuasion of the free favour, love, and grace of God in Christ, as took place in our Reformers' days. Whence is it that all manner of sin and profaneness rages in our day? Why, gospel-light is either darkened or slighted and men remain under the law, which is the strength of sin.

2. See hence the dreadful corruption and depravation of our nature, and the deplorable condition of sinners in their natural state, in that the law, which forbids sin, should be in men the strength of

sin, and should irritate corruption, and stir up to more sin. The law, instead of healing that disease, does increase it; as it is said, Hosea vii. 1, "When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria." See also Rom. viii. 9, 10, 11. It fares with men under the dominion of the law, as with wolves and dogs, that grow more fierce by their being tied up and confined; and as with a brook, which if not interrupted, runs calmer; but if it be damned up then *supens et serrens, et ab obice sevirior ibit*: "It swells beyond its bounds, and rages and runs down afterwards the more violently." When the sun of the law shines upon men's dunghill hearts, they bring forth the more noisome smell; hence, tell the unregenerate man of his sins, he is the more inclined thereto; tell him of his duties, he is the more averse therefrom; why, whence does this proceed? It even comes to pass by these two means. 1. God is provoked by sin, to work these strange effects upon men, as an angry judge; he makes the law, which should be their soul's meat and drink to be poison to them. 2. Because the law is contrary to sin, therefore sin is contrary to it; they violently oppose each other. If there were no sin, the law would be pleasant to them, they would wear it as jewels about their neck, and write it upon the tables of their heart; but now oh! how opposite is the carnal heart to all spiritual work: Some speak of their good hearts, and good nature; but "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" any good thing out of a sinful nature? Naturally we delight in good, just as fish delight to be out of the water; take a fish out of its watery element, and so long as it lives it is not quiet, it does nothing but leaps and tumbles up and down; so, set carnal men upon spiritual work, they are out of their element, they cannot live, cannot rest there, Hos. vi. 5. Praying and preaching does, as it were, hew and slay, vex and torment them, they are never easy till they be in their own element again. That horse must be a froward beast, that, the more he is spurred forward, the more he runs backward; and a stubborn child, that, the more his father enjoins him to do a thing, the more he sets himself against it; this is the state of every one by nature; men huff and snuff at reproof, and cannot endure contradiction. And as our nature is a corrupt and contradicting nature, in opposition to the law; so it is a heterogenous and self-contradictory nature; men are, while under the curse of the law both under the power of sin, and under the power of self-

righteousness ; having a cursed opposition to the law as a rule of holiness, and yet a woful inclination to be justified by the law as a covenant of works, Rom. x. 3; and, as the expression is, Gal. vi. 21, they desire to be under the law to be saved by it: and yet they cannot endure to be under it, to be ruled by it. They take occasion to sin from the law, Rom. vii. 8; as some evidently do when they scorn their teachers, and turn their preaching into scoffing; and yet they take occasion to boast from the law, Rom. ii. 27, as if they were too wise to be instructed, and too good and righteous to despair of life by the law. Thus the law they are under is their ruin, and they know it not. While the commandment never came with power to their effectual conviction, sin and self remain in their power; and yet of this they are ignorant, that "The strength of sin is the law." They perceive not the strength of sin that they are under, nor the strength of natural corruption, nor the dreadful curse they are under, because they know not the law they are under, nor perceive it in its spirituality and severity, in its mandatory and minatory power, which gives sin both its commanding and condemning strength.

3. Hence we may see the duty of all unbelievers under the power of sin, namely, to come to Christ, and to come under his grace, who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth, as they would not remain under the yoke of the law, and so under the strength of sin. Oh! what a fearful thing it is to be under the law! "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." Your works can never satisfy the law; to attempt this were to build a castle in the air; and, as a snow-ball, the more it is rolled the bigger it grows; so, the more you go on to get a righteousness in yourself to fulfil the law, the further off you are from it, and the more involved under the curse, as being a debtor to do the whole law, Gal. v. 3. And, oh! how dreadful will your state be in a dying hour, and on the brink of eternity, if you have no righteousness that can please the holiness, or pacify the justice of God; you will have nothing to expect but to bear the weight of your own sins for ever, where God will open the treasures of his fury, and shut the bowels of his mercy for ever upon you; and when you have suffered millions of years in hell, yet not one mite of a million of your law-debt will be paid! O then, despair, absolutely despair of getting any good by the law, whether by your own doing or suffering; and see the necessity of flying to Christ, and his doing

and suffering, knowing that there is no other way of getting both the law and the Lawgiver satisfied. O happy these, who are persuaded, through grace, to take this way, namely, of coming to Christ alone for deliverance from the law, and so from the strength of sin !

4. Hence we may see what is the duty of believers in Christ, who are delivered from the law. Surely they ought to give evidence that they are delivered from the strength of sin, by aspiring after the strength of grace ; for, as it is said of believers, Rom. vi. 14, " Sin shall not have dominion over you ; for you are not under the law, but under grace ; " which says, that by their being delivered from the law, they are delivered from the reigning strength of sin : so it is the duty of believers to give evidence that they are not under the law, nor consequently under the strength of sin, by aiming at the strength of grace, or the highest and noblest degrees thereof, in opposition to the strength of sin.

If you ask, Whence is it that the strength of grace does appear in a believer ?

I shall offer some instances of the strength of grace ; I speak not now of grace in the fountain, as it is in God, but of grace in the streams, as it ought to shine in the believer.

(1.) The first instance of the strength of grace is when the believer can be high and yet low ; high in his attainments, and yet low in his thoughts and apprehensions of himself. Thus Paul was high in gifts, high in graces, high in comforts, high in services, high in success, high in manifestations, high in many excellent respects, and yet low and humble in spirit ; for, if we take his own verdict of himself, he looks on himself as the least of all saints, the chief of all sinners, not worthy to be called an apostle, as I might instance in several of his epistles ; yea, he calls himself nothing, 2 Cor. xii. 11. And, O how becoming is it for believers to be low and humble amidst these high and eminent graces and attainments ! For he that was the highest became the lowest ; " Learn of me, says Christ, for I am meek and lowly in heart ; " and yet so high, that in the preceding verse he had shewed how all things were delivered to him by his Father, Mat. xi. 27, 28, 29. Oh ! may not dust and ashes blush and be ashamed to be proud, when God humbled himself ! Oh ! for a vile worm to swell, when MAJESTY humbled itself !

(2.) The second instance of the strength of grace is when the

believer is low, and yet high : lying low in the dust before God continually, and yet high and heavenly-minded, according to Col. iii. 1, 2, when the lower he sinks in self-abasement, the higher he mounts up as on eagles' wings in spiritual-mindedness and holy loftiness of heart, looking down with a generous disdain upon worldly things, that carnal minds are so much taken up with.

(3.) The third instance of the strength of grace is when a believer is full, and yet empty ; full of worldly enjoyments, and yet empty of love to the world ; enjoying all manner of temporal good things, and yet able to say, as Psalm lxxiii. 25, " Whom have I in heaven but thee ; and there is none on earth that I desire beside thee ? " And with Paul, " I am crucified to the world, and the world to me. " It is an instance of great grace when a man can swim in the streams of creature enjoyments, and yet so as not to forsake the fountain of living waters.

(4.) The fourth instance of the strength of grace is, when the believer is empty, and yet full ; empty of all outward worldly enjoyment, and yet full, as having all by having Christ. This is exemplified in Hab. iii. 17, 18, " Though the fig-tree should not blossom, nor fruit be found in the vine, &c., yet will I rejoice in the Lord, and be joyful in the God of my salvation. " Thus, when a man having nothing yet possesses all things by seeing all in Christ, even amidst outward wants, losses, crosses, and afflictions, then the strength of grace appears.

(5.) The fifth instance of the strength of grace is when the believer is at ease, and yet afflicted ; at ease in respect of outward and inward prosperity, and yet afflicted for the afflictions of God's church and people, laying the church's calamities duly to heart. You have a notable example of this in David, 2 Sam. vii. 1. There you see that he sat in his house, and the Lord had given him rest round about from all his enemies, and thus he was at ease, but he says to Nathan, " Behold, now I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells within curtains, " ver. 2. Though he was at rest and ease, so that his own personal interest prospered ; yet he was afflicted, because it fared not so well with the house and interest of God. It is choice grace, to be deeply afflicted with the affliction of the church, even when no personal affliction takes place.

(6.) The sixth instance of the strength of grace is when a believer is afflicted, and yet at ease ; I mean, when he is compassed about with personal affliction, and yet easy and quiet, in a holy,

humble submission to the will of God, and cheerfully acquiesces therein: "I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, because thou didst it," says the Psalmist. Thus Aaron held his peace, even when God's dispensations towards his children were terrible.

(7.) The seventh instance of the strength of grace is when the believer presses after the greatest measure of personal holiness and imparted righteousness, and yet lives wholly and depends entirely upon an imputed righteousness: see a notable example of this in Paul, Phil. iii. 12, 13, 14, where he is pressing after the greatest degree of holiness: and yet, ver. 7, 8, 9, he lives and depends only and wholly upon the imputed righteousness of Christ, for justification and acceptance with God.

(8.) The eighth instance of the strength of grace is when a believer can apprehend love in God's heart, even when he sees nothing but frowns in his face; and when, with Abraham, "Against hope he believes in hope," and says, with Job, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." To love a smiting God, and trust in a slaying God, or notwithstanding all his slaying dispensations, argues great grace; and even when walking in darkness, and having no light, then to trust in the name of the Lord; and when he is calling him a dog, then to draw arguments for his faith out of such a word, and to plead kindness on him amidst all the frowns of his face, and blows of his hand: this is conquering grace.

(9.) The ninth instance of the strength of grace is when believers see a beauty in the service of religion, as well as in the sweets of it, a beauty in spiritual employments, as well as spiritual enjoyments; when it is their meat and drink to do their Lord's will, and work his work, as well as enjoy his presence; and when it is their very life to serve the Lord. O but they are come a great length that can say, "To us to live is Christ."

(10.) The tenth instance of the strength of grace is when a man can rejoice in the gifts, graces, and usefulness of others, even when they outshine his own, and eclipse him; and when a man can rejoice to see the work of God carried on by others, though himself be laid aside, and share not in the honour of it. Such eminent grace was in Moses when he said, "Enviest thou for my sake? would to God all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them," Numb. xi. 29. And such eminent grace was in Paul, when he rejoiced that Christ was preached, though with a design to cloud and eclipse him, Phil. i. 18. Some

have noticed two things as carrying noble grace in them: the one is, to be willing to be used in God's work, without being taken notice of, or having the honour of it; and the other is, for a man to rejoice to see the work of God carried on by others, though he himself be laid aside.

(11.) The eleventh instance of the strength of grace, is, when a man can set the glory of Christ above his own interest, his own happiness, his own life and concerns. Moses and Paul were also eminent in this; Moses content to be blotted out of God's book, and Paul content to be accursed for Israel's sake; what was this, but as some observe with respect to Moses, a preferring the glory of God before their own salvation, whose glory they looked upon as conjoined with Israel's preservation, in respect of the promises made to the fathers, and in respect of the blasphemy which the Egyptians and adversaries were ready to belch out against God, should he utterly destroy them. And again, we find Paul not only willing to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus; Christ's honour being dearer to him than his life. O sirs, it is rare grace for a man to be content that his name be eclipsed, and his honour laid in the dust, if the name and honour of Christ may be advanced thereby; and content to be a footstool on which Christ may ascend his throne.

(12.) The twelfth instance of the strength of grace, is, when a man can account no outward adversity too hard to suffer for the name of Christ on earth, and no outward prosperity too dear to part with for the enjoyment of Christ in heaven: when, on the one hand, he accounts no outward adversity too hard to suffer for the name of Christ on earth, and can glory in the cross of Christ; it is said of the disciples, Acts v. 41, They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ: or, as the words may be read, that they were *honoured to be dishonoured* for Christ. And when, on the other hand, they account no outward prosperity too sweet, or too dear, to part with for the enjoyment of Christ in heaven. If a man be in affliction, adversity, distress, sickness, pain, and then be willing to be gone, there is not much here, this may be where there is no grace at all; but when a man enjoys abundance of worldly comforts and contentments and yet longs for heaven and perfect holiness and happiness; when, though he may say, *It is good to be here*, yet he is saying O it is better to be there, *to be with Christ is best of all*; and therefore is breathing,

with the spouse, Song viii. 14, "Make haste, my Beloved, and be thou like to a roe, or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices;" make haste to bring me to the place where I shall be for ever with the Lord, and shall be like him; for I shall see him as he is: no paradise here being like the paradise above. This were an instance of the strength of grace; and, O but a new discovery of the glory of Christ would make a man long to be above, and look with contempt upon all sublunary enjoyments! For, as a man that looks any time on the natural sun, when after that he looks down, the earth is but a lump of darkness to him; so, if we look to the glory of Christ, the Sun of righteousness, and the glory of heaven, how will it darken all worldly glory, and make us long to be above. Now, I say, it is the duty of believers, that are delivered from under the law, and consequently from the strength of sin, to discover, in opposition thereto, the strength of grace, in these or the like instances that I have named.

"To seek life by the law, or justification by the deeds of it," says one, "is to seek life in death, justification in condemnation, and heaven in hell." There are two things necessary to salvation, namely, justification and sanctification; but the law can give none of them. Pardon sin it cannot; for, it is the office of the law to condemn sinners, and to curse the transgressors of it: renew unto holiness it cannot; for, though it be holy, yet it cannot make any holy, in regard, that whom it leaves under the curse, it leaves under the power of sin, which is the leading part of the curse; on which account it is declared in our text, that the strength of sin is the law. If the law could make a sinner either happy or holy, it could neither be just nor holy itself; but so just and holy is the law, that it punishes the least transgression with the greatest judgment: now, the strength of sin being the greatest judgment, and the greatest curse: to inflict this judgment on a sinner, and yet to make him holy, is a contradiction; therefore, though it require holiness, yet it cannot work holiness in a sinner; and hence it does not detract from, but rather declare and illustrate both the justice and holiness of the law, to say, that the strength of sin is the law. And, from this subject,

We may further infer the woful nature and infinite evil of sin, as it stands in opposition to the infinite holiness of God manifested in his holy law; for, in this doctrine, we may see sin to be both a breach of the command, and a branch of the curse of God's law;

for, as I shewed in the doctrinal part, the law threatened death to the transgressor; and spiritual death, which is the power and strength of sin, is the greatest death therein threatened. The meaning of this, in short, is, that the grand part of the threatening of the law was to this effect, "In the day thou sinnest thou shalt die;" which, when understood of spiritual death, the meaning is, If thou sin, and break my law, then thou shalt be left to the power of sin; I will punish thy sin with sin: there is no evil so great as sin, and there is no punishment so great as sin; if therefore, says the law, the commission of sin be thy choice, the strength of sin shall be thy doom: here is the greatest curse of God's law against sin; sin is a departing from God. Now, says God in the law, If you depart from me, then I will let you depart from me to sin, where the strength of sin shall be your greatest punishment in time; and at last I will bid you depart from me to hell, where the perfection of sin shall be your greatest punishment to eternity. The strength of sin then is to be considered, not only as it is a breach of the law, but as it is a branch of the curse thereof. This sentence of the law is past, and it is so far execute, as that a man is under the power and strength of sin, which, in this respect, is a penal evil, as well as a moral. The first sin that ever was committed by our first parents, was a moral evil: that is, a violation of the moral law, a breach of the command; but all the following sin, both in them and their sinful posterity, is not only a moral evil, that is, a breach of the command, but also, a penal evil; that is, a branch of the curse, or a just judgment inflicted, according to the sentence of the holy law, against the sinner for his breach thereof. As sin is a moral evil, though it take occasion from the law, yet the holy law can have no casualty, no hand in it; for, on the contrary, as it commands holiness, so it discharges sin, and threatens it with the fire and sword of God's everlasting vengeance: but as sin is a penal evil, or a righteous punishment of sin, the law is properly the strength of it; for, to say in this sense, that the strength of sin is the law, is to say, that the strength of sin is a just judgment of God inflicted upon the sinner, according to the threatening of his just and holy law. Ye ought then, still to distinguish here betwixt sin, as it is a moral evil, and as it is a penal evil; for, not to distinguish well here, were to make this text unintelligible to you. Why? because to say, that the law is the strength of sin, or the cause of it, as it is a moral evil, were to blaspheme the holy law of God; but to say, that the law is the strength of sin, as it is a

penal evil, and an execution of the sentence of the law, is to commend the law, in its holiness and justice both. Let this therefore be kept still in mind, that the law is properly the strength of sin, not as sin is a breach of its command, but as it is a branch of its curse; and let this fill your heart with a deep sense of the woful nature and prodigious evil of sin, in that it is both a breach of God's command, and a branch of God's curse. As it is a breach of the command, it is our giving up ourselves to work wickedness; as it is a branch of the curse, it is God's giving us up to ourselves, and to the rule and strength of sin. Behold sin here as the most fearful invention that ever was; for, as sin is the greatest evil that hell could invent, so God's punishing sin with sin, is the greatest evil that heaven could invent. Sin, as it is a moral evil, and a breach of the law-command, is the most ugly brat of hell, a brat of our own, begotten in us by the devil; and in this respect it is an affronting of the holiness of God, appearing in the precept of the law: and sin, as it is a penal evil, or the strength of sin, as it is the punishment of sin, and a branch of the law-curse, is the most dreadful fruit and offspring of heaven's vengeance against sin; and in this respect it is a flash of the fire of God's infinite justice, arising out of the threatening of the broken law. See here, then, the infinite evil of sin, in that the strength of sin is the law.

6. Hence we may infer the standing force and binding power and authority of the law over all that are under it, as a covenant of works: though it be broken, yet it is binding; though it be violated by us, yet it is obligatory upon us by nature, which is evident from its continuing to be the strength of sin to all unbelievers, who, if they were not both under the power of the command, and of the curse of the law, would not be under the commanding and condemning power of sin; the power of the law-command they are under, is the strength of sin occasionally; and the power of the law-curse is the strength of sin effectively.

(1.) The power of the command they are under, is the strength of sin occasionally; Rom. vii. 8, "Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence." Here the command is the occasion that sin takes, not that it gives occasion; nay, the law in its own nature, is so far from being the cause of sin, that it does not so much as give occasion of sinning; but man's corrupt nature does take occasion from it to break forth into more sin, when it is stirred up, and irritated by the command and prohibition

of the law ; even as the sparks arise out of a furnace when it is stirred up, so do the sparkles of sin arise out of the furnace of corrupt nature, when stirred up by the knowledge of the law that condemns it ; and, instead of being amended thereby, doth bring forth sin and sinful desires more abundantly. The law being the strength of sin this way, shews how much the power and force of the law takes place even over unbelievers, though in a way that is very terrible ; and how much they are under obligation to the command, which yet they are so unwilling to yield subjection unto ; yea, and are direct enemies to, Rom. viii. 7. Surely all things work together for evil to them that hate God, since the law itself, which should serve to call men to God, makes them the more to flee from him, and run headlong unto sin and death, through the untowardness of our nature, that is altogether estranged from God. This, by the way, takes the whole fault of our sins from the law, and lays it where it ought to be, even upon our perverse crooked natures ; for the law is no more to be blamed by becoming the occasion of so many great evils, than a physician is to be blamed, if, upon his forbidding cold drink unto a sick man, the patient should more frequently and vehemently thirst after it. There are three sorts of people that should lay this matter to heart : All the children of disobedience, that are in a natural state, should hereby be stirred up to seek after a new birth, and a new nature, since this is the wretched condition of corrupt nature : All the children of grace, whose natures are changed, should hereupon be humbled, both in regard that they were once under the power of this poisoned corruption, and have still the remains of it sticking in them, and prompting them to offend : and again, all the hearers of the word in general, ought hereupon to hear with fear, and to pray that they be not made the worse by the word, through the fault of their own wicked nature ; and particularly, that the gospel itself be not the savour of death to them, and the strength of sin ; which gospel is the only thing in the world, that prescribes an antidote against the strength of sin. It is sad enough, when men draw strength to sin from the law : but, what a dreadful thing it is to draw strength to sin from the gospel ! This is the sin of sins, that turns the grace of God into wantonness, and when Christ himself is a stumbling-block, and a rock of offence.

But,

(2.) The power of the curse of the law, that sinners are under, is the strength of sin effectively : Rom. iv. 15, " The law worketh

wrath ; for where no law is, there is no transgression ;” as if the apostle should say, Men’s corrupt nature cannot observe God’s law ; therefore, where there is a law, there is and must be transgression : where there is transgression, there is and must be wrath ; for the law must curse the breaker of it ; and of this curse, as I said, the strength of sin is a principal part. Both these particulars, then, do prove the standing force and authority of the broken law over all that are under it, and out of Christ ; though they have lost ability to obey, yet it retains its authority to command ; and though the law is weak to justify, yet it is powerful to condemn. Its weakness to justify, is not the fault of the law ; it is in us, Rom. viii. 3. It is weak through the flesh ; our corrupt nature : it cannot justify us, because we cannot fulfil the righteousness of it, and it cannot give life, Gal. iii. 21. As the sun cannot give light to him that hath no eye, so the law cannot give life to him that hath no perfect righteousness ; but its power to condemn is from its own nature, as it is a just law, cursing every transgressor, Gal. iii. 10 ; and from the justice of the Lawgiver, which appears in the sanction of the law, even as his holiness in the precept thereof. Every sinner out of Christ, then, remains under the commanding and condemning power of the law, as a covenant of works, as is evident from his being under the commanding and condemning power of sin ; the strength of sin to command him, being occasionally from the commanding power of the law that he is under ; and the strength of sin to condemn, being properly from the condemning power of the law that he is under ; yea, the condemning power of the law influences the commanding as well as the condemning power of sin over him, while the sinner is by the sentence of the law righteously condemned to that slavery and bondage under sin, for his breach of the law : in which sense effectively, yet in a holy and just manner, the law is the strength of sin. This standing force and binding authority of the law, as a covenant, both in its commanding and condemning power over unbelievers, is what makes them stand in absolute need of Christ, both in his active and passive obedience, as revealed in the gospel. The law-command they are under, when it is seen to be imprestible, makes them need to flee to Christ’s obedience ; the law-curse that they are under, when it is seen to be intolerable, makes them need to flee to Christ’s satisfaction ; and hence it is said, Gal. iii. 24, “ The law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ ;” which it could not be, if sinners under the gospel were not under the commanding and con-

demning power of it ; for, how does it bring us to Christ, but as it urges us to obedience, which is now impossible, and condemns us for our disobedience? Not that the law brings any to Christ directly, for it neither reveals Christ, nor can give strength to believe in him ; but only accidentally, in that it accuses and condemns us, and so brings us to Christ, as a disease brings one to a physician.

7. Hence we may see the danger of being ignorant of God's righteousness, to the establishing of a righteousness of our own ; seeing thus we keep ourselves under the law, and so under the power of sin ; the danger of this is declared, Rom. x. 3, " They being ignorant of God's righteousness, and so going about to establish their own righteousness," or to make their own rotten footless righteousness to stand, " have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God ;" and thus they keep themselves under the law, which is the strength of sin. Whatever view we take of God's righteousness here, ignorance of it hath this sad effect. There are three ways in which God's righteousness is taken in scripture ; either, 1. The righteousness that is in him, his essential holiness and righteousness ; Or, 2. The righteousness that he requires of us by the law ; Or, 3. The righteousness that he provides for us in the gospel. Now, ignorance of God's righteousness, in any of these respects, is a dangerous root of a legal spirit, and of establishing our own righteousness, and so of remaining under the law, that is the strength of sin.

(1.) If we consider it as the righteousness that is in God, his essential righteousness and infinite holiness of nature, as he is of purer eyes than that he can behold iniquity, and who will in no wise clear the guilty ; surely they that know this righteousness of God, will never trust to a righteousness of their own. How can a sinner stand before this holy God, or be justified in his sight? Sinners may be justified in the sight of men by their works, but cannot be justified in the sight of God ; nay, ignorance of God's righteousness fosters the opinion of self-righteousness and justification by works, which opinion is even the root of licentiousness of life. And whence is it that self-justiciaries, that hold justification by their own works, are ordinarily most licentious in their life and conversation? Why, the reason is because the very same notions of God that make them fancy he is not so ill-pleased with their works, but that he can justify them by their works, do also make them fancy that he is not

so ill pleased with their sins as that he will be too severe against them ; and so here is a root of licentiousness on which sin grows, the strength whereof is the law.

(2.) If we consider God's righteousness, as the righteousness God requires of us in the law, ignorance of this makes them adventure on a righteousness of their own, and go about to establish it, and so remain under the law as the strength of sin. Men are ready to dream that the law respects only some outward duties, which, when they comply with, they dream also that they are acquit by the law, and so they give loose reins to all other disobedience ; but they do not know or consider, that the law requires perfection, and that internal, in heart and nature ; external, in life and conversation ; and eternal, in respect of perpetuity and duration, yea, sinless obedience ; insomuch that it cannot justify any that is, or ever was a sinner. If this were considered, then their hopes by the law would give up the ghost.

(3.) If we consider God's righteousness as the righteousness which God hath provided for us in the gospel ; that is, " Christ the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth," Rom. x. 3, 4, which is the principal meaning of the word here ; it is the want of the knowledge of this righteousness that makes men go about to establish a righteousness of their own, and trust to it ; and so, remaining under the law, are under the power and strength of sin, because they remain under the curse of the law so long as they want this law-magnifying righteousness, this law-fulfilling righteousness ; for the law cannot but curse every breaker of it ; and so, the strength of sin being a part of the curse, they remain under the strength of sin so long as they remain under the curse of the law, through the want of this righteousness, which would make them to be accounted perfect keepers of the law, and so would really free them from the strength of sin. See then, what a dangerous thing it is to be ignorant of God's righteousness.

8. Hence see, what need there was that our help should be laid upon such a mighty one as our Lord Jesus is, he being the end of the law for righteousness, who alone can deliver us from the strength of sin. There is no power can conquer sin, but that power that can satisfy the law, both in its command and demand. It is utterly impossible for any man to deliver himself from the strength of sin ; nay, we can no more do it, than we can shake off the curse of the law that we are under : the strength of sin hath the strength

of the curse on its side ; the strength of the curse of the law hath the strength of infinite justice on its side : and so, the power that can only remove or break the strength of sin, is that infinite power that can fully satisfy infinite justice : this, therefore, is the work of him who is the wisdom of God and the power of God. We need not only a helper, but a strong One ; therefore God hath laid help upon One that is mighty, Psalm lxxxix. 19. We need not only a Saviour, but a great One, and so Christ is called, Isa. xix. 29, "He shall send them a Saviour, and a great One, and he shall deliver them." He must be a great Saviour, that is the author of so great a salvation ; none else but the eternal Son of God, who is essentially one with the Father and the Holy Ghost. Woe to the Arian blasphemy, that would rob us of the only ground of our hope ; yea, rob the Son of God of his supreme Deity. This is our mighty Samson, that carries away the gates of Gaza, the gates of hell, that they might not prevail against us ; and he only was able to carry away the strength of sin, by giving full satisfaction to the law and Lawgiver, and so to stop the progress of God's infinite wrath against sinners with his everlasting righteousness : which law-magnifying righteousness being once imputed and applied, the legal and condemning strength of sin is broken, and thereupon the actual and commanding strength of it gradually broken, according to the measure of faith's daily improvement of this righteousness of Christ, till it be wholly destroyed in the very in-being thereof at death. For, as he is able, so he will save to the uttermost all that come to God by him.

9. Hence see what obligations believers are under to Christ, their great Captain of salvation and glorious Conqueror that delivers them from the law. How sweet is the swan-song in the view of death, "O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law ; but thanks be to God, that giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord." What makes sin, as it is, the sting of death, and death, as it bears that sting, to be so terrible ? Why, it is the law, as it is the strength of sin ; but now, the great Lawgiver becoming, in the person of his Son, the law-satisfier, in the room of the sinner the law-breaker, and thereupon the Judge becoming the justifier, according to Rom. iii. 26, the law hath no more power to curse the believer ; and so sin hath lost its strength, and death lost its sting, and the grave its victory. The believer being perfectly

delivered from the curse of the law, he is perfectly delivered from the strength of sin, as it is a branch of the curse.

QUEST. What is the strength of sin that still remains with the believer while here, if it be not a part of the curse?

ANSW. (1.) Sin in all unbelievers is, as I said, both a breach of the law and a branch of the curse; but, with respect to believers, though their sin be a breach of the law, yet they are under no part of the curse of the law; for, though sin be a cursed thing, and the law curses sin wherever it is, and curses the sin of believers, as well as the sin of others; yet, as the law cannot curse the person of the believer, so the sin that is suffered to remain in him is designed for some other purpose than to be a curse to him; for it is one of the great privileges of the believer that he is delivered from the wrath of God and the curse of the moral law. Therefore,

(2.) Though sin in itself, and in its own nature, is a curse and a misery wherever it is; yet, with respect to the believer, whenever he is delivered from the curse of the law, the remaining strength of sin in him is made subservient to some other end than ever it had before, through the infinite wisdom of that God who can turn a curse to a blessing, and a misery to a mercy. Though he still looks upon sin as his greatest misery, and on himself as miserable and wretched because of sin, saying, with the apostle, Rom. vii. 24, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of sin and death?" yet it is his mercy that he sees sin to be his misery now, inasmuch as it shall not make him miserable hereafter. Sin is still the greatest burden to the believer; but it is his mercy that sin is his burden now, that it may not weigh him down to hell, as it will do the rest of the world, who feel not the burden of sin in time. Sin is still, to the believer, the greatest disease; but it is his mercy that sin is his disease; for, whereas others that go on in sin impudently, and without spiritual remorse, sin is not their disease, with which they are affected or afflicted, and they are in danger of dying of that disease, like a man that is distempered with a fever, and yet hath no sense of it; but believers in Christ, having sin for their disease, under which they sigh, and sob, and moan, and groan, the disease is not unto death, eternal death, but unto the glory of God, and to their good. It is to the glory of God, as he is JEHOVAH-ROPHI, the Lord their helper and physician; and it is ordered to their good the curse is turned so far to a blessing, that the remaining strength of sin in the believer is made subservient to these following good ends.

1. It serves for his instruction, that he may see more and more of the corruption of his nature and the daily need that he hath of Christ, both for righteousness and strength, that Christ may be more and more precious to him, as the brazen serpent to the stung Israelites. Sin in itself tends to destruction, but, through grace, it turns to the believer's instruction; for hereby he learns more and more that his own righteousness is but filthy rags, that Christ's righteousness is the only fair and glorious robe; he learns more and more, that as his damnation would have been just, if he had been sent to hell, so his salvation will be free if he be brought to heaven; he learns more and more many sad experiences in the daily working of sin in him, and many sweet experiences in the daily improvement of Christ.

2. The remaining strength of sin in the believer serves for his correction, as Peter's fall was for the correction of his pride and self-conceit, when he said, "Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I." Indeed, it is one of the sorest effects of God's fatherly anger towards his children, when he leaves them to one sin, thereby to correct them for another: under such a dreadful correction as this, the believer may have dreadful apprehensions of God through unbelief, as if he were designed to ruin and destroy him, saying, as the church, Isa. lxiii. 16, "Wherefore hast thou made us to err from thy ways? and hardened our hearts from thy fear?" It is what the Lord's people may have frequent occasions to observe, that the Lord sharply reproveth and corrects them for their sloth and unwatchfulness, by leaving them to other sins; as it was with David in the matter of Bathsheba; therefore, "Watch and pray (says Christ), that ye enter not into temptation."

3. The remaining strength of sin in the believer serves for his humiliation; 2 Chron. xxii. 26, "Hezekiah was humbled for the pride of his heart." Believers are in danger of being lifted up, even after great manifestations, as Paul, 2 Cor. xii. 7; therefore, a thorn in the flesh, and a messenger of Satan, may be ordered to buffet them, lest they should be exalted above measure.

4. The remaining strength of sin in the believer serves for his excitation and upstirring; it is so ordered, that sin should abide in believers, that it may be the continual ground, reason, and occasion of the exercising of all graces, and putting a lustre on their obedience; some excellent graces, such as repentance and mortification, could have no exercise if the strength of sin were altogether removed,

and while we are in this world there is a beauty in these graces that is an overbalance for the evils of the remainders of sin. And it renders spiritual obedience the more valuable, the more that remaining sin renders it difficult and impracticable to nature.

[1.] The remaining strength of sin excites the believer to love and long for more of the enjoyment of Christ here, and for the full enjoyment of him hereafter, saying, O to be there, where there shall be no more sin! O when shall the day break, and the shadows of sin and sorrow flee away! "Haste, my beloved, and be thou like a roe, or a young hart, upon the mountains of Bether."

[2.] The remaining strength of sin excites him to be weary of this life: oh, "I am weary of my life, because of the daughters of Heth," said Rebekah; so, I am weary of my life, because of the remains of sin, says the believer; what is life to me, when I am in a continual conflict with such bosom enemies?

[3.] It excites him to pray without ceasing, saying, with David, Psalm xix. 12, "Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults; keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins, and let them not have dominion over me." Where it is supposed that secret sins that are overlooked, and, perhaps, not known to be sins, may make way for these that are presumptuous. Thus there is a secret pride that may seem to be nothing but a frame of mind suitable to our wealth, dignity, parts, or abilities; sensuality may seem to be nothing but a lawful participation of the good things of this life, passion may seem to be proper zeal, and covetousness may seem to be but a necessary care of ourselves and our families; but, when the seeds of these are covered with such pretences, they will at length spring up, and bear bitter fruits in the lives of men. The beginning of all apostacy lies in such covered pretences: we need therefore to pray with the psalmist, to be cleansed from secret faults that we may be kept back from presumptuous sin; the remaining strength of sin excited him thus to pray.

[4.] It excites also to deprecate, with the psalmist, Psalm cxliii. 2, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight no flesh can be justified;" The words here, *Enter not into judgment with thy servant*, may be read in the original, *Go not to law with thy servant*. Though David was a servant of God, a man according to God's own heart, yet he deprecates the law-trial: the best servants that ever God had of mere men cannot be justified by the law; they see sin remaining in them, and therefore are

excited to pray, *Lord, go not to law with me* ; go not to the law-threatening with me, to pursue me for my debt ; go not the law-tribunal with me, but rather go to the gospel-tribunal with me ; go to Christ with me.

[5.] The remaining strength of sin excites them to make much of Christ, when they get a grip of him, and to say, with Jacob, Gen. xxxii. 26, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." Oh ! my woful sin, and fearful departings had made a sad separation betwixt thee and me, insomuch that I never thought thou wouldst have deigned to give me another visit ; but now, that I have got thee in my arms again, through grace I will keep the grip ; I cannot think of our parting again, nor of my going back to that sad and sinful case again ; nay, "I will not let thee go, till thou bless me."

[6.] The remaining strength of sin excites them to much heart-exercise, such as self-searching, and pleading that the Lord would search, and try, and discover them to themselves, saying, "That which I know not, teach thou me." To self-abasement and abhorrence ; "Now I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." To self-annihilation ; Oh ! I am nothing, less than nothing, worse than nothing. To self-condemnation, now the man judges himself, and passes sentence against himself in the court of conscience, that he may not be judged but assoiled in the court of heaven. To self-observation and watchfulness ; according to that of the apostle, "Look to yourselves ;" and that of the psalmist, "I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue ;" he is therefore excited the more narrowly to notice and observe the traitor that is in his bosom, and to keep a watch. And to self-reformation, saying with David, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." And, in these respects, God makes the believer's malady to be his medicine ; and, on these accounts, the strength of sin is not wholly abolished in believers in time ; and infinite wisdom sees that a state of spiritual warfare is best for them.

Let none, from what hath been said, take encouragement to sin, nor abuse this grace of God unto wantonness ; for they that do so, will discover themselves to be strangers to Christ, and so under the strength of sin, as it is a branch of the curse of the law. Shun, like hell, and abhor that peace of mind that is consistent with the love of, and living in any known sin ; for, though believers may be often surprised into known sins, yet while they refuse all inward peace but that which comes in by most fervent desires of deliverance from

sin, and continual application to Christ for the ruin of sin, they discover that they are safe from the dominion thereof; yet these people that maintain a presumptuous peace, while they live in any known sin, are near the borders of the territories of hellish security, where sin reigns unto death.

10. To add no more from this doctrine, we may infer the dangerous influence of any new doctrine of a legal strain, that stands in opposition to this truth, That the law of works is the strength of sin to all sinners that have broken and violate it. Whence it being manifest, that all unbelievers are under the commanding and condemning power of the law, as a covenant of works, which appears by their being under the commanding and condemning strength of sin; and that it is the privilege only of believers that they are not under the law, as a covenant, either to be justified or condemned thereby; there is a twofold dangerous doctrine that stands in opposition to this truth.

[1.] That doctrine, which asserts, That unbelievers, under the gospel, are not under the COMMANDING power of the law, as a covenant of works: Which some attempt to prove by this argument. Unbelievers, under the gospel, cannot be under two opposite obligations, namely, to seek life by their own obedience; and, at the same time, to seek life by the obedience of another; now, they are by the gospel, obliged to seek life by the obedience of another, viz., of Christ; therefore, they are not obliged to seek life by their own obedience: and consequently, say they, unbelievers are not under the commanding power of the law, as a covenant of works.

ANSW. This argument, or rather quirk, and sophism, may be easily exposed, if we consider,

1. That it goes upon a wrong hypothesis, supposing, as if the form of the command of the covenant of works did lie in this, that Adam was to seek life by his obedience, or that man was to seek justification by his own works; which is a supposition that is not matter of fact; for, Adam might have been justified by his works, or by his own perfect obedience, without seeking or aiming at any thing, but the pleasing or glorifying of God, which is the supreme end of man's obedience; whereas, man's seeking, or aiming at life and justification by his obedience, is but a subordinate end thereof; yea, such as that the command of that covenant might have been fulfilled without it; for, if Adam had yielded that perfect obedience, without seeking anything else, or aiming at any other end, but the

supreme one, viz., the glory of God, he would have got life by his obedience, even though he had generously neglected the supreme end altogether, namely, the seeking his own life by it, which was no part of the command itself. For, as our common Standards express it, "When God created man, he entered into a covenant of life with him, upon condition of perfect obedience ;" not upon condition of man's seeking life by his obedience ; nay, this would have made the covenant of works run in a very selfish strain, namely, instead of *Do and live*, it would run, *Seek life by your doing, and you shall live* : and, instead of the threatening, *If you do not, you shall die* ; it would run, *If you seek not life by your doing, you shall die* ; which is a plain perverting the tenor of that covenant.

In opposition to that hypothesis, we may reasonably suppose, that if that covenant had stood, as Adam would not have claimed life so much upon his perfect obedience, as upon the free promise of God, connecting life with that obedience ; so, in obeying, he would not so much, if at all, have sought his own life and happiness, as the glory of God, who graciously condescended to annex the promise of life with that obedience, which he was naturally obliged unto, prior to that annexation. Surely, what man was obliged to by nature was not made void, but rather furthered, by the covenant of works ; but man was naturally obliged to obey his Creator perfectly, and that for this great end, viz., the glorifying of him ; therefore, whatever hope of life, or fear of death might be the consequent of annexing the promise of life, and the threatening of death to the precept, yet it was the precept itself, to which life and death were thus annexed ; that was the command of that covenant, and not man's seeking to have life, or to shun death by his obedience. The promise and threatening were motives to urge man's obedience ; seeking to have life, or shun death, was but a subordinate end, that man might have lawfully had in his obedience. But now, to suppose, that man's being obliged to seek life by his obedience, was the command of the covenant of works, is to confound the command with the sanction, and man's obedience to the command, with the subordinate end that he might have had in his obedience. If man had merely sought himself, and his own life, by his obedience, without seeking God's glory ; surely he had sinned, and so broken that covenant ; but if he had sought only God's glory, and yielded perfect obedience, merely with that view, and abstracting from that subordinate end, the seeking of himself and his own life ; I say,

suppose he had done so, he would have got life by his obedience ; therefore, seeing life might have been obtained by obedience, by virtue of the promise of life annexed to it, and obtained without man's seeking or aiming at himself, and his own life by his obedience, then man's seeking life and justification thereby could never be the precise form of the command of that covenant. Why, the command could have been obeyed, and the promise of life, annexed thereto, could have been accomplished, without that seeking ; seeing the promise was made to man's obedience, and not to his seeking life by his obedience. You see then, the error of the sophism lies in misstating and misrepresenting the form of the command of the covenant of works. Here it is evident, that unbelievers, under the gospel, may be obliged to seek life by the obedience of another, even of Christ, and yet remain under the commanding power of the covenant of works ; since the command thereof did not lie precisely in this, viz., that man was to seek life by his own obedience ; no, this was but a secondary end, or a consequent lawfully deducible from the promise annexed to the command, but no constitutive part of the command itself.

2. The fallacy of that sophism appears also in this, that it supposes, as if sinners, or unbelievers, not under the gospel, were obliged, by the covenant of works, to seek life and justification by their own works and obedience ; but though they, as well as other sinners, do naturally, if they seek life at all, seek it by the law, or by their own works ; yet the covenant of works never said to a sinner, *Seek life by your own works*. Though we should grant, that seeking life by our perfect obedience were the proper command of the covenant of works, to man in his innocent state, while he was capable to yield it ; yet it never commanded a sinner to seek life that way, nor did it ever promise life to a sinner, a breaker of that covenant, upon his seeking life by his obedience ; nay, it is impossible that ever the law should do so, otherwise it would condemn itself, should it offer to justify any transgressor of it, by whatever after obedience of his ; for, it is the very nature of the law to condemn the least transgressor, whatever his after-works may be ; no act of obedience, no, not the highest, even of saints in heaven, can expiate for the least breach of God's law ; nor can any mortification take away the fault of sin committed, Deut. xxvii. 26, Gal. iii. 10, Rom. iii. 20, 23, Jam. ii. 10. The law requires no less than a sinless obedience ; yea, the perfect obedience of a sinless

man ; but never did, nor does require of any sinner, that he should seek life by his obedience. No man, that is a sinner, is capable of any obedience but what is imperfect ; now, imperfect obedience is a breach of the covenant of works, which requires absolute perfection, Gal. iii. 10. Therefore, if it should require any sinner to seek life by his own obedience, then it would require him to seek life in a sinful way, namely, by the continued breach of the law, which his best obedience would be, so long as it is, and cannot be but imperfect. Now, to suppose that the law requires this of any sinner, whether under the gospel or not, is to speak wickedly of the holy and perfect law of God. The law of the covenant of works requires no less than ever it did ; yea, it requires more of the sinner, than it did of the sinless man ; it required only active obedience of innocent Adam, but now of the sinner it requires active and passive obedience too ; though the sinner be insolvent, and utterly unable to pay his debt, yet the law requires full payment of his double debt, both of obedience to the command, and satisfaction for his sin in breaking of it.

Herein the case of unbelievers appears to be most miserable, that they are under the commanding, as well as the condemning power of the covenant of works ; that is, they are under an obligation to perfect obedience, and that upon pain of eternal death, under the sentence whereof they already lie ; and under the continued forfeiture of eternal life, and all title thereto, by reason of their want of that obedience, and violation of that covenant. That all unbelievers are under the command of the covenant of works, is plain,

(1.) Because they are under the curse of it. If they were not under the commanding power, they could not be under the condemning power of it ; if they were not under obligation to the command of it, how could they justly be condemned by it, for want of obedience thereto, or transgression thereof ? Where no command, no transgression ; where no transgression, no penalty : but under the penalty or sentence thereof they are, Gal. iii. 10 : therefore they remain under the command of it, so long as they remain out of Christ.

(2.) That they are under the command of the covenant of works, is plain, because they are under the law wherein eternal life is connected with perfect doing. That they are under the law is evident, so long as they are not under grace, Rom. vi. 14. But it

is now their misery, that this law they are under, is a law wherein the connection stands betwixt obedience and eternal life : though there is no connexion by the law, betwixt their obedience now, and the promise of eternal life ; yet there is a standing connexion betwixt eternal life, and that perfect, personal obedience required by that law they are under, Rom. x. 5. The law still continues to say, "The man that does these things shall live by them ;" and Matt. xix. 16, "If thou would enter into life, keep the commandments ;" which plainly says, that though they cannot yield obedience, such as the law requires ; yet the connexion betwixt life and obedience stands by that law they are under ; it justifies all that can and do obey it, as it doth the elect angels ; and it would justify men also, if they were in case, had they power, and did yield obedience to it, in the manner it requires.

(3.) That unbelievers are under the command of the covenant of works, is plain, because it is "only the privilege of believers, that they are not under the moral law, as a covenant of works, to be thereby either justified or condemned," as in our Confession of Faith : which plainly says, not only the moral law was turned into the form of a covenant of works, by its being made a covenant of life and justification upon doing, and of death and condemnation upon not doing ; but also, as it is the privilege only of believers in Christ, that they are neither under the command of the covenant of works, to be justified by their obedience, nor under the curse thereof, to be condemned for their disobedience thereto ; which evidently shows, that it is the misery of unbelievers, that they are not only under the condemning power of that covenant, wherein disobedience and eternal death are connected ; but also the commanding power of that law, wherein perfect obedience and eternal life are connected. This connexion betwixt life and personal obedience does not stand with respect to the believer, because he is not under the law, Rom. vi. 14. Hence, though the believers in Christ had a personal righteousness of their own in perfection, as they will have in heaven ; yet there is no connection betwixt it and their justification, or eternal life, which is now to them the gift of God through Jesus Christ ; they being brought under another covenant, which makes their title to life to stand upon another foundation, namely, Christ's perfect obedience, active and passive, in their room and stead. But as for unbelievers, that are under the law, the standing connexion betwixt life and obedience by that law, ren-

ders them as miserable, in regard that it confirms their forfeiture of eternal life; as the standing connexion betwixt death and disobedience, by that same law, renders them miserable, in regard that it continues them under the sentence of eternal death.

(4.) That unbelievers are under the command of the covenant of works, is plain, because they are, by the gospel-dispensation, obliged to seek life by the obedience of another; which is so far from proving them not to be under the command of the covenant of works, that it plainly proves them to be under it. Our Lord Jesus Christ, as Surety, came to fulfil the righteousness of the law, only as it is a covenant of works; and this he did, both by his active obedience, fulfilling the precept of the law; and by his passive obedience, satisfying the threatening, and enduring the penalty, of the law. Now, if unbelievers were only under the condemning power of the law, then they would need only to seek freedom from death, through Christ's suffering, or passive obedience, in their room; but if they were not under obligation to the command of the covenant of works, then there is no need they would have of Christ's active obedience, or doing in their room. They were never obliged, as I cleared before, to seek life by their obedience; but if they were not obliged, by the command of the covenant of works, to yield that perfect obedience, to which life was promised therein, then they would have no need to seek life by the obedience of another. What need they to seek that in the person of another, which they are not obliged to have in their own person? Who will see a need for seeking that which he is not obliged to have or yield? The unbeliever's obligation, therefore, to seek life by the obedience of another, namely, of Christ, is a plain argument to prove that he is under obligation to the command of the covenant of works.

See then the danger of that doctrine which asserts, that unbelievers are not under the command of the covenant of works; it crosses one of the great ends of the gospel, which is to hold out Christ in his complete righteousness, both of doing and suffering, that sinners may come and take the whole benefit thereof, in order to their being entitled to eternal life, and secured from eternal death, according to the method of the covenant of grace; for, while they remain out of Christ, they are wholly and altogether under a covenant of works, both in its commanding and condemning power.

[2.] Another doctrine that stands in opposition to this truth

that we are treating of, is that which asserts, That believers by their *new sins*, come under a liableness, or obligation, to the penal sanction of the law, and threatening of eternal death. I have elsewhere endeavoured to refute this error;¹ therefore, at present, I shall not enlarge upon it, but only repel it with the weapons that the text here affords me, namely, "The strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God (says the apostle in the name of all believers) that giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Where it is plain, that all believers in Christ are delivered, by virtue of their union to him as the Lord their righteousness, from the law and the curse thereof: and consequently from the strength of sin, as it is a part of the curse of the law. See also Gal. iii. 13, Rom. viii. 1, 34; vi. 14, and vii. 6. But now, if believers are, after their union to Christ, brought, by their new sins, under a liableness to the penal sanction of the law; that is, to eternal death, and vindictive wrath; then they are brought under the curse of the law again; and if so, then they are brought under the strength of sin, which is the leading branch of that curse. If they that assert this doctrine attempt to prove it from this, that every sin deserves God's wrath and curse; and argue from the believer's sins deserving it, that therefore believers are liable to it, which is a very wide argument; then, by the same argument, I can prove, that because there is no moment of a believer's life, wherein he is perfectly free of sin, so long as want of perfect conformity to the law, either in nature, heart, or way, is sin: therefore there is not a moment of the believer's life, wherein he is not both under the curse of the law and the strength of sin; and consequently, no sinful believers in this world, as all believers are, could ever, upon good ground, sing this song of victory in the context. But this is such dreadful doctrine, that I hope I need not enlarge in the refutation thereof.

Believers are neither justified upon their personal good, nor unjustified upon their personal evil; but their actual personal title to life, and their freedom from all legal obligation, and liableness to death, which are the two branches of justification, stand upon the active and passive obedience of Christ, imputed to, and received by them, whereby they are discharged from all law-debt. And though God continue to pardon the sins of them that are justified, and they daily need his pardon, as he is a Father, whose fatherly anger their

(1) See, in particular for this, the Author's discourse on Gal. iv. 28, entitled, *The Precious Promise*.

sins expose them to; yet they have no more to do with him as a wrathful Judge, except in their own unbelieving apprehensions and legal fears, which are their sin. Indeed, the more aggravated their sins are, the more are they liable to the bitter effects of God's fatherly wrath and chastisement; but to make either any good they do a prop to their justification, or any evil they do a flaw in their justification, this is popery. The righteousness of Christ, with which the believer is ever clothed, secures him so, that the sentence of life is never revoked, neither is the sentence of death ever incurred anew; for, "He that believes hath everlasting life;" and, "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ."

Though the law cannot but curse sin, wherever it is, and even the believer's sins; yet the curse can never reach his person. Christ hath no cursed or condemned member. Simeon and Levi had been guilty of heinous crimes, in killing the Ishmaelites; yet, as some think, they being good men in the main, Jacob does not curse their persons but their sins; Gen. xlix. 7, "Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel;" so cruel, that it might have brought a curse upon them deservedly. But Jacob, guided by the Holy Ghost, lays the curse on their extravagant passion, not on their persons; and every believer will join issue with that curse of the law against his sin, saying, Cursed and destroyed be my sin, my unbelief, my enmity. Believers are not under the law, as a covenant of works, either to be justified or condemned thereby: if they were brought, by their new sins, under the curse of the law, then they would be brought also under the power of sin, and the reigning strength of corruption; and so they are neither justified nor sanctified; neither delivered out of the state of sin nor of misery.

See the danger then of this erroneous doctrine, of believers being made liable to the curse of the law: it is contrary to that gospel-principle, which asserts, "That believers are delivered from the wrath of God, and the curse of the moral law:" and it is contrary to that gospel-practice of the believer's, which is influenced by the faith of his freedom from the curse, and the faith of God's everlasting love in Christ Jesus. That doctrine of believers' liableness to wrath, upon every sin, tends to create slavish fear and dread in God's children; and so to discourage from duty, and mar true gospel-holiness, which is a serving of God, not out of slavish fear, but a child-like love, and of a willing mind: for the fear of hell, and of falling into eternal wrath, and the fear of losing their sonship, and

being disinherited, which some, that pretend much to orthodoxy, tell us, believers ought to be influenced by; these fears, I say, can never be filial or child-like, because they go upon the supposition of an allowed act of unbelief, namely, their apprehending God not to be their everlasting Father in Christ, according to the tenor of the new covenant; which if they believed him to be, they could not fear these evils, but would rejoice in the faith of the contrary; and this faith would work by love, and love would constrain them to holiness. So that the doctrine I here oppose, is not a doctrine according to godliness, but rather a doctrine of licentiousness, tending to keep believers themselves under the law, which is the strength of sin.

This text then shows us the dangerous tendency of both these new doctrines, the one making the believer not to be under the command of the covenant of works, and the other bringing the believer under the curse of it: but, as they that are not under the command of the law of works, cannot be under the curse of it; for, where no law, no transgression: and as they that are under the curse of the law, cannot but be under the command of it: for, where no transgression, no penalty, and where there is a penalty there is transgression; so this strange doctrine in effect, and by plain consequences, makes unbelievers happy, and believers miserable; by freeing the believer from the command, it frees him from the curse; and by bringing the believer under the curse, it brings him under the command; and, by this means, unbelievers would not be under the law, but free both from the commanding and condemning power thereof; and believers would be under the law, and in bondage, both to the command and the curse. I dare not think, that all who maintain the foresaid doctrine, are chargeable with asserting these dreadful consequences that flow from it; but surely it is dangerous to maintain such positions, from which such consequences are naturally deducible. So far have I enlarged upon an use of information, because of the manifold lessons that arise from this text and doctrine.

Use 3. The third use shall be by way of examination and trial, namely, to see what state we are in, whether or not we be delivered from the law of works, as it is the strength of sin. In order to our having a clear view of this, there is a fourfold inquiry we may make.

Inquiry First, In order to try this matter, viz., Whether delivered from the law of works, as it is the strength of sin; let us inquire whether the strength of sin be truly broken; for sin has dominion, and a ruling power, over all that are under the law, Rom. vi. 14.

Why, say you, who are these, in whom the *rule* and *strength* of sin remains unbroken ?

ANSW. 1. All you that do not find a daily exercise with sin ; they in whom the strength of sin is dashed, will be at work to get themselves purged from it ; they are still either lamenting their sin, or plotting against it, praying against it, watching against it, making use of the blood of Christ against it, and sometimes mourning and crying against it, and against themselves for it ; whereas they in whom it reigns live peaceably and undisturbedly with it.

2. All you who have been your whole lifetime strangers to Christ, and to fellowship and communion with him, you are not yet delivered from sin : there is a throne of iniquity set up in your hearts, which shall not have fellowship with God, and indeed cannot.

3. All you that know nothing of that dispensation of grace, viz., God's hearing of your prayers, and giving you his countenance therein ; sin reigns in your hearts, and you regard iniquity in your hearts, therefore the Lord hears you not, but is saying, Go to the gods whom you have served.

4. All you that never found any pain in parting with sin, nor any thing of the cross of Christ, or of suffering in the flesh, 1 Pet. iv. 1. It is such as have suffered in the flesh, that have ceased from sin. Some were never disturbed in their making provision for the flesh : never knew the painful exercise of repentance and self-denial ; never burdened with the vileness of sin ; nor exercised in the work of judging themselves. When a gangrene is to be cured, because it is in the flesh, the flesh must be cut ; so, because sin is seated in the flesh, the flesh must suffer by self-denial. There is a woful tenderness that we have of ourselves, that keeps us from mortifying our corruption. Have you never discovered or seen the evil and bitterness of sin, but lived always in peace ? Why, then it seems the strong man keeps the house : if the passing of the gravel stone never pained you, ye are not yet quit of it ; if your heart was never pained with sin, it says your heart was never yet circumcised ; the strength of sin remains where there has been no gospel-mortification. Which leads to a

Second Inquiry, For helping you to try if you be delivered from the law of works, as it is the strength of sin, namely, inquire if you be acquaint with gospel mortification. It is almost incredible to think how great a length people may go in legal mortification of sin, while yet they are utter strangers to the gospel. It is strange

to think what some heathens have done this way, and what many popish monks have done: yea, what great reformations have taken place among some, so as by their life you would think they were real converts, because of their exactness and tenderness, while yet they are enemies to grace, and strangers to the gospel, and consequently to true mortification, which cannot be by the law, it being the strength of sin.

QUEST. How shall I know, whether it be by the gospel that I mortify sin, or by the law?

ANSW. 1. Gospel and legal mortification differ in their principles from which they proceed. Gospel-mortification is from gospel principles, viz., the Spirit of God, Rom. viii. 13, "If ye through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live;" Faith in Christ, Acts xv. 9, "Purifying their hearts by faith;" The love of Christ constraining, 2 Cor. v. 14, "The love of Christ constraineth us." But legal mortification is from legal principles; such as, from the applause and praise of men, as in the Pharisees; from pride of self-righteousness, as in Paul before his conversion; from the fear of hell; from a natural conscience; from the example of others; from some common motions of the Spirit; and many times from the power of sin itself, while one sin is set up to wrestle with another, as when sensuality and self-righteousness wrestle with one another; the man perhaps will not drink and swear; why? because he is setting up and establishing a righteousness of his own, whereby to obtain the favour of God: here is but one sin wrestling with another.

2. Gospel and legal mortification differ in their weapons with which they fight against sin; the gospel-believer fights with grace's weapons, namely, the blood of Christ, the word of God, the promises of the covenant, and the virtue of Christ's death and cross, Gal. vi. 14, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom [or, as it may be read, WHEREBY, viz., by the cross of Christ], the world is crucified to me, and I to the world." But now the man under the law fights against sin by the promises and threatenings of the law; by its promises, saying, I will obtain life; and win to heaven, I hope, if I do so and so; by its threatenings, saying, I will go to hell and be damned, if I do not so and so. Sometimes he fights with the weapons of his own vows and resolutions which are his strong tower, to which he runs and thinks himself safe.

3. They differ in the object of their mortification; they both, indeed, seek to mortify sin; but the legalist's quarrel is more

especially with the sins of his conversation ; but the true believer should desire to fight as the Syrians got orders ; that is, neither against great nor small, so much as against the King himself, even against original corruption ; a body of sin and death troubles him more than any other sin in the world ; “ O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death ? ” Rom. vii. 24. His great exercise is, to have the seed of the woman to bruise the head of the serpent.

4. They differ in the reasons of the contest ; the believer, whom grace teaches to deny all ungodliness, he fights against sin, because it dishonours God, opposes Christ, grieves the Spirit, and separates between his Lord and him ; but the legalist fights against sin, because it breaks his peace, and troubles his conscience, and hurts him, by bringing wrath and judgment on him. As children that will not play in the dust or stour ; why ? not because it sullies their clothes, but flees into their eyes, and hurts them ; so, the legalist will not meddle with sin ; why ! not because it sullies the perfections of God, and defiles their souls, but only because it hurts them. I deny not, but there is too much of this legal temper even amongst the godly.

5. They differ in their motives and ends ; the believer will not serve sin, because he is alive to God, and dead to sin, Rom. vi. 6. The legalist forsakes sin, not because he is alive, but that he may live ; the believer mortifies sin, because God loves him ; but the legalist, that God may love him ; the believer mortifies sin, because God is pacified towards him ; the legalist mortifies, that he may pacify God by his mortification. He may go a great length, but it is still that he may have whereof to glory, making his own doing all the foundation of his hope and comfort.

6. They differ in the nature of their mortification ; the legalist does not oppose sin violently, seeking the utter destruction of it ; if he can get sin put down, he does not seek it to be thrust out ; but the believer, having a nature and principle contrary to sin, he seeks not only to have it weakened, but extirpate ; the quarrel is irreconcilable ; no terms of accommodation or agreement ; no league with sin is allowed, as it is with hypocrites.

7. They differ in the extent of the warfare, not only objectively, the believer hating every false way ; but also subjectively, all the faculties of the believer’s soul, the whole regenerate part being against sin. It is not so with the hypocrite or legalist ; for as he

sparing some sin or other, so his opposition to sin is only seated in his conscience; his light and conscience oppose such a thing, while his heart approves of it. There is an extent also as to time: the legalist's opposition to sin is of a short duration, but in the believer it is to the end; grace and corruption still opposing one another.

8. They differ in the success; there is no believer, but as he fights against sin, so first or last he prevails, though not always to his discerning; and though he lose many battles, yet he gains the war; but the legalist, for all the work he makes, yet he never truly comes speed: though he cut off some actual sin, yet the corrupt nature is never changed; he never gets a new heart; the iron-sinew in his neck, which opposes God, is never broken; and when he gets one sin mortified, sometimes another and more dangerous sin lifts up the head; hence all the sins and pollutions that ever the Pharisees forsook, and all the good duties that ever they performed, made them but more proud, and strengthened their unbelieving prejudices against Christ, which was the greater and more dangerous sin. Thus you may see the difference between legal and gospel mortification, and try yourselves thereby.

Inquiry third, In order to try whether or not you are delivered from the law, as it is the strength of sin; inquire whether you have renounced your own righteousness; for they that make their duties their righteousness, and rely thereupon, are yet under the law, and so under the strength of sin.

QUEST. Who are they that make their duties their righteousness, and establish a righteousness of their own, and rely thereupon?

ANSW. 1. These that please themselves with a form of godliness; and like the Pharisees, make clean the outside, while yet they have a secret enmity at the power of godliness, having outward conformity to the letter of the law; and, like Paul before his conversion, touching the law blameless, yet little regarding the spirituality of it; they profess a regard to the law, but if they knew the inside of it, they would hate it.

2. These that rest in a certain pitch of religion, when they have as much as they think will save them, and are for no more; not knowing what it is to press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

3. These that set their duties against their sins and against the wrath of God, and the fear of judgment; not fleeing to Christ for

refuge, as all true believers do, Heb. vi. 18: but to their duties, their prayers, and no further. Their betaking themselves to duties would be well done, if they went a little further; but they set their duties against their sins, and thereupon have peace, saying, though my sins be so and so great, yet my duties are so and so many; therefore, I hope, all will be right. Thus they speak peace to themselves, when God never spake it; here is a dead fly that spoils all the ointment.

4. These who are at enmity with the doctrine of grace; however much they may be engaged in duty, Christ is a stumbling-block to them, as he was to the Jews, Rom. ix. 33. The doctrine of duties and works, they understand; but the doctrine of grace, and of the righteousness of Christ, they will not understand; they suspect it, as an enemy to the law, and Antinomianism; they are ignorant of God's righteousness.

5. These that perform duties in their own strength, are establishing a righteousness of their own; though they say they can do nothing without Christ, yet they can do all without seeing much need of him. But, where Christ is the righteousness of a soul, he will be the strength also, Isa. xlv. 24. Some, indeed, profess to take Christ for their strength, but they set Christ against himself, as it were, by employing the strength of Christ against the righteousness of Christ; that is, when they cry to Christ for strength to perform duties, that when they are enabled to perform them, they may make them their righteousness. Hence many will say, O for an enlarged heart in duty! O for grace to seek, and a heart to pray! And if they get anything like it, what make they of it? Why, then they think they have a good enough righteousness, and seek no further.

6. These that are of a wrathful and implacable disposition, they discover themselves to be under the law, and under the strength of sin, and so not delivered from establishing a righteousness of their own; "The law worketh wrath," Rom. iv. 15. Not only wrath in God against man, and wrath in man against God; but wrath and enmity also in man against man, especially upon any real or supposed injury. When wrath rises, and rests, and remains from day to day, from week to week, from month to month, from year to year, and the man will by no means be reconciled to one that has offered him any affront; nay, he will not pardon, he will not forgive, he will not forget; surely that man is under the law, and under the

strength of sin ; he never got a pardon from God, that cannot pardon his neighbour an offence ; he has not the image of God, not being merciful as his heavenly Father is merciful : he cannot pray, " Forgive me my sins, as I forgive them that sin against me. Anger rests in the bosom of fools," says Solomon. Anger and wrath may rise, and rage a little in the bosom of a wise man, a good man, but it cannot rest there : it rests only in the bosom of fools. This foolish and implacable disposition shews the man to be selfish and self-righteous.

7. These whose good hope, founded upon, and drawn from duties, never utterly failed them, so as to say, as it is, Isa. lvii. 10, " There is no hope," no, " They are wearied in the greatness of their way, and have found the life of their hand," &c.

8. These who, the more they go about outward duties, the more liberty they take to sin, saying, as it is, Prov. vii. 14 and 18, compared, " I have peace-offerings with me : this day have I paid my vows, come let us take our fill of love, until the morning : let us solace ourselves with loves."

9. These who neglect duties, through desperation and hopelessness of getting any good by them, saying, " It is vain to serve the Lord : " why, what is this, but that because they would rely on duties, as their Saviour, when they find they may not do so, they will rather forbear them, and cast all behind their back, saying, " There is no hope ? " Hence,

10. When men are madly pursuing their lusts, it may be a sign they are relying on their duties, even when they commit sin desperately. Why, they are desperate debtors ; and, perhaps, have been trying, some time or other, to pay their debt by doing something that they might live : but finding that will fail them, they say, There is no hope of paying that debt, therefore they desperately take no more ; Jer. ii. 25, " There is no hope, for, I have loved strangers, and after them will I go : " and, Jer. xviii. 12, " There is no hope : but we will walk after our devices, and do every one the imagination of his evil heart." They want not a natural inclination, as all others have, to pay their debt in the way of a law of works, with their own righteousness, which appears whenever conscience is awakened : but for the present they are desperate, if they cannot win to heaven by their own righteousness, they will rather go to hell in their wickedness, than be obliged to the righteousness of another for heaven and eternal life ; so strong is the law of *Do*

and live, even at the root of their wickedness. “The strength of sin is the law.”

Again, it may be asked here, Who are they that have *renounced* their own righteousness?

ANSW. 1. Such as have renounced their own righteousness, are easily brought to the sense and acknowledgement of their sin; whereas others are ready to say, with these who are commanded to return to the Lord, “Wherein shall we return to him?” Such were the Pharisees, Luke xviii. 11, 12.

2. The great care of such will be to advance in the knowledge of Christ; they have a high esteem of Christ’s righteousness, accounting all other things, on which they formerly relied, but dung; and expecting justification and absolution before God, only upon the account of the righteousness of Christ, laid hold upon by faith, Phil. iii. 8, 9.

3. From a sight of their own imperfection, and inability in duty, they go on and make progress in Christ’s strength, Psalm lxxi. 16; Phil. iii. 12, 13, 14. And in all their approaches to God, they are concerned how to get the Spirit with them, and the internal part of duty performed, as well as the external; and their spiritual joy and comfort arises from Christ; Phil. iii. 3, “They worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”

4. Such will justify God in all his dispensations of providence towards them, though never so harsh; and undervalue damages and losses, if they can but win Christ, Phil. iii. 8.

5. As they are not lifted up upon the account of their inherent righteousness, but say with Job, chap. x. 15, “If I be righteous, yet will I not lift up my head;” and with the church, Isa. lxiv. 6, “All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags;” and dare plead for nothing at the throne of grace on the account thereof, Dan. ix. 18; Job. ix. 15; so their obedience is most free, the believer acts freely, not by the coercion and compulsion of the law, and without respect to the promises or threatenings of it, as it is a covenant of life: he being, by virtue of the new nature, ready to do the will of God with pleasure. As there is need of no law for the body, which may compel it to eat, drink, sleep, walk, sit, stand, or do any works of nature, as I said before, because it is ready to do these things naturally, so there is need of no law-coaction and compulsion to drive the believer to obedience; there are gospel-threatenings and promises, that are

lined with love, which work upon him, and constrain him : but to be acted by the law-threatening of death, in case of disobedience, or the law-promise of life upon obedience, is not compatible with the state of the believer, as such ; he not being under the law, but under grace, his obedience is free, Luke i. 74, 75.

6. They that have renounced their own righteousness, have renounced their own strength also, and said, "In the Lord only have we righteousness and strength," Isa. xlv. 25. They see the need of the same creating power that began the good work, to carry it on every day, as long as the new creation work is a-working. As in the first creation, after God made heaven and earth, he left not the work there, but every day the Lord said, Let there be this, and Let there be that : "Let there be light ;" and then, "Let there be fruit ;" so, in the new creation, believers see a need every day of an almighty word, saying, Let there be light, spiritual light ; and after that, Let there be fruit, spiritual fruit ; and again, every day another word of power from God to carry on the new-creation work, during the whole six days of our life here, till the Sabbath of everlasting rest come.

Inquiry Fourth, In order to try whether or not you are delivered from the law, as it is the strength of sin ; inquire whether you be experimentally acquaint with the gospel, as it is the means and strength of holiness.

QUEST. What is it in the gospel that contributes to the strength of holiness, that believers, who are not under the law, have saving experimental acquaintance with ?

ANSW. There are these following things in the gospel, that contribute to the strength of holiness ; and you may try what experience you have thereof.

1. What experience have you of the sanctifying discoveries of the gospel ? Some discoveries are introductory and preparatory unto, and some are effective of holiness to the destroying of the strength of sin. The introductory discoveries are such, as give persons the faith of the law ; such as, conviction from the evidence and demonstration of the Spirit ; this may be called a gospel-discovery, in so far as it is by the Spirit promised in the gospel, John xvi. 7, 8, 9. If it be asked here, Does not the law prepare us for the grace of the gospel ? we reply, Not in itself, any more than sin and misery doth ; for the law makes known sin, and leaves a man under wrath, Rom. iii. 19, 20. The whole revelation of the remedy

and application thereof both, is by the grace of the gospel ; Luke xix. 10. Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost ; both to seek, by the revelation of the gospel, and also to save, by the application thereof. Yet these introductory discoveries may be called gospel-discoveries, in respect of the author, namely, the Spirit promised in the gospel ; and because of their connection, in the elect, with the saving work that follows, even though they be not saving in their own nature ; and therefore, these convictions may be called legal, in respect of the man's state, who is the subject thereof, he not being yet in Christ ; and in respect of the subserviency of the law under the influence of the Spirit, for making these discoveries of the man's sinful and miserable state without this faith of the law, and these convictions, one will never prize gospel-grace, which is the channel wherein true holiness runs. But again, some gospel-discoveries are effective of holiness, namely, the discovery of the glory and fulness of Christ, and of the glory of the grace of God in him. *Holiness to the Lord*, is the immediate effect thereof, 2 Cor. iii. 18, "Beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image." Now, what know ye of this gospel-discovery of a God in Christ, reconciling the world to himself? If ever Christ was revealed in you, the revelation would be sanctifying and transforming.

2. What experience have you of the sanctifying, attracting charms of the gospel? Have you always stopped your ears at the voice of the charmer therein? And, was you never taken and captivated with the joyful sound? Or, have you been allured with the charms, and drawn by the attractives thereof? What these attractives are, you see, Hosea xi. 4 ; Jer. xxxi. 3 ; John xii. 32. The bands of love ; the divine loving-kindness ; and all in and through a crucified Christ, lifted upon the cross, on the throne, and on the gospel-pole. These gospel-attractives are of such a sanctifying nature, and so contributive to the strength of holiness, that they natively constrain the believer thereunto, 2 Cor. iv. 14, 15. This love of God in the sinner, begets love in the sinner to God : "We love him, because he first loved us ;" and love to God is the very heart of holiness : "Love is the fulfilling of the law ;" and therefore, the more love, the more holiness.

3. What experience have you of the sanctifying attire of the gospel? for the gospel-garment contributes to the strength of holiness. There is a twofold gospel-garment : the one is an unchange-

able, and the other a changeable one: the unchangeable gospel-garment is the imputed righteousness of Christ, which, when it is put on by faith, the soul is said to be clothed with the sun, Rev. xii. 1; and it is such an unchangeable robe, that it is never taken off the back of these that are once clothed with it, but they remain always fair and perfectly righteous in the sight of God. It is true, this may be called, and is, indeed, their justifying attire; and yet I call it sanctifying also; because, as justification is a root and cause of sanctification, so it is this righteousness of Christ that purchased holiness, and consequently brings its purchase still along with it: and hence the faith of this righteousness works by love, and so producing holiness of heart and way. The changeable gospel-garment is the imparted righteousness of Christ; that is, holiness itself: I call it changeable, like the moon; not because the soul that is clothed with it is ever altogether naked or denuded of it again, but because of the various degrees it admits of; sometimes more and sometimes less, and the changes from better to worse, and from worse to better therein, according to the measure of the communication of the Spirit, and according to the need of the new creature, Isa. xl. 31, "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;" they shall *change* their strength, as I formerly noticed, the word imports: like a man changing his clothes, having several suits conform to his occasions: a garment for working, and a garment for walking abroad withal; a garment for night, and a garment for day; one for the week-day, and another for the Sabbath: he hath changes of raiment; so the believer hath changes of strength: if he need to walk, he has walking strength; if to run, running strength; if to flee, flying strength is communicate: for so it follows, "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not weary, and walk and not faint." Examine your experience with respect to this twofold robe: do you know the sanctifying influence of the justifying righteousness of Christ? If you be delivered from the law, as it is the strength of sin, you have some time or other experienced, that the justifying righteousness of Christ hath a sanctifying effect; and this it hath, when the sense of pardoning mercy melts the heart for sin; when the faith of forgiveness draws forth heart-loathing of sin, and heart-love to holiness; and when the apprehension of the mercy, love, and grace of God, quickens the soul to a lively performance of duty, and enlarges the heart to run the way of God's commandments.

4. What experience have you of the sanctifying promises of the gospel? That they contribute to the strength of holiness is evident from 2 Cor. vii. 1; 2 Pet. i. 4. Was ever a promise applied with power and majesty to your heart? If so, then, what effect had it? Did you not see your own hellish nature, even to self-abhorrence? and, was not the desire of your soul after the participation of the divine nature excited to such a degree that, perhaps, you could have wished rather to die than not to be holy; and your breathing was, O to be holy! O to be like unto Christ! O to have all heart-plagues healed, and all spiritual maladies cured.

5. What experience have you of the sanctifying principles, truths, tenets, and doctrines of the gospel? "Ye shall know the truth, says Christ, and the truth shall make you free;" free from the ruling power of sin, free from the bondage of the law; at liberty to serve the Lord, free from that slavery to sin and Satan that the rest of the world are under, who want the true knowledge of the sanctifying principles and doctrines of the gospel, Eph. iv. 19, 20, 21; where we see, that the knowledge of the gospel directs to another course than the world take; some are altogether ignorant of the sanctifying principles of the gospel, others have a head-knowledge and notion of some gospel-principles, but no sanctifying knowledge thereof; these abuse the grace of God to licentiousness. But, what experience have you of the power of gospel truth, and the sanctifying virtue of gospel doctrine? If the grace of God has taught you nothing but looseness, you have no true knowledge of it, for it teaches otherwise, Titus ii. 12. Did never the doctrine of Christ's death and resurrection, as the Lord our righteousness, tend to beget you to a new and lively hope? Did you never feel the power of that doctrine for killing sin? Examine your experience by that of Paul, who desired to know more and more of Christ, and the power of his resurrection, Phil. iii. 10, compared with 1 Peter i. 3.

6. What experience have you of the sanctifying privileges of the gospel? Gospel privileges, enjoyed by believers, are the foundation of gospel holiness. By the law of works obedience was first to take place, and their privileges; but by the gospel of grace, privileges first come in, and thereupon obedience influenced thereby. Have you experienced gospel joys and comforts in the Lord, inso-much that the joy of the Lord was your strength! Gospel consolation is a great furtherance of gospel sanctification. Have you ever

experienced a gospel day ; I mean, not a day of preaching only, but a day of power ? Why, then, surely willingness to serve the Lord in holiness was wrought ; “ Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power. ”—But not to enlarge this use further, I come to close with a word, by way of exhortation.

And our Exhortation shall be first to unbelievers that are under the law, and so under the commanding and condemning strength of sin. Oh ! sirs, do not stay there ; for it is a fearful state, to be under the law, and under the power of sin : if you die in that state you must bear the weight of your sins for ever ; and how dreadful will it be, when God shall open the treasures of his wrath, and shut the bowels of his mercy for ever upon you : O unbelievers ! see the necessity of fleeing to Christ and his righteousness ; think not to please God by your own feeble endeavours ; there is but one way in all the world to get from under the law curse, and so from under sin’s ruining power, and that is, to get into Christ, who hath fulfilled and is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. Where there is but one way there is no room for consultation ; were there many ways to heaven, you might consult which to take ; but there is only one, Christ the way, the truth, and the life ; there remains no more sacrifice for sin. If a man were fallen into a great pit, full of snakes, and serpents, and fire, and all that can be imagined terrible and dreadful ; and there comes one and casts a rope into this deep pit ; will there be need of arguments to persuade the man to take hold of it ? He is in a miserable case, and there is no other way to help him : even so here, you are in a pit full of snakes, and serpents, and fire, the power of Satan, the sting of sin, the fire of God’s wrath ; you are in a manner in hell already ; and God has sent his Son, with a law-biding righteousness in him ; he lets down the rope, that poor perishing sinners may lay hold upon it ; what will you do in this case ? Will you put off time saying, What shall I do ? when there is no other way left for you but to come to Christ, as the Lord your righteousness. Alas ! stand not trifling and dallying till you go to the devil in hell, as many do. Will you take advisement till the next year, when, for aught you know, you may be in hell the next hour ? Are you brought to that question, “ What shall I do to be saved ? ” There is no other answer in the world to be given to it but this one, “ Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved : ” despair of life by the law, as you would not live under the ruling, and die

under the damning strength of sin: but repair to the gospel, by applying the promise thereof; for there is exhibited to you the saving strength of Christ. Give up with the old covenant of works; for there sin reigns, through want of righteousness, to eternal death, but take hold of the new covenant of promise; for there grace reigns, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord, Rom. v. 21. Be content not to think of paying a farthing of your own debt to the law, and to be obliged to Christ for paying it all for you. To believe in Christ is to come out from under the law, that you may be under grace; and to come under grace is to be subject to it, so as to be content to be in grace's debt, and that grace do all for you and in you, and that grace be glorified in you, and Christ glorified in grace, and God glorified in Christ. May the power of grace persuade you to flee to Christ, and out from under the law, which is the strength of sin. I might here adduce manifold motives and directions; but, referring you to other parallel subjects, and having enlarged so much beyond my intent in the preceding parts of this discourse, I hasten to a conclusion. Therefore,

2ndly, I would offer a short word of exhortation to believers, that are under the law, and so are delivered from the strength of sin. O let it be your care to study conformity to the law as a rule of life, since you are graciously delivered from it as a covenant of life; give evidence that being delivered from the law, you are delivered from the strength of sin; shake off the power and dominion of it; you are under stronger obligations to mortify sin than any in the world; yea, than Adam in a state of innocency; for you are not under the law that he was under, but under grace; and grace hath brought you to possess a more glorious and honourable righteousness than ever Adam could have yielded, though he had never violated the covenant of works. Grace gives you more encouragement to obey the law as a rule, than ever Adam had to obey it as a covenant. You have such grace as Adam never had in that state, even grace in a better hand, where it can never be lost. Adam never had a title to a life by the covenant of works, because he failed in the condition; but you have a title to life, and the condition also in your Head: "Will you sin, because you are under grace? God forbid." Will you turn loose, and carnal, and formal, because you are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Will you hate God because he loves you? Oh! monstrous ingratitude! Because God has a regard for your happiness, will you have no regard

to his honour? Because he is gracious, will you be ungrateful? Alas, "Tell it not in Gath!" Has grace justified you, and will you not evidence your justification by your sanctification? Has grace adopted you, and will you not be followers of God as dear children? Has grace given you the hope of glory, and will you not, having this hope, purify yourself, even as he is pure. Has grace given you all the promises, and will you not, having these promises, cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God? O give evidence that you are not under the law, which is the strength of sin; but under grace, which is the strength of holiness. If you be under grace, surely you will have a regard to the glory of God, and to the credit of grace, that the gospel of grace be not reproached as an Antinomian doctrine of licentiousness. We call you to mortify sin, and study holiness and conformity to the law as a rule of life, as you have a regard to the love and grace of God, and to your own peace and comfort; for, "Great peace have they that love his law;" as you have a regard to the welfare of others, and their conviction and conversion; and as you have a regard to your family and posterity, and would entail a blessing on following generations, and leave a blessing behind you. In a word, it is by your holiness of heart and life that the power of grace is seen, the truth of grace is tried, the beauty of grace is discovered, and the comfort of grace is felt, as I noticed on a former occasion. The power of grace will not be seen if you be not holy, and if it be not so powerful, as to make the hardest command easy to you: The truth of grace will not be evident to you if you be not holy, for sin will cast a cloud over it: The beauty of grace will not appear to others if you be not holy; they will say, You are just like neighbour and other, if you do not shew your faith by your works: The comfort of grace will not accrue to you if you be not holy; it is they that walk in the fear of the Lord, that walk in the comforts of the Holy Ghost. The sweets of religion and the exercise of it go together. Go therefore in the strength of grace, leaning upon your Beloved, setting the strength of Christ, who is the Lord your righteousness, against the strength of sin, which is the law. The more firm and fixed that a man's faith is, with respect to Christ, as the end of the law for righteousness, the more fast will he follow the Lord in the works of holiness, for the true believer hath two feet, as I formerly said elsewhere, like the feet of a pair of compasses, the one foot stands fast in the

centre, and the other draws the line, and goes round; now, if the foot that is in the centre do not stand firm and fixed, if it move out of its place while the line is a-drawing, then the other foot can never make an exact circle: so here, the believer hath two feet, the one is the assured faith of justifying grace, this should be still firmly fixed in its centre, Christ, the Lord our righteousness; the other foot is gospel obedience, and a holy walk influenced by faith, and this should be always moving about in the work of the Lord, and running its holy round of spiritual duties: now, if one foot, namely, the faith of justifying grace, be not fixed and firmly established in its centre, then the other foot, namely, that of obedience, cannot perform its motion with any exactness. While a believer is fixed in the faith of God's grace and love, then this love constrains him to obedience; but when his faith begins to waver and totter, and he begins to jealousy the Lord's love, and to deny his grace, then he loses his heart, and strength, and courage; and so, by an evil heart of unbelief, departs from the living God. O then, seek to be firmly fixed in the faith of divine grace, and in the full assurance of your privilege, that you are not under the law, but under grace; then shall you be able to mortify sin with success. And, seeing the most thankful believer is the most obedient, entertain still a thankful remembrance of your merciful deliverance from the law, and let the apostle's song of victory in the text be much in your hearts and mouths, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

SERMON CXXXII.

THE MEDIATOR'S POWER IN HEAVEN AND EARTH.¹

"And Jesus came, and spoke unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and earth."—MATTHEW xxviii. 18.

HAVING now in view the administration of one of the most solemn and august ordinances of God upon earth, namely, our New Testa-

(1) This subject was handled in an Action Sermon preached immediately before the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper at Dunfermline, July 14, 1728.

ment solemn feast, the sacramental supper of our Lord Jesus; if any should question by what authority we set about such a work, we need only look to the context here, and notice the Lord Jesus giving a commission to his disciples and their successors to the end of the world, to dispense the word and sacraments to all nations. The sacrament of baptism is here mentioned, and the sacrament of the supper included in that word, ver. 20, "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you;" and this commandment among the rest they received of the Lord, 1 Cor. xi. 23.—But to corroborate and fortify this commission given to his servants, if any should question further, by what authority did Christ give a commission to this effect in the church of God? If he had assumed a power to himself, without having any divine commission of his own, then theirs, received from him, might be reckoned not valid; therefore, our Lord here clears to them the validity of their commission, by declaring to them the nature and extent of his own, saying, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

My friends, we are called this day to commemorate the death and sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ; yet it may be no loss to our faith, that it is not the manner of his death and passion, but rather the remarkable effects of his death, and the grand reward of his sufferings, that my text leads me to: I say, it may be no loss, but rather an advantage to our faith, could we follow him from the cross to the crown; for, though they believe to advantage who look to a crucified Christ hanging on a cross, yet they believe to more advantage who step up a little higher, and look to a crucified Christ sitting upon a throne of power and majesty. It is best looking to Christ where he is, and not where he was: as the angel said to the woman, ver. 6th of this chapter, "He is not here, for he is risen," when they were seeking him in the grave; so we may say to these who would seek Christ upon the cross, He is not here, but upon the throne. It is true, as the angel further said to the woman, "Come see the place where the Lord lay," though they were not to stay there, but seek after a risen Christ, so we may say to you, it is not amiss for you to come see the place where he was, namely, in Golgotha, hanging on a cross, "Making his soul an offering for sin;" but, having finished that work, he is not there; therefore, let not faith stop and tarry only in the place where he was, but come see the place where the Lord is; and, behold, it is a place of absolute

supremacy and universal government, wherein now he is fixed :
 "All power in heaven and earth is given unto me."

Our Lord Jesus, after his resurrection, having appeared to the eleven disciples, ver. 16, we find the different entertainment he met with from them, ver. 17, "When they saw him, some worshipped him, and some doubted." Now, the words of our text meet with the case both of worshipping and doubting disciples ; for, that the worshipping disciples might know they had a right object of worship, and that the doubting disciples might know they had no reason to doubt, he tells them, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." These words hath both a retrospect or back-look to what went before, and a prospect or looking forward to what follows. As they have a reference to what went before, they show that as there is good reason why all should worship him, so there is no reason why any should doubt concerning him ; for, "All power in heaven and in earth is given unto him." Again, as they have a reference to what follows, they show not only the ground and foundation of all our ministerial administrations of word and sacraments, as I said already, but also the ground of hope we have of success therein, according to the promise in the close of the chapter, "Lo, I am with you alway, to the end of the world ;" *q. d.*, As I have power and authority to institute these ordinances, so you may be sure that my powerful and spiritual presence will never be wholly wanting to make them effectual ; for, "All power in heaven and in earth is given unto me." Here is a great word, such as none but he can say ; and it imports a great dignity and advancement.

More particularly, you may notice therein these four things following.

1. The Person dignified, even our Lord Jesus Christ, the blessed speaker of these words, who lately before this was hanging on a cross, and lying in a grave ; humbled to the lowest, and now exalted to the highest.

2. Notice the nature and kind of this dignity ; namely, Power and ALL *power* reposed in him ; all supremacy, sovereignty, might, and dominion ; and a plenitude thereof.

3. Notice the degree of this dignity, or the extent thereof, what are the vast dominions to which his power extends ? Why, it is "All power in heaven and in earth." Our Mediator is a universal Monarch, having all power in heaven above and earth beneath.

4. Notice here the manner of the conveyance of this dignity.

and the way how he came by it as Mediator ; it is given to him ; “ All power is GIVEN unto me.” He did not usurp this dominion, but was legally entitled to it, and invested with it by divine donation. Christ hath a twofold right to this power and universal dominion.

(1.) A natural right, as he is God, equal with the Father ; and thus all power is originally and essentially his : he is the omnipotent God.

(2.) A donative right, as he is Mediator, God-man ; and thus, all power is given to him. But who is the giver ? Who can give all power ? Who but God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, essentially considered, hath lodged all power in the person of the Man, the God-man, Jesus Christ, as-our Mediator ? Wherever this donation is ascribed to the Father, there the Father is to be considered essentially, as in Matth. xi. 27. It is the whole glorious Trinity, one God in three persons, by mutual concert, that confer this honour and dignity upon the man Christ ; as may appear in the sequel. The further explication of this great subject I refer to the prosecution of a doctrine.

OBSERV. That all sovereignty and supremacy of power is delegated to, and resides in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ : or, to the same purpose, That, by divine donation, Christ is invested with all power and dominion over the whole creation of God.—“ All power in heaven and in earth is given unto me.”

Now, as he that hath all power may be pleased to assist and enable, I will speak to this great doctrine in the following method :

- I. I would confirm the truth thereof from other parallel texts, and scriptural instances.
- II. Inquire what this power is that is delegated to, and resides in the person of Christ.
- III. Speak of the extent of his power, as it is declared to be, “ All power in heaven and in earth.”
- IV. Touch at the divine donation thereof, by showing when and how it was given to our Lord Jesus Christ.
- V. Offer some reasons of the doctrine, why it is that all power in heaven and earth is given to him
- VI. Draw some Inferences for the Application.

And, O may our eyes be towards him for power to speak and hear of his power! His powerful presence would make it a precious communion-day to us.

I. The first head proposed is, To confirm the truth of the doctrine. But what do I speak of confirming a truth that is delivered out of the mouth of Truth itself? What needs more confirmation than his own declaring it here, "All power in heaven and in earth is given unto me?" Here is the testimony of the faithful and true Witness concerning himself, and that after he was declared to be the Son of God with power, by his resurrection from the dead. It is the testimony of the eternal Son of God, in the name of his eternal Father, under the glorious effusion of his eternal Spirit; and therefore, to doubt of this testimony, would import the highest blasphemy and be a questioning the veracity of the glorious God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Therefore, not to say for the establishing of this doctrine, but for confirming our faith therein; let us consider, that what Christ says here, is the same that he says elsewhere, and that the Father says of him, and that the whole scripture testifies concerning him. I shall, for clearing of this, give you a short view of several things that are said to be given to Christ, which carry in them this gift of all power.

As Christ is the unspeakable gift of God, so every thing that he hath, as Mediator, is the gift of a glorious Trinity made over to him.

1. A call and commission was given to him, and that from all eternity in the counsel of peace, when he was set up from everlasting, with respect to his being the Mediator betwixt God and man, and the Saviour of a company of lost sinners, whom he was to redeem by the price of his blood, and the power of his Spirit, according to that gracious covenant-transaction, Isaiah lxii. 6, "I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles," &c. This is what our Lord Jesus points at, John x. 18, when he speaks of the commandment given him of the Father, concerning his giving his life a ransom for many, and taking his life again, to complete the redemption-work by power as well as by price. Here was a call and commission given him, with reference to a work attended with such difficulties from heaven above, and earth beneath, that indeed required all power in heaven and earth to accomplish it; and the giving of the former, plainly supposes and imports the giving of the latter to him.

2. A seed was given him, and that also from all eternity; an elect seed and offspring, which it was promised he should actually see in time and to eternity, when once he made his soul an offering for sin; Isaiah liii. 10, "He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand; he shall see the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." Concerning this seed that was given him, he speaks, John xvii. 6, "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me." Now, here was a vast seed; when God declares the decree concerning it, Psalm ii. 7, 8, he says, "I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost ends of the earth for thy possession;" yea, it is a numberless number out of all nations that was given him, to be saved and governed by him, to be fitted for heaven, and guided on earth, it required and imported all power in heaven and in earth, which accordingly was given him.

3. A body was given to him in time, for accomplishing, in our nature, the great business that was committed to him from eternity; Heb. x. 5, "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins; wherefore when he came into the world, he says, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me:" that is, a human nature to be a sacrifice to offended justice; which sacrifice we commemorate this day: and O may it be a day of power from him that hath all power in heaven and in earth! O sure, when this body was given to the Son of God, and our nature was joined into the same personality with him, then he had all the power of heaven and earth to grapple with: all the vengeance of heaven, and all the violence of earth lighted upon him: and, did not this require all power in heaven and in earth to be given for his support? But some may think, What! had he the power of heaven to grapple with, and yet the power of heaven to support him? Was there a battle betwixt two powers in heaven? Yes, there was a seeming war in heaven betwixt the power of God's wrath and the power of his love; the power of his wrath must vent against sin, and yet the power of his love must vent upon the sinner according to the eternal concert; but finite wisdom cannot tell how both these could come to pass; but, behold these two powers made an appointment, as it were, with mutual consent, to meet in the body, the humanity that was given to our IMMANUEL, and there they met together, and kissed each other, Psal. lxxxv. 10. And can you tell me which of these powers prevailed?

Indeed, I think, they both prevailed: and none of them without blood upon this wonderful field of battle; for, "Without shedding of blood there could be no remission." The power of God's wrath prevailed, and got a condign satisfaction by that sacrifice; and the power of his love prevailed, and got a blessed vent through that sacrifice; therefore, if it be said, "Who knows the power of his wrath?" May I not also say, Who knows the power of his love? Now, when the humanity of our IMMANUEL was the theatre on which this wonderful scene was acted, surely while all the vengeance of heaven and violence of earth was pressing him down, he needed all power in heaven and earth to bear him up, and accordingly he had it; for,

4. Help was given him; yea, all the help and assistance of the glorious Trinity was given to him; Isaiah lxii. 6, "I the Lord have called thee, and will hold thine hand and keep thee;" and ver. 1, "Behold my Servant, whom I uphold." To this same purpose you read, Isa. xlix. 8, and l. 6, 7. The fountain of all power was opened, and gushed in upon him in an everlasting flood; while he offered his human nature a sacrifice on the altar of his eternal God-head, he was upheld in the arms of his eternal Father, and the power of his eternal Spirit; for,

5. The Spirit was given him, even the Spirit of power; Isa. xi. 1, 2, and xlii. 1, "I have put my Spirit upon him, and he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." Isa. lxi. 1, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, for he hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek." And, accordingly the promise and prophecy concerning him, the Spirit descended and rested upon him, Matt. iii. 16. And he received not the Spirit by measure, but above measure: "For God gives not the Spirit by measure unto him," John iii. 34. Now, the Spirit of power above measure given to him carries in it all power in heaven and in earth given to him.

6. To show that it was no dumb Spirit that was given to our Lord Jesus, he that gave him a body to be a sacrifice, gave him a tongue to be a teacher; and a powerful tongue, to teach with a strong hand, and to speak as never man spake; Isa. l. 4. "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." O! who teaches like him! None in heaven or earth hath power to teach like him; "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life," John vi. 68. Such grace is poured into his lips, that

eternal life hangs upon his tongue, and depends upon a word from him ; " The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live," John v. 25. He that, by his divine power, spoke the world from a state of nothing to a state of being, even he had the tongue of a man, a human tongue given him to speak man from a state of death to a state of life. But whence can he do this ? Why, that blessed tongue is in the mouth of a God-man, who can speak words of power from heaven to earth, and that even by the means of poor mortal tongues, whom he employs for him ; which imports all power in heaven and earth given to him.

7. A robe and raiment was given to him, Isa. lxi. 10. It is our Lord Jesus that is there speaking both of himself and his bride, " I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in God ; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, and covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels." Christ, as Mediator and Surety, the blessed bridegroom of his church, rejoiceth in his being clothed with this garment of salvation and robe of righteousness for the behoof of his bride, whom he covers with the same mantle, and fills with the same joy. As he was, in the capacity of Surety and Cautioner, solemnly condemned in the flesh for our sin ; so having paid all the debt by his doing and dying, he was as solemnly justified in the Spirit, and absolved as the Lord our righteousness ; and, having risen again, is clothed with righteousness and salvation ; and the Man Christ rejoices in God as his Father and Justifier, that hath thus clothed and adorned him ; " He is near that justifies me, who will contend with me ?" Isa. l. 8. Now, this righteousness being such a glorious one, as brings in glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace and good-will towards men on earth, implies all power in heaven and earth that was given to him.

8. A throne was given to him ; not only a prophetic tongue and a priestly righteousness, but also a royal kingly throne, according to God's oath unto David. Acts ii. 30, which refers unto Psalm cxxxii. 11 ; and therefore, says the apostle, Acts ii. 30, " Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." See how he was set upon this throne, Psal. ii. 6, 7, " I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion ; I will declare the decree ; the Lord

hath said to me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." As God co-equal with the Father, he sits upon the same supreme throne with the Father and eternal Spirit, which are one God in three persons : but as God-man, the imperial throne is given him, and his throne is an everlasting throne, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever : the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre," Heb. i. 8, Psalm xiv. 6. Heaven is his throne, and the earth is his footstool ; which imports all power in heaven and earth.

9. A name was given him suitable to his throne, majesty, and dignity, Phil. ii. 9, 10, "God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name." It is a name above men ; "Thou art fairer than the sons of men ;" a name above saints ; for he is King of saints : a name above angels, for he is the Lord of angels : a name above all names, for he is the Head of all principality and power. See his name that is given him, Isa. ix. 6, "To us a child is born, to us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders ; and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." See his name, Rev. xix. 16, "He hath upon his vesture, and his thigh, a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. In a word, his name, is, JEHOVAH OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. And who can explain his name, or his Father's name ? Prov. xxx. 4, "What is his name, and what is his Son's name, if thou canst tell ?" Because he is God as well as man, God equal with the Father, therefore though he hath a new name with relation to us, yet his name is not changed no more than his nature ; the man Jesus Christ is the supreme God : it is Arian blasphemy that would rob him of his part of his name. But in vain do they rob him of that which God hath given him ; God the Father calls him GOD, Psalm xlv. 6, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever : " there is a name given him above all names. But, perhaps, some one may think, if it be only given to him, then it does not belong to him but by gift, and so not by nature. I answer, As God, it is not given to him, for it is natural to him to be God ; but it is given to the man Christ, because he is God essentially, as well as man ; and God-man in one person : "He hath then given him a name above every name." And there is no name above his, so there is no God above him ; he is the God, the Angel that swears by himself, because he could swear by no greater, Heb. vi. 13, "I am God, and there is none else," says Christ, Isa. xlv. 22. And hence his name is the Supreme, the most mighty God, Psal. xlv. 3, "Gir

thy sword upon thy thigh, O most Mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty." Thus then all power in heaven and earth must be given to him.

10. To add no more, all things were given to him, and therefore all power in heaven and in earth; Matt. xi. 27, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father. John iii. 37. The Father hath given all things into his hand. John xiii. 3. Knowing that the Father had given all things into his hand;" and therefore he says, John xvi. 15, "All things that the Father hath are mine." Here I might tell you some of these *all things* that are given to him. All gifts and graces are given to him; "He hath ascended up on high, received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that God the Lord might dwell among them." All blessings are given to him; all the stock we lost in the first Adam is more abundantly in him; "Grace is poured-into thy lips, therefore God thy God hath blessed thee:" and hence he is the fountain of all blessings; and men shall be blessed in him. All treasures are given to him: "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;" all the treasures of power and pity, grace and glory. All fulness is given to him; "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; yea, "In him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Now, there is not one of these things I have mentioned on this head that could have been given him, unless all power in heaven and earth also had been given him. Let our faith then be fortified in the truth of this doctrine of Christ here. What could he have done with all things, if he had not all power to manage them? Yea, it could not be true that all things were given him, if all power were with-held: but it is an eternal truth, that our God and Saviour, the fountain of truth, says here, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." I go on,

II. To the second head proposed, which was, To inquire, what this power is, that is delegated to, and resides in the person of Christ: "All power, says he, is given unto me." As to the nature of this power, I shall only say in general, it is what we cannot define nor pretend to give a full description of: only to hint at the Scriptural definition of it: it is a power above all power that Christ hath: for he is set far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be head over all things to his

church, Eph. i. 21, 22. It imports his just and indisputable right to govern the world, and dispose of all creatures in it according to his sovereign will and pleasure. But, more particularly, to give some further scriptural account of this power that is given to Christ, I would touch at these four things, 1. The kind of this power. 2. The parts. 3. The acts. 4. The qualities and properties thereof.

1st, I would touch at the kinds of this power of Christ; and it is twofold, either essential or economical.

1. His essential power, as he is the great God, from everlasting to everlasting, whose kingdom ruleth over all: Rom. ix. 5. "Of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever, Amen," says the apostle; so it is, so let it be, and so shall it be: and, AMEN, will all the church of Christ say, except damnable Arian and Socinian blasphemers. And if he were not a God of infinite patience, as well as of infinite power, he could not have borne so long with the high affronts, which have been of late cast upon his supreme Deity in Britain and Ireland, and even in the Church of Scotland also; wherein the groundless noise and outcry of novelties of doctrine, and dangerous Antinomianism, is, in the righteous providence of God, like to be drowned with a more hideous noise of damnable Arianism. However, this essential power of our Lord Jesus is the same with that of the Father and Holy Ghost, who are one in essence. And if we view him in his personality, as he is the eternal Son of God, he is equal in power and glory with the Father and eternal Spirit; "He was in form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God," Phil. ii. 6; being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, Heb. i. 3.

2. His economical power, as he is the great Messiah, God in our nature. This is the power that is properly said to be given to him: and this mediatorial power of Christ, though it be of another kind, yet it is not separate from, but founded upon his essential power, insomuch, that he could not be our almighty Mediator, if he had not been the almighty God; but our help was laid upon One that is mighty, Psalm lxxxix. 19, "One that is MIGHTY;" there is his essential power: "I have LAID help upon him;" there is his economical power given him as Mediator; in which respect it is given him to have power over all flesh, John xvii. 2; and to be Head over all things to his church, Eph. i. 22.

2dly, I would touch at the parts of this power that was given

to the Lord Jesus. For clearing of this, you are to consider that the economical, or mediatorial power of the Lord Jesus Christ is twofold, namely, his power of authority, and his power of ability.

1. His power of authority: he took not this office on himself, without the call of God, Heb. v. 4! He was chosen of God to it, Matt. xiii. 18; He was anointed to it, Psal. ii. 6; and thus sealed and authorised of the Father, John vi. 27. This divine call and commission conveys authority to all his mediatory acts. The word here in the text, ΠΑΣΑ ΕΞΟΥΣΙΑ, properly signifies not simply *potentia*, that is, force and strength, as *DYNAMIS*, among the Grecians does; but *potestas*, that is, authority and right to rule, grounded upon law: a legal authority, a rightful power over all.

2. His power of ability, whereby he is able to save to the uttermost, Heb. vii. 25; yea, both able to save and to destroy James iv. 12. And no wonder, he is the very same person who was able to create the world out of nothing, and did so; who clave the sea, and made a way for his ransomed to pass over; who was able to lay down his life, and to take it up again; which accordingly he did, John x. 17, 18. These two parts of power in the Lord Jesus Christ are inseparable, notwithstanding that they are distinct things, and separable in themselves. Some kings, for example, have a power of legal authority over their rebellious subjects, but they want a power of ability to repress them; that is, they have right, but they want might: others again have a power of ability to subdue their neighbours, but it is an act of iniquity, for they have no legal authority over them; that is, they have might, but they want right; but both these, you see, do concur in our Lord Jesus Christ; he hath both a power of authority, and a power of ability over all things in heaven and earth: *All power is given unto me*. Now, from these essential parts of his economical, or mediatorial power, issue these four consequential parts thereof, which I but name.

(1.) There is a power of pre-eminency given him; "He is the Head of the body the church, who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence, Col. i. 18. He that came from above is above all," John iii. 31; above all, by nature, as God; and above all, by donation, as Mediator: that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.

(2.) There is a power of dominion that is given to him, a power of government; "The government shall be upon his shoulders,"

Isaiah ix. 6. This dominion is an universal dominion over all in general, as he is the King of kings; and particularly over his church, as he is the King of Zion, and head over all things to his church.

(3.) There is a power of dispensation that is given to him, to dispense, distribute, communicate, give, and bestow what he will upon whom he will; John xvii. 2, "Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he might give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him;" that is, to as many, as he pleased: for he and his Father are one in will and pleasure, as well as in essence and nature.

(4.) There is a power of judgment given to him; "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son, even as Mediator, to have life in himself, and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man," John v. 26, 27. Authority to execute judgment both in this world and at the last day. Thus, I say, there is given to him all power of authority and right; all power of ability and might; all power of pre-eminency, whereby he is above all; and all power of dominion, whereby he rules over all; all power of dispensation, to give what he pleases, to whom he pleases; and all power of judgment, to acquit or condemn whom he will. These are the parts of his power.

3dly, I would touch at the acts of his power; whereby he exercises that power that is given him. And here, all that can be said is but a dilating upon the former head; for all these acts of power that can be mentioned, are but so many more pieces of his power, founded upon, and included in what I have said. The acts then and egress of his power may be viewed in these following out-goings thereof, especially in his church.

1. He hath power to gather a church to himself out of all the corners of the world, as it is said, "To him shall the gathering of the people be:" so, having all his power in his hand, hath no more to do but to lift up his royal standard, and then there is a rendezvous under his banner, who is the standard-bearer among ten thousand; Isa. xi. 11, 12, "He shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah, from the four corners of the earth."

2. He hath power to give laws and ordinances in his church, and to commissionate officers and servants to dispense these ordinances of his appointment: hence it follows in the context here,

“All power is given unto me ; Go ye therefore, and teach all nations.” Well, but may they teach any thing he hath not ordered nor invented, any new ceremonies he hath not instituted? No : “Teach them to observe, whatsoever I have commanded you.” Whatever, therefore, is not his institution, but of human invention, is to be rejected as spurious, though it were enforced with the authority of all principalities and powers in heaven, let be of all the popes and prelates on earth ; if it bears not his superscription, who hath all power in heaven and earth, it is to be rejected.

3. He hath power to convert sinners, to subdue rebels, and to draw whom he will to his obedience ; “Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power,” Psal. cx. 3, “When I am lifted up, I will draw all men after me.” There is many a hard stony heart here : but, O sirs, it is good news that he hath power even out of stones to raise up children to Abraham.

4. He hath power to justify the guilty, and pardon whom he pleases, Matt. ix. 6, there he wills us to know that the Son of man hath power even on earth to forgive sins. Had the Prince of Peace this power when he was in a state of humiliation, in the depth of his poverty? Who then will question his power, now when exalted to the height of his pomp, and when he is exalted by, and to the right hand of God, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for this very end, to give repentance unto Israel and remission of sin ?

5. He hath power to adopt the fatherless, and to bring these that are the children of wrath, by nature, out of the devil's family, and to make them the children of God by faith, whereof he himself is the powerful author ; “To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the children of God, even to them that believe on his name,” John i. 12. The power of adoption and filiation is in his hand, whereby he can make these that were heirs of hell to be heirs of God, and joint-heirs with himself : for, as he is the everlasting Son, so he is the everlasting Father.

6. He hath power to sanctify the filthy, and to purify his church, and to present it to himself a glorious church not having spot, Eph. v. 26. It is he that hath power to purify the sons of Levi, Mal. iii. 3. And though it seem to be a contemptible office for him that has all power in heaven and earth, to stoop down so low as to wash and purify such abominable filthy lepers as we are ; yet, if he wash us not, we have no part in him ; and he wills us not to say to him, “Depart from us, for we are sinful men :” nay, but

rather, Come to us, for this very reason, because we are sinful men and women. For as he alone hath power to wash us in his blood, and invites us to come to him that he may wash us, so he commands us to invite him to come to us and wash us; "Take with you words, and say, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously," Hosea xiv. 2. But to mention all acts and outgoings of his power, is impossible: he hath power to reveal all mysteries, and to make known the very mind and heart of God; "All things are delivered to me of my Father, and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son shall reveal him, Matt. xi. 27. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him," John i. 18. And again he hath power to make effectual all his ordinances, word, and sacraments; they are all lifeless and powerless without him; but they are effectual through his powerful presence, which, glory to his name, he promised when he appointed them; "Lo I am with you always to the end of the world," Matt. xxviii. 20. He hath power to destroy unbelief, and create faith, being the author and finisher of it; and indeed, in working it, he shews the exceeding greatness of his power, Eph. i. 19. For why (O admire his power!) he hath power to send the Spirit, John xv. 26, and xvii. 7. Here is a power above all finite power, a power to send the Holy Ghost, the third person of the glorious Trinity, that is equal in power and glory with the Father and with the Son; "If I go, I will send him;" when I go up, I will send him down. O let us say, AMEN, Lord; thou hast gone, therefore now send him, send him, send him; the Father promised the Son, and he sent him: the Son hath promised the Spirit, and will he not send him? Yea, he hath sent him already many a time since he went away: but hath he not promised to send him to the end of time, when he said, "Lo, I am with you to the end of the world?" Yea, he hath promised, and therefore rely on the promise. Thou hast gone, Lord Jesus: therefore send the Spirit, according to thy word. O blessed power of our Lord Jesus! He hath power to send the Spirit of power, as he did on the day of Pentecost, Acts ii. 33. And, O! here is the great reason why he can give us power to preach, and power to hear, power to believe, and power to repent, and power to love, and power to pray, and power to praise, and power to communicate, because he hath power to send the Spirit of power, by whose power alone we can do all things.

What shall I say? Surely I cannot give any more glorious instances of his power than what I have done. He hath power to loose all bonds, to liberate captives, and bring them to the glorious liberty of the children of God; "If the Son make you free, you shall be free indeed," John viii. 36. A freedom from the curse of the law, freedom from the wrath of God, freedom from the power of sin, and from the slavery of Satan. Let the bonds of sin and corruption be never so strong about you, man, woman; let the bonds of death and despair be never so powerful, he can, in a moment, loose them, and let you go free, saying, "Come forth, ye prisoners of hope." But, passing many particulars that might here be mentioned, I shall proceed,

4thly, To touch at some of the properties of this power that is given to our Lord Jesus Christ. I might here shew you that his power is not only a legislative power, a power to give laws to, and write his laws in the hearts of his subjects, Jer. xxxi. 33, which no king could ever do but himself; but also an executive power, for executing his royal acts and orders, whether they be acts of grace and mercy promised towards his willing subjects whom he makes so in the day of his power, or acts of justice and vengeance threatened against his rebellious enemies; of both which we read, Psalm lxxxix. 21, 22, compared with ver. 28, 29, and downward, and also with what is spoken of him both in the second and hundred and tenth Psalm. Some have power to make laws and acts, but no power to execute them; it is not so with him, that hath all power in heaven and in earth. But, more particularly, there are these few properties of his power I would mention.

1. It is an irresistible power; if all power is given to him, then what can resist him? His power is invincible, and who but he can speak in that language, Rev. i. 8, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending: which is and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty?" Hence, when his day of power for drawing sinners to him comes, there is no standing before it: why, it is the power of an irresistible will: "For who hath resisted his will?" Rom. ix. 19; and the power of an irresistible arm; "The right hand of the Lord being exalted, the right hand of the Lord does valiantly," Psalm cxviii. 15, 16.

2. It is a serviceable power; though it be not communicable to any, in the manner that it is in him, yet it is serviceable to many, and communicable in the effects and outgoings thereof, to

empower and strengthen them, and to perfect strength in their weakness. Yea, as his power is omnipotent, so it is omnipotent; it is laid open and exposed for the use and service of sinners, who are therefore called to lay hold on his strength, that they may make peace with him, Isa. xxvii. 5. Our stock of strength, in the first Adam, was lost: and now all shops are closed, but Christ's shop stands open: and whosoever will, may come and take supply freely, and get a better stock in a better hand, even that of Jesus, who is JEHOVAH our righteousness and strength; therefore, "Trust ye in the Lord for ever," says the prophet, Isa. xxvi. 4; "For in the Lord JEHOVAH is everlasting strength." Which leads to another property.

3. It is everlasting power, everlasting strength: his power is, like himself, unchangeable; "The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom." It is true, the time is coming, when it is said, "He will deliver up the kingdom to the Father," 1 Cor. xv. 24. But this respects the different administration of it at the end of time, when he shall have no more subjects to bring in, nor enemies to bring down, and when all his mediatorial power will be seen to have been given him for glorious designs, and God will appear to have been, and to be *all in all* in this wonderful business of redemption. Christ will give an honest and honourable account of the whole work put into his hand, when he shall say, "Behold I, and the children which thou hast given me," Heb. ii. 13. And, "Of all that thou hast given me, I have lost nothing," but managed all according to thy will, John vi. 39. But the God-man will never cease to be King, and his kingdom, power, and authority will be everlasting and unchangeable; for it is to him the Father says, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever," Heb. i. 2. The believer may be sometimes weak and sometimes strong, as well as empty by turns; but, O the power that is in this glorious Head is everlasting power! This is the ground of his people's everlasting peace, everlasting pardon, everlasting consolation, and everlasting glory.

4. It is a suitable power; suitable to the royal dignity of the person to whom it is given, suitable to his station and quality as God-man, Mediator; it well becomes him to have all the power that is given him: it is suitable to the great end that God proposed, namely, his highest glory and honour in the salvation and redemption of his people; it is suitable to the trust that God reposes in

him : and suitable to the honour that God would confer upon him : it is suitable to the delight the Father hath in him ; and suitable to the agreement the Father made with him : it is suitable to his office that had so much ado with God ; and suitable to his people that had so much ado with him. In a word, it is suitable for his work that he be thus qualified ; and suitable for his reward that he be thus glorified ; “ All power is given unto me.” Hence,

5. It is a glorious power ; “ Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most Mighty, even thy glory and thy majesty,” Psal. xlv. 3, “ His powerful sword is glorious majesty,” Psal. lxxiii. 2. Why is the sight of his power and of his glory in the sanctuary put together, but because his glory is a powerful glory, and his power a glorious power ? It is a glorious divine power. Christ crucified is the wisdom of God, and the power of God, and the glory of the power of God : for, he is the brightness of the Father's glory ; and the power of God being the glory of God, Christ is the brightness of the glory of the power of God, in whom his power shines more than in all the works of creation and providence ; for in his powerful saving of sinners out of the hands of sin, guilt, Satan, death and the law, and out of the hand of all the powers of earth and hell, and out of the hand of infinite justice and incensed wrath, the glory of God's power shines so much, that if God had made ten thousand worlds more and greater than this, he could not thereby have given such a discovery of the glory of his power as he hath done in the face of Jesus Christ. O ! hath the God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, shined into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of his glory, in the face of Jesus Christ, and among the rest the glory of his power !

6. It is an universal and extensive power ; “ ALL power is given unto me.” As it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell, so all fullness imports all power ; yea, “ In him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily ;” and so all the power of the Godhead. Creatures may have some power by communication from him ; but where is there another, beside him, that hath all power, and that both in heaven and in earth ? But this leads me,

III. To the Third Head proposed in the general method, which was, To speak a little of the extent of this power, as it is declared in the text to be all power in heaven and in earth ; which I consider under a distinct head, because it is so particularly mentioned, extending to heaven above, and earth below. Let us consider then, 1. What lies in this *All power in heaven*. 2. What lies in this, *All power in earth*.

1st, All power in heaven is given to Christ; What is that? O! who can declare this, but the God of heaven? We shall only touch a little at what he hath said in his word concerning it. I think it imports these two things.

1. All power in heaven, imports, a power reaching over heaven, even all the principalities and powers, in heavenly places, as they are called, Eph. i. 20, 21. He appointed them to serve his saints upon earth; "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister unto the heirs of salvation?" Heb. i. 14. Even when Christ was upon earth in his lowest state, as they were apprehending him, he could have ordered twelve legions of angels for his assistance, Matt. xxvi. 53: but that this was not agreeable to the glorious work of redemption that he was pursuing, according to the scripture; and now, in his exalted state he hath the ordering of the heavenly hosts as he pleases, and to what errand he will. See how all the saints and angels about the throne are employed, Rev. v. 9, 12; and this in a suitableness to the orders given, Heb. i. 6; "When he brings the First-begotten into the world, he says, Let all the angels of God worship him." In a word, "The chariots of our Lord are twenty thousand," Psal. lxxviii. 17; he drives these heavenly chariots where he will.

2. All power in heaven imports, a power reaching above heaven; not only a power over heaven, and all the heavenly inhabitants, whether angels or saints; but a power above heaven; I mean, with God, that is infinitely above heaven: a power with his eternal Father, and a power with his eternal Spirit. Such a power of intercession with the Father, that nothing he demands can be denied; for, "The Father hears him always:" for he always intercedes in the virtue of the sacrifice and atonement that he made, which is infinitely well-pleasing unto God. Such a power of mission, with respect to the Holy Ghost, that when he will he can send him, as I was shewing already; it is a power and authority to pour out the Spirit, Isa. xlv. 3, "I will pour water on him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." What is that? even "My Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing on thine offspring." Such a power with God hath the Lord Jesus, that his will is a law to his Father; "Father, I will that these whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory that thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world," John xvii. 24, "Father, I will;" there is a power infinitely above the

heavens. Such a power hath Christ, with respect to the Holy Ghost, that the Spirit's descending from heaven to earth, depended, in a manner, upon his ascending from earth to heaven; "I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come," John xvi. 17. And according to the stated economy of the glorious work of redemption, the Holy Ghost comes not down without a mission from heaven; therefore he adds, "If I depart, I will send him;" Whence will he send him? Is it only from heaven? nay, there is more, "I will send him from the Father," John xv. 26. There is a power above the heaven of heavens, a power to send the eternal Spirit from the eternal Father! See then what it is to have all power in heaven; it is a power reaching over heaven, and a power reaching above heaven. O what a powerful Saviour have we to look unto! "All power in heaven is given unto me."

2dly, All power in earth is given unto Christ: What is that? This to be sure, follows of consequence; for, he that hath all power in heaven, cannot but have all power in earth; and, I think, this imports two things also, namely, a power over the earth, and a power under the earth.

1. A power over the earth. Though his kingdom be not of this world, but distinct from all earthly kingdoms, yet he hath a power over the earth; a general power over all things and all persons on earth, from the greatest to the most minute; for he, being King of kings, and Lord of lords, his kingdom ruleth over all. His providential power and government extend from the king upon the throne, to the sparrow on the bush; from the disposing of kingdoms and sceptres on the earth, to the numbering of the hairs on our head. But there is a particular power and authority he hath over his church on earth; this I have touched at already, and therefore shall only say, He hath power over all gifts in the earth: to bestow all gifts and graces, and all spiritual blessings; for, Psal. lxxviii. 18, "He hath ascended on high, and led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them." He hath power over all souls in the earth, both to save and to damn them. Power to save; and therefore says, "Look unto me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." Power to damn; and therefore says, he that looketh not, "He that believeth not, shall be damned." He hath power over all things on earth, so as to make all things work together for good to them that love him, and are the called

according to his purpose. He hath power over all enemies of his church upon earth, "When the floods lift up their voice, the Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters." He hath power over all cases of sinners on earth, and can save in the most desperate cases, from the utmost point of sin and misery, to the utmost point of happiness and glory, "He is able to save to the uttermost all that come to him, because he ever liveth to make intercession," Heb. vii. 25. "The Son quickeneth who he will," John v. 21. His voice will raise the dead at the last day, when he comes to judge the world; and his voice can raise the dead sinner out of the grave of sin and security.

2. A power under the earth belongs to him also, and is imported in this all-power in earth, that is given to him; for, if there be any under the earth and attempts to undermine and oppose his power and authority in it, that must also be under his check and control, and his power must extend thereunto; otherwise he could not be said to have all power in earth. His power then extends not only to things of and in the earth, but to things under the earth, Philip. ii. 10, "That at [OR IN] the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things UNDER the earth;" that is, a power over all the devils in hell. Christ could not have run through his kingly office, if he had not had this power over devils; he could not have been able to bind the strong man, if he had not been stronger; nay, he came for this very end to the earth, to bruise the head of the serpent; and by death to destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and accordingly, having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross, Col. ii. 15. And if he triumphed above them, when the cross was on his back, how does he now triumph and exert his power above them when the crown is on his head? His having all power in heaven and earth, then, imports also, that he hath all power in hell, and under the earth, which that word perhaps relates unto, Rev. i. 18, "I am he that lives and was dead; and, behold, I live for evermore; Amen: I have the keys of hell and death." The keys argue power; for it is a metaphor from conquerors, when they take a city, they have the keys delivered to them, in token that the city is now under their command. Christ hath the keys of hell, and can send whom he will to it. In a word, the power of the keys is only his; "He hath the key of David, that opens and none shuts, and shuts and none opens," Rev. iii. 7. All

the keys of power and authority hang at his girdle ; these four keys particularly, (1.) The keys of heaven, to open heaven, and let in whom he will to glory ; and he must needs have supremacy of power, that can set a crown of glory on the head of all his ransomed ones, who shall return and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads. (2.) He hath the key of hell, to shut up whom he will into the pit. (3.) He hath the key of the word, to open it, and discover the mysteries of the kingdom to whom he will. (4.) He hath the key of the heart, to open it, as he did the heart of Lydia, when he pleases ; and, indeed, no less power than that of his, who hath all power in heaven and earth, can open the heart of man upon earth, to let in this King of glory, this mighty King.

Let us then view the extent of this power that is given him, even all power in heaven, over heaven, and above the heavens : and all power in earth, over the earth, and under the earth. His power then extends from the battlement of heaven to the bottom of hell ; it is a power over all the angels in heaven, and power over all the devils in hell ; power to pacify the God of heaven, and power to destroy the god of this world, " All power in heaven and earth is given unto me."

IV. The Fourth General Head proposed, was, To touch at the divine donation of this power, by shewing when and how this power was given to the Lord Jesus. And,

1st, When was all power in heaven and earth given unto him ? There are four periods we may cast our eye upon, in answering this question.

The first period is from all eternity, before the foundation of the world was laid, in the counsel of peace. Upon his undertaking the work of redemption, all power was given him decretively and federally, according to that glorious transaction betwixt the Father and him ; and hence the gospel is said to be but the declaration of the decree concerning him ; " I will declare the decree," Psal. ii. 7. What decree is it ? even of giving Christ all power in heaven and earth, of giving him a throne in Zion, and giving him the Heathen for his heritage, and the uttermost ends of the earth for his possession ; and hence also he is said to be set up from everlasting, ere ever the earth was, when, in the prospect of this great work now declared unto us, he was his Father's delight ; and his delights were with the sons of men, Prov. viii. 23, 30.

The second period is from the beginning of the world ; or rather,

when, upon the back of the fall, the first promise was proclaimed in Paradise, "the seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent," all power was given to him virtually, insomuch, that it was not only promised he should have all power to destroy the old serpent's devices, but his parole and word of honour, in the counsel of peace, was so much regarded, and the Father put so much trust and confidence in him, that he entrusted him with all power and authority, even before his incarnation, and before ever he paid the debt of obedience and satisfaction; and upon this ground it was, that by virtue of this power lodged in him, he bestowed the Spirit, and many spiritual blessings upon his people, under the Old Testament, before he took on our nature; yea, upon this ground, all that were appointed to life, from the beginning of the world, and during the time of the Old Testament dispensation, before Christ assumed our flesh, were saved by this Mediatorial power and grace that was given him upon trust: hence, says the apostle, Acts xv. 11, "We believe we shall be saved by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, even as they."

The third period wherein all power was actually given to him, and initially, was even in the days of his humiliation; for therein he was, as God in our nature, clothed with all this power for performing the work that belonged to his humbled state. The New Testament history, therefore, is full of the account of his power that he exerted in working miracles, healing diseases, opening the eyes of the blind, and the like. When the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, says the apostle, even then, "We beheld his glory, full of grace and truth:" and even when he was riding to Jerusalem on an ass; yea, when he was hanging on a cross, and lying in a grave, he was clothed with the same royal power and glory that was manifested to the wise men of the east, when he was lying in a manger. There were, indeed, some remarkable times wherein his glory was discovered in a more special manner, witness at his baptism and transfiguration. But then,

The fourth period wherein all power in heaven and earth was most eminently given to him, was immediately upon his resurrection; then he was more signally and solemnly invested with all power. The first step of his exaltation, namely, his rising again from the dead, was the first step of his solemn investiture with universal power and authority: for clearing of this, compare Psal. ii. 6, 7, with Acts xiii. 33. When is it that God says, "I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion, and declared the decree, say-

ing, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. God hath fulfilled the same unto us, says the apostle, in that he hath raised up Jesus again, as it is written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee," why, his resurrection was the great proof and declaration of his being the Son of God; for then, "He was declared to be the Son of God with power, by his resurrection from the dead," Rom. i. 4. And though it would not be improper to apply that word, "This day have I begotten thee," to his eternal generation; for, "From everlasting to everlasting he is God," as it were, one and the same eternal day; yet we see it is accommodate to his resurrection in point of declaration; *I will declare the decree; this day have I made it appear that I have begotten thee.* His resurrection was the declaration of his being the Son of God with power. The other steps of Christ's exaltation, his ascending into heaven, and sitting at the right hand of God, were so many other steps up to the glorious throne of universal power and supreme authority, Phil. iii. 9. When God highly exalted him, then he gave his name above every name; a throne above every throne: when he ascended up on high, then he received gifts for men; and here is the sum of his gifts, "All power in heaven and earth is given unto me." You see the time when it was that all power was given to him.

2dly, As to the manner how all power was given to him. Here it might be shown by whose pleasure, and by what means and acts this power was given to him.

[1.] As to the first, by whose pleasure was it, or who could give him this power? I answer, in a word, it pleased the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, one God in three persons, that in him, the second person, as God-man, Mediator, should all fulness dwell, even all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, Col. i. 19, and ii. 9. It pleased the Father, that all the fulness of his Godhead; it pleased the Son, that all the fulness of his Godhead; it pleased the Holy Ghost, that all the fulness of his Godhead; or, it was the pleasure of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that all the fulness of the Godhead should centre and reside in the Man, the God-man, Christ Jesus. And, because God the Father is the first in the order, or the manner of the subsistence of the three persons of the glorious Trinity, therefore it is especially ascribed to the Father, "It pleased the Father:" and again, "All things are delivered to me of my Father:" yet here the Father is to be considered essen-

tially, including the eternal Son, and the eternal Spirit, in the unity of the same essence ; for, though Christ is God, yet being somewhat else beside God, and acting in this glorious dispensation not as God absolutely, nor as the offended majesty, but as one interposing in favours of his offending creatures, he is said to have this power given him ; which, therefore, must be by the pleasure of the offended Trinity ; the pleasure of the great God, in pursuance of this grand device for averting his just displeasure from us. Christ then derived his mediatorial and economical power in our behalf from the united infinite power of the glorious Trinity, and thus delegated to him with infinite pleasure and satisfaction : God having a rapturous delight in that method of man's salvation.

[2.] By what means or acts was all power in heaven and earth given to him ? We reply : It was given him by the following acts, or with the following solemnity ; as all power is originally in him by nature, as God, so all power is delegated to him by office, as Mediator in this manner :—

1. All power was given to him by solemn election. Isa. xlii. 1, compared with Matt. xii. 18, “ Behold my Servant, whom I uphold : mine Elect, in whom my soul delighteth.” He was chosen of God to be joint Emperor with himself ; and as David set up his son Solomon to reign, and gave all the dominion to him ; so God hath given all to Christ, as if he would meddle with nothing, “ For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son,” John v. 22. This was done then by an ancient statute of heaven, insomuch that the exhibition of Christ upon his throne is called a declaring the decree. He was chosen of God to the universal government ; and there was more of God in the election of that one Man, Christ, than in the election of all the angels and saints in heaven. He was chosen to be the lord of angels, and also to be the King of saints : and they were chosen in him before the foundation of the world, Eph. i. 4.

2. All power was given to him by solemn transaction ; Psalm lxxxix. 3, “ I have made a covenant with my Chosen.” The Father transacted with him to this effect, that, upon condition he should pour out his soul unto death, he should divide the spoil with the strong, Isa. liii. 12. And because it was a bargain betwixt them, therefore,

3. All power was given to him by solemn promise, Psalm lxxxix. 19-27, where God having said, I have laid help upon one

that is mighty, and exalted one chosen out of the people, it follows, "With him my hand shall be established, and mine arm shall strengthen him : in my name shall his horn be exalted : I will set his hand in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers ;" that is, he shall be lord of the isles in the sea, as well as king of nations." Ver. 17, "I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth."

4. All power was given him by solemn oath ; Ps. lxxx. 3, 4, "I have sworn unto David my servant ; thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations, *Selah.*" With Psalm cx. 4, "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, thou art a priest for ever ;" a priest upon the throne, with a sovereign sceptre in his hand ; even the rod of his strength, "Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies."

5. All power was given to him by solemn inauguration and legal instalment into the government of his church ; Psalm ii. 6, "I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion:" and accordingly, the government is put upon his shoulders, and of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.

6. All power was given to him by solemn oblation and supereminent unction, Psalm ii. 6, "I have anointed my King," as the word signifies ; and Psalm lxxxix. 20, "With my holy oil have I anointed him : " Psalm xlv. 6, 7, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever ; the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness ; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." Christ himself speaks of this, saying, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he hath anointed me ;" and again, "Him hath God the Father sealed."

7. All power was given to him by solemn proclamation, and that by a voice from the most excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased," 2 Pet. i. 17. Yea, with many great *O ye's*, with many a sweet *Behold*, he hath been proclaimed King since the beginning of the world. His royal power and authority was proclaimed in the first promise : he was proclaimed in all the after-promises, prophecies, types, and sacrifices, whereof the voice of all was, "Behold, O Zion, thy salvation cometh : behold, thy King comes ;" he was proclaimed by his harbinger, John the Baptist, who was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord ;" he was pro-

claimed by an heavenly host, when he made his entrance into this world on the stage of time in our flesh, when the angels of heaven in the hearing of the shepherds, cried out, singing and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and goodwill towards men; for, behold, the good tidings of great joy shall be unto all people: for unto you is born, this day, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord;" even Christ the Lord of lords, the Lord of angels and men; he was proclaimed again at his baptism, and transfiguration, with a voice from heaven; he proclaimed himself also by his own authorative preaching and miraculous works; and afterwards he ordered his ambassadors to go and proclaim him to the world, even to teach all nations, and preach the gospel of his kingdom to every creature. And then last of all,

8. All power was given to him by solemn coronation, being crowned universal Monarch on the right hand of power; "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour," Heb. ii 6. For the crown of thorns he hath the crown of glory, power, and authority put upon his head. There are two coronation days of our Lord Jesus; one is the day when he ascended into heaven in person, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God, where the twenty-four elders fall down before the Lamb that sits upon the throne, and lay down their crowns at his feet: another is, the day when he descends down to the earth in the power of his Spirit among his people, enabling them, by faith, to put the crown upon his head, and to put honour upon him, by counting all but loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of his glory; and O what a happy day would this be, were I preaching the coronation sermon of our glorious Lord Jesus upon his coronation day! O behold his glory! behold his crown! "Behold king Solomon, with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, in the day of the gladness of his heart;" yea, behold King Jesus, with the crown wherewith his Father crowned him! "All power in heaven and earth is given unto me." I proceed now,

V. To the fifth head, namely, To offer some reasons why it is that all power is thus given to our Lord Jesus Christ; why it is delegated to and resides in his person? There is the greatest reason for it, and that in these following respects:—

1. All power in heaven and earth is given to him, to reward him for the work that he hath done; and, particularly for his obe-

dience unto death, even the death of the cross, according to the eternal purpose and concert wherein all this business was laid down and agreed to; Christ having finished the work of his humiliation, he was to be advanced to a state of exaltation; Phil. ii. 6, 9. He who was in the form of God took upon him the form of a servant, and humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; wherefore God hath given him a name above every name; hence it is said that for the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, despised the shame, and now is set down at the right hand of God, Heb. xii. 2, having drunk of the brook in the way, he was to lift up his head, Psalm cx. 7. The prophecy of Isaiah is full of this; yea, all the prophets treat so much of it, that our Lord reproves his disciples going to Emmaus in these terms, Luke xxiv. 25, 26, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken; ought not Christ to suffer all these things and then to enter into his glory?" All power, then, is given to him in recompense of his work of doing and suffering, and as the reward of that death of his which we celebrate the memorials of this day; that sacrifice Christ offered was of such a sweet smelling savour unto God that he cannot reward him too highly for it; nor for his assuming our nature, that therein he might offer it to the eternal satisfaction of his justice, and the vindication of the honour of all his excellencies. Hence it is said, John v. 27, that authority to execute judgment is given him, because he is the Son of man; that is, "All power in heaven and earth is given him," and universal government. But why is it said, Because he is the Son of MAN, and not rather, Because he is the Son of GOD? Why, as he is the Son of God absolutely, he hath no need of this gift of power and authority; it belongs to him naturally and essentially; but it is given him because he is the Son of man; because he condescended to assume our nature and become man; he became a true man; having a true body and a reasonable soul; a poor man, that had no where to lay his head; a distressed man; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; a mortal man, that actually died the cursed death of the cross: and now, all power is given to him, because he was the Son of Man, the true promised Messiah, that, in our nature, humbled himself to the lowest; therefore he is exalted to the highest throne of power and glory.

2. All power in heaven and earth is given to him, not only to reward him for the work he hath done, but also to furnish him for

the work he hath to do ; namely, to carry on and finish the work of redemption by power ; as he hath done by price ; to apply what he hath purchased, and give out the blessings he hath bought, John xvii. 2, "Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him : " How many is that ? Even as many as he will, John v. 21, " Even as the Son quickens whom he will." Here is a great work that indeed requires great power, namely, to give eternal life to whom he pleases, in all nations under heaven ; and therefore, immediately after he shows the power given him, he gives a commission to his servants here, saying, " Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations ; lo, I am with you to the end of the world ; go ye and preach the gospel to every creature : " intimating that the great end of his getting all power in heaven and earth was, that he might exert his power by a preached gospel in the conviction, conversion, and eternal salvation of all whom he pleases to save. This gift, then, is for our behoof given to him ; when he ascended up on high he received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, Psalm lxxviii. 18 ; and the sum of all these gifts is here that " All power in heaven and earth is given him." But what he received for men, he will not keep up from men ; nay, what the psalmist calls *receiving* gifts for men, the apostle calls his *giving* gifts to men, Eph. iv. 8, " When he ascended up on high, he gave gifts unto men : " and thereupon a description of a gospel ministry follows in the main principal ends thereof, namely, " The perfecting of the saints, the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith and knowledge of the Son of God to a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," ver. 12, 13. What, might the disciples say, can anything great be expected of our preaching ? What can a poor company of poor fishermen do to the subduing of rebellious sinners, and the spreading of the gospel with any success among all nations ? Never fear that, says Christ, " All power is given unto me ; " and, " Lo, I am with you." We that are ministers, being also poor frail sinful men, might faint and give over, if it were not for this, that the work is his, and all power is given to him ; because all the work is committed to him, he is well furnished for it.

3. All power is given to him, because all his enemies are to be subjected by him and subdued, either in mercy or in wrath ; some in mercy, Psalm cx. 3, " Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power ; " thus his arrows are said to be sharp in the hearts of his

enemies: whereby the people fall under him, Psalm xlv. 5. Some in wrath, Psalm cx. 1, "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." And verse 5, "The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings, in the day of his wrath." Psalm ii. 9, "Thou shalt break them in pieces with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." His church's enemies, his peoples enemies, whether outward or inward, are to be subdued, the devil, the world, and the flesh; and it requires all power in heaven and earth to break the power of sin, and destroy the works of the devil in them.

4. All power is given to him, because all glory comes to God thereby: for, when Christ is exalted and glorified, God is glorified in him; God hath highly exalted him, that the world may see and own that Jesus is the Lord, to the glory of God the Father, Philip. ii. 9, 11, "Father, glorify thy name," says Christ: Yes, I will, says the Father; "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again:" and how does he it? Even by exalting Christ to the highest, he gets glory in the highest ascribed to him. Christ, who is said to be set up from everlasting, was in time set up first upon a cross, that the glory of God's love and grace might be seen in him; therefore says Christ, before he was lifted up on the cross, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him." Next he was set up on a throne of power and majesty, where a crucified Christ appears more eminently to be the wisdom of God, and the power of God; and, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him."

5. All power is given to Christ, that all honour may be given to him: John v. 23, "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son; that all men may honour the Son, even as they honour the Father; for he that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father that sent him." How can they honour the God of heaven, who do not honour him that is invested with all the power and authority of the God of heaven?

6. All power is given to Christ, and resides in his person, because of the PERPETUITY of his priesthood and mediation; Heb. vii. 25, "He is able to save to the uttermost, all that come to God by him, because he ever lives to make intercession." He intercedes upon the ground of the full satisfactory atonement that he hath made; and, being a Priest for ever, his everlasting priesthood is the foundation of his everlasting power, whereby he is able to save to the uttermost.

7. All power is given to Christ, for the SECURITY of the new covenant, that stands fast in him : Why, because he is higher than the kings of the earth, and his throne as the days of heaven, Psalm lxxxix. 27, 28, 29. Christ is the great guarantee of the new covenant, " All the promises are Yea and Amen in him ;" and therefore must be the sure mercies of David. Our stock is better secured than it was in the hands of the first Adam : nay, all the power and policy of hell cannot rob us of it, because it is in his hand that hath all power in heaven and earth.

8. All power is given to him, that all BLESSINGS may be given out by him to his church ; Acts v. 31, " Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sin." Repentance here implies faith, and all the other graces of the Spirit ; and forgiveness of sin here implies justification, and all the other blessings and benefits of the covenant : and Christ being exalted by and to the right hand of God, as a Prince and a Saviour, to give these things to sinners ; to impenitent sinners, for only such need repentance ; to guilty sinners, for only such need forgiveness of sin ; it says, that all power is given to Christ, that he may be in case to give all blessings to sinners like us. Therefore,

9. All power is given to him in heaven and in earth, that all SINNERS, under heaven and upon the earth, may flee to him alone for righteousness and strength, and glory only in him ; Isa. xlv. 22, 25, " Look to me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth ; for I am God, and there is none else." They are to look to him by faith, saying, " Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength ; To him shall men come," &c. And, again, " In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." All power is given to him, that all flesh may look to him, and that no flesh may glory in his presence, but that he that glories may glory in the Lord, 1 Cor. i. 29, 30, 31. If any power were in us, there would be matter of boasting.

10. All power in heaven and earth is given to Christ, because he is the FITTEST person for receiving such a gift ; should we search heaven and earth, there is none so fit as he ; why ? there is none so capable of it among angels or creatures ; there is none able to bear the weight of it ; therefore, in Zech. vi. 13, it is said, " He shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory." No cherubim or seraphim in heaven is able to bear the glory of all the power in heaven and earth, but Christ can well bear it ;

he that bore the greatest weight of wrath, does bear the greatest weight of glory. Again, as there is none so capable to bear it, so there is none so creditable to possess it; for he, being in the form of God, counts it no robbery to be equal with God. God cannot have a more honourable representative; God does not discredit himself by making Christ the repository of all fulness, the storehouse of all power. Again, as there is none so capable, none so creditable; so there is none so responsible as he, so as to improve that great stock to the greatest glory of God and to the best advantage of his people: he was found to be responsible enough in his humbled state. If God had exacted the payment of the infinite debt that we owed to justice from the hands of any besides Christ, all the creatures would have said, We are not *solvendo*, we are not in case to pay; but, behold our help was laid upon One that is mighty; mighty to save, mighty to satisfy, mighty to give the law and justice all their due. And now in his exalted state, being intrusted with the business of saving, by the power of his Spirit, all whom he hath saved by the price of his blood, he is no less responsible, being able to save to the uttermost, and to bring in all the rent and revenue of praise, and glory to God in the highest by so doing. Again, as there is none so capable of all power, none so creditable to possess it, none so responsible to make a good account of such a trust, so there is none so acceptable to God; and, therefore it is that all power is given unto him; "The Father loveth the Son, and hath put all things into his hand," John iii. 35. He takes infinite delight in him, even as he is Mediator; "Behold my Servant, whom I uphold, mine Elect, in whom my soul delighteth." And what can he with-hold from his darling? Hence he glories in him as his righteous Servant: "By his knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify many," Isa. liii. 11; and as his prudent Servant; "Behold my Servant shall deal prudently," Isa. lii. 13. O what a faithful and prudent steward is he, to distribute of this fulness that is in him to needy sinners! Again, as there is none so acceptable to God so there is none so accessible by man, he being God-man; there is no sufficient helper so nearly related to man, he being bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, to whom the right of redemption belongs, as the nearest of kin; and we may go to him as a relation of our own; he is full of compassion towards mankind sinners, and full of condescension. Never was a king so humble as he, riding upon an ass, upon a colt the foal of an ass; although "He was rich, yet

for our sakes he became poor ;” yea, poorer than the poorest, and lower than the lowest ; and, “ It behoved him, in all things, to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest,” Heb. ii. 17. And, chap. iv. 15, “ We have not, therefore, an High priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” Therefore, though he be upon the throne of power and glory, yet it is also a throne of grace and mercy to which we have access : “ Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” Though he be now exalted to the highest, yet he stoops down to the lowest ; he that hath all power hath all pity ; and, O ! is he not then the fittest person for receiving such a gift ? “ All power in heaven and earth is given unto me.”

In a word, he hath all right to the universal government, and to all power ; a right by nature, for he is “ God over all, blessed for ever ;” a right by purchase, for he hath bought the kingdom with his blood ; a right of heritage, being the heir of all things ; a right of primogeniture, being the first-born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. Ought he not to have all power in heaven and earth, who, by the blood of his cross, have reconciled all things in heaven and in earth ? Col. i. 20. So much shall suffice for the reasons of the doctrine.

VI. The sixth thing proposed was, to draw some inferences from the whole for the Application. A vast many uses might be made of this great doctrine, but I shall confine myself within as narrow bounds as such a subject can well allow. Is it so, that all sovereignty and supremacy of power is delegated to, and resides in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ ; or, that all power in heaven and earth is thus given to him ? Then,

1. Hence we may see the fountain of all ministerial authority to preach this gospel, and administer the sacraments of the New Testament, and this of the sacramental supper that we have in hand. Christ, having all authority himself, is the only hand that can give authority to whom he will : therefore Christ opens up his own commission from the Father, and so gives commission to his servants ; accordingly, says Christ, John xx. 21, “ As my Father hath sent me, so send I you.” And as Christ had his commission from his Father to show and open, so they may preach most warrantably, who can show their commission most clearly : “ How shall

we preach, except we be sent?" Gospel ministers have need to keep their commission clear for their encouragement, because the world is ready to question their authority and despise their message, as it was with Christ himself. Luther said once, "That to preach the gospel was to draw the hatred of the whole world upon a man; yea, the hatred of earth and hell:" for, as the gospel of the kingdom of Christ is opposite and destructive to the kingdom of Satan, so it is cross to the natural inclinations, corrupt humours, and legal bias of men and women in the world. However, every faithful minister, being confident that his cause is good, his crown better, and his captain best of all, may, notwithstanding whatever dart of calumny, or dart of cruelty may be thrown at him, rejoice in his being treated as his glorious master was. Meantime, however weak and sinful the poor mortals are whom he employs, yet let the word and ordinances be entertained with due reverence and holy fear; because they are dispensed by us, in his name, who hath all power in heaven and earth.

2. Hence see on whom it is that the virtue and efficacy of the gospel, and gospel ordinances, does depend; not upon the minister, not upon the ordinance itself, but upon HIM who hath all power in heaven and earth. What can make a sermon and sacrament powerful and efficacious? Nothing but this powerful presence, according to his word here, "Lo, I am with you." Heaven would be but darkness if the Lamb were not the light of the place: and surely all ordinances on earth, without Christ, would be sapless, feeble, empty, insignificant, and ineffectual things. The scripture without Christ is but a dead letter, a letter of death; sermons without Christ are dead words and empty sounds; the sacrament here without Christ will be but a dead work, an empty table; yea, God himself without Christ is nothing but fire, and fury, and flames of wrath. Oh! powerless praying, powerless praising, powerless preaching, powerless hearing, powerless communicating, without Christ, who is the substance, the life, the soul, the ALL of his ordinances; yea, *All in all!* O sirs, look for power from him, who is the store-house of all power.

3. Hence see the glorious dignity and everlasting excellency of our Lord Jesus Christ, the second Adam. The first Adam had a natural power given to him, and he lost it; but the second Adam hath all power given to him, and he keeps it for ever, and is inadmissible; it cannot be lost; "The gifts and callings of God are

without repentance ; and surely the gift of all power in heaven and earth, that Christ hath received, is what God will never repent of ; nay, “ He hath sworn, and will not repent, saying, Thou art a Priest for ever : ” and again, “ Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.” O what a wellqualified Saviour is Christ ! having all power given him, and all power to give what is necessary to us, and all power to heal the most desperate diseases : none so qualified as he is for sinners to come to. If any of you were taken with a dangerous distemper, that were like to prove mortal, if there be a physician in all the country better qualified or more able to help than another, you will have recourse to him : well, should not this be a spur to us, and a powerful argument to come unto Christ and employ him ? Never any had such qualifications as he, even all power in heaven and earth, and that for our use and behoof, he having received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, to subdue them to him, that God the Lord might dwell among them : he is the magazine of all power ; the repository of all divine fulness.

4. Hence see how much the salvation of a company of poor sinners hath been upon the heart of God and of Christ from all eternity, and how much it appears in time by the great work he hath wrought for that end, namely, in Christ’s being humbled to the lowest, and then exalted to the highest pitch, and all for accomplishing this business. See the vast difference of times, in the condition of our Lord Jesus ; for thirty years, or thereby, he was greatly humbled, wounded, bruised, lived such a poor life on this earth, that he had no place where to lay his head, nor a penny to pay his tribute, and then died a shameful and accursed death ; but now exalted to the greatest honour, having all power in heaven and earth, and all gifts in his hand, to bestow upon poor needy creatures ; and, the more honour and dignity he is advanced unto, the more advantage do sinners get by him, he being exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins. He is not exalted to heaven to neglect the earth, and leave us hopeless ; nay, but, on the contrary, exalted to heaven that he may send down heaven’s blessings upon earth ; and exalted to all power in heaven, that he may show the more pity on earth : therefore, “ If I go, says he, I will send the Spirit.” The light of the sun is not designed for itself, but for the world : so the mediatorial fulness and power of Christ is not designed for himself, but for his church and people in

all nations of the earth. O wonder at this contrivance, which the infinite wisdom of God spent an eternity upon. The shallow capacity of man, by studying twenty or thirty years, will fall upon great inventions; but, O sirs, what must be the product of the heart of God! what must be the production of his infinitely wise mind from eternity! Behold, here it is, a CHRIST, in whom dwells all his fulness, all his power: his heart was set upon the great work of first giving Christ to us, and then giving all power to him for our behoof. O what encouragement to look for a day of power!

5. Hence see, that since all power is given to Christ, then all power and pre-eminence should be given to him; "Thus should it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour:" thus should it be done to the God-man whom the Father delighteth to honour! "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." It pleased the glorious Trinity that in him, as Mediator, all power in heaven and earth should reside. God's great design, all along, hath been to glorify and exalt Christ: all his promises were for exalting Christ; to him they were all made before the world began, Titus i. 2; and in him they were all Yea and Amen. All his dispensations and remarkable providences were for exalting Christ: Isaac was not killed, why? because Christ was to come of him. All his commands are for exalting Christ; they are all summed up in, and reduced to a looking to Christ and a believing in him: "This is his commandment, that ye believe in the name of his Son." All his ordinances are for exalting Christ: what is the great subject of preaching? It is Christ: "We preach Christ crucified." What is the matter of the sacrament? It is a crucified Christ. All the services he requires of his church and people are esteemed only according as they have this engraven and written upon them, JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH, the Lord is there. All the work of the church triumphant is to exalt Christ, the great task of heaven is to sing everlasting Hallelujahs to him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever. And, in a word, all God's dispensations towards Christ are still to set him on high, and put honour upon him. The Father puts Christ amongst all relations, offices, and conditions, and then brings him out with the most ample testimonial that ever was. He classes him amongst the number of lords, and then brings him out with this testimonial, LORD OF LORDS: he puts him amongst kings, and then brings him forth KING OF KINGS: He names him amongst princes, and then calls him,

“The Prince of the kings of the earth;” He ranks him amongst prophets and priests, and then declares him to be the great prophet, the great High-priest: he places him amongst lights and luminaries such as the sun and the stars, and then he proclaims him to be the Light of the world, the sun of righteousness, the bright and morning Star: He names him amongst servants, and then calls him his faithful Servant, his righteous Servant: He puts him amongst the dead, and then he is the First-born from the dead, who runs away with the keys of hell and death, and goes forth with this name, “The resurrection and the life.” But, what needs more to be said of the honour that God puts upon him than this, “All power in heaven and earth is given to him?” and should not we give all honour and pre-eminence to him? We should honour him in the divinity of his person, as the Son of God: in the divinity of his office, as he is the Sent of God: in the divinity of his suffering, for his blood is the blood of God, and his sufferings of infinite value; in the divinity of his resurrection, being declared to be the Son of God with power, by his resurrection from the dead; he laid down his life of himself, and took it up again, which none but a God could do; and in the divinity of his power and strength, as being able to save to the uttermost, and having *all power in heaven and in earth*. And in all this we may read the necessity and excellency of faith, by which alone we can put honour upon him whom the Father honours; being strong in the faith, we ought to give glory to God, and that by putting honour upon Christ; for, “He that honours not the Son, honours not the Father.” To pretend to honour God out of Christ, is to dishonour him, and destroy ourselves; but to put honour upon Christ, is to put honour upon God in him; for, God is in him, and all the fulness of God is in him, and all the power of God is in him: “All power in heaven and earth is given unto me.”

6. Hence see, that the followers of Christ have no reason to be ashamed of a crucified Christ, that is now such a glorified Christ, having all power in heaven and in earth. How ought we to glory in his cross, when we see him advanced to the crown? “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world,” Gal. vi. 14. As Christ is well qualified to be the Judge of the world, having all power in heaven and earth; so they that are ashamed of him now, may expect he will be ashamed of them when he comes in the

clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Oh! who would be ashamed of the very reproach of Christ, or the worst thing about him! "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth on you." Who would be ashamed of his truths, though called to bear witness thereunto, over the belly of cruel calumny and bitter opposition from earth and hell? Who would be ashamed of his cause and interest, though civil and ecclesiastical power were combined against him; though court, and council, and judicatories, were against him; though princes and parliaments were against him and his royal prerogative and headship over his church, as the only King in Zion? This was the cause that our worthy Forefathers and covenanted Reformers were not ashamed to own, even upon bloody scaffolds, and to seal it with their blood: Woe is us that any of their degenerate race are ashamed of that which was their glory! ashamed, I mean, of the glorious Reformation, as it was carried on by Solemn National Covenants from time to time. I shall not enlarge upon this; I know some are reproached for singularity on the one hand, when they make honourable mention of our Covenants; and for neutrality on the other, when they do it not; and so, if we should study to please men, we would neither speak nor hold our peace, which is impossible. But, as it is our duty to glorify Christ, and speak honourably of his cause: so I shall only say, on this subject, that if once he that is the glorious Head of the church, and King of Zion, who hath all power in heaven and earth, would exert and put forth that power that took place in our reforming and covenanting days, that glorious work would be again revived to advantage, and those that oppose and impugn it would be ashamed. I speak not in resentment of any trivial calumny: it is below my present work; neither do I go aside from my purpose in hand, nor make an extraneous digression. Why should our national solemn Covenants with God be reviled under this notion among others as if there could not be such a thing as a national church on earth, and as if the seat of our Lord's kingdom were in heaven only, and not upon the earth? But though his kingdom be not of this world, or an earthly kingdom, yet it is a kingdom in earth as well as in heaven, "Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies." All power is given to him, not only in heaven, but in earth.

7. Hence see the excellency and acceptableness of that everlasting righteousness of Christ, which he hath brought in for our

justification before God ; for, why is all power given to him, but because all righteousness was fulfilled by him ? Therefore when he sent the Spirit, he says, " He shall convince the world of righteousness : " why ? " Because I ascend to my Father," John xvi. 10. He had not been admitted to this supreme dignity, nor ascended to the throne of all power, if he had not fulfilled all righteousness, and finished his work, to the Father's infinite satisfaction. But now, when all power in heaven and earth is given to him, we may be sure that the Lord is well-pleased for his righteousness sake that it is acceptable to God : and we may with the utmost safety, and with the full assurance of faith, build our acceptance with God upon it. There are two considerations, by which our faith may be confirmed in this matter, namely, That the power given to Christ was partly in point of qualification, to fit him for his work on earth, when he was fulfilling it ; partly in point of remuneration, to reward him for it in heaven, when it was perfected. In point of qualification, all power was given him to work out that righteousness ; he was upheld therein by the power of omnipotency ; " Behold my servant, whom I uphold." Hence, wonder not that God exacted so much of Christ, as both a perfect obedience to his law, and a condign satisfaction to his justice ; why ? he knew he was well furnished and able for paying the debt that he had undertaken as our Surety to pay ; he exacted of him the debt of active obedience, that he owed to the precept of the law ; and all the debt of passive obedience, that we owed to the threatening of the law ; all the debt was required of him, because all power was given to him. And now, in point of remuneration and reward for his work, all power is given to him both in heaven and in earth ; O then, what can a God do more to make the excellency and sufficiency of Christ's righteousness to appear ? Is there any more ground left to doubt of its being satisfactory and acceptable to him ? Yea, may not the divine glory of it fill us with sweet amazement ! Oh ! what poor, low, perishing things do we spend our contemplations upon ! Were we to have no advantage by these things, yet the excellency thereof deserves the flower of our enquiry, the vigour of our spirits, and the substance of our time ; but when our life, peace, joy, and happy eternity, and all, lie herein, shall not the thoughts thereof always dwell in our hearts ? And shall we not build upon this sure foundation that God hath laid in Zion ? Also, let the world see here, our Lord Jesus is the true Messiah, and no

imposter. Would God set a deceiver at his right hand of power?

8. Hence see the nature of Christ's kingdom, together with the nature of unbelief that opposes it, and the nature of faith that advances it.

As to the nature of Christ's kingdom, you see, as the apostle says, 1 Cor. iv. 20. "It is not in word, but in power:" hence the efficacy of a preached gospel lies not in the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power; this is what overcomes enemies. A member of the council of Nice encountered with a great philosopher, and it was feared, because he was but a poor simple kind of a man, lest the cause should suffer through his weakness; but he, being full of the Spirit of Christ, opposed so much power to what the philosopher said, that he professed plainly, "While arguments," says he, "were opposed against arguments, syllogism against syllogism, and reason against reason, I was hard enough for them all; but here comes a man that speaks in the power of the Spirit of Christ, and I am not able to resist him." "The kingdom of Christ is not in word, but in power."

As to the nature of unbelief, that opposes this kingdom of Christ, we see also from this doctrine what an evil thing it is, either in sinners or saints, in regard, it will not trust him whom God hath entrusted with all power in heaven and earth; it will not trust God's Trustee; it will not confide in the Father's confident.

O sirs, "Take heed, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief," when you are making a solemn profession of faith in Christ; unbelief casts the most solemn affront and indignity upon the Father and the Son; and in effect, charges God with folly in putting this trust in his hand; or rather, it charges the God of truth with a lie, and says in effect, that Christ hath not received it, or that he is unfaithful to his trust; that either he hath not received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, or that he embezzles them, and keeps them to himself. Can there be a greater affront or indignity cast upon a man of any candour or credit? Yet this is the treatment that the sin of unbelief gives unto Christ. It says in plain terms, though secretly, Either he hath not that saving power he is said to have, or he hath not prudence to manage it, or pity to exert it in their behalf.

On the other hand, as to the nature of faith, this doctrine shows us, that as it is a fruit of this power, so it lies in our particular improvement thereof, by trusting him whom God hath intrusted, and

crediting him whom God exalts with all power for our help and salvation, according to his word, "I have laid help upon One that is mighty:" and there lies my help also, says faith; it is safe trusting to God's Trustee, it is safe leaving the care of our salvation where God leaves it, and putting all our confidence in him to whom all power is given. Faith is a powerless sinner's looking to a powerful Saviour, and saying, Though I have neither righteousness nor strength of my own, yet "Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." There are two things concerning this faith that I would here notice. 1. That it is the exceeding greatness of divine power, that is the cause of it; true faith is of God's operation. 2. Christ, in the word, is the ground and object of it; faith is no enthusiastical notion of a powerful Christ, but it is a receiving of his testimony, or himself, in the testimony that he gives of himself in the word: as when he says here, "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth."

Some in our day, to avoid the necessary doctrine of particular persuasion of salvation, through Christ, in the nature of faith, are like to turn the notion of faith into mere enthusiasm, as if it were a receiving of Christ, but not in a word of promise; whereas there is no receiving of Christ, or closing with the person of Christ, but as he is offered, or exhibited to us in a word of grace. To receive and rest upon Christ for salvation, is not faith, if you take away the other part or branch of definition, namely, as he is offered to us in the gospel: Take away the gospel offer, or gospel-promise, and to receive and rest upon Christ without that, is mere fancy, mere delusion, mere enthusiasm: You may see your picture or image in a glass or mirror; but take away the glass, and you see no more of it: the gospel is the glass wherein we behold the glory of the Lord, and see Christ the image of the invisible God; but take away the gospel or the promise, and you will see no more, except it be an image of your own brain. If you say, Are we not to take Christ, and then we have all the premises in him? Very true, but how will you take Christ, if not as he lays himself out in the word? Will you ascend to heaven, to take him there? Though you could, it would not be faith, but vision: Or, will you descend to the deep, to seek him in the grave? that is a fancy; he is not there, he is risen; But, what says the Holy Ghost? "The word is near, even the word of faith which we preach," Rom. x. 8; there you may see him; there you may take hold of him. And to take him in his word, is to take him

at his word ; to receive his testimony by believing and being persuaded of it, and giving a cordial assent unto it, and so trusting in him that thus speaks in his word to you, and continuing to hope in his word.

But what is the glass, the word, the promise, wherein I may see and eye, and receive Christ ? Why, my text is as clear a glass as any : there is not only a promise in the context, "Lo, I am with you ;" not only with you ministers, but with you for the sake of my people, that I may exert my power on them by you as my instruments : but there is more than a promise in the text, "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth." If any thing can be better than a promise of God to build faith upon, here it is ; for it is not a promise made to Christ, but all the promises fulfilled in him, that he may fulfil them on whom he will. God promised to Christ, that if once he had given himself a sacrifice for sin, then he would give him all power to save whom he pleased ; and now the sacrifice is offered, and God's promise is performed ; "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth." Well, but what am I concerned ? say you ; and how does it yield a ground of faith to me, that God's promise to Christ is performed ? Why, his promise to Christ includes all the promises ; they are reductively all in this one, and the accomplishment of this is the radical accomplishment of all. Now, since there is a promise left for sinners to build their faith and hope upon, Heb. iv. 1, and a word of reconciliation for you to confide in, 2 Cor. v. 19 ; here is the surest ground for faith imaginable, that whatever promise of God you take hold upon, it is fulfilled already in Christ, by his having all power given him to fulfil it in you. And here you see, that all the promises are not only sealed by his precious blood, according to that word, that they are Yea and Amen in him ; but they are like so many sparkling jewels set upon his golden crown, according to this word, "All power in heaven and earth is given unto me." He hath not only fulfilled the condition of them, by his obedience unto death : but received the accomplishment of them, by his receiving all power to make them out to whom he will, and when a man, by the power of his grace, takes hold of a promise he may believe it to be as sure as the blood of Christ upon the cross, and the power of Christ upon the throne can make it. Now, all the promises that we are called to build our faith upon, are included in, and depend upon this promise that is already performed to Christ ; so that here our faith may have a footing, not only upon a promise

made, but a promise fulfilled in Christ; not only a promise sealed by his precious blood, as a Priest upon the cross, but a promise put in his powerful hand, as a Priest upon a throne: a promise that hath both the sign of the cross and the sign of the crown engraven upon it; that, looking to the cross, we may see and believe that the condition of it is fulfilled, and the price of it is paid; and, looking to the crown, we may see and believe that the effectual application and powerful accomplishment thereof is secured.

9. Hence see, if all power is delegated to, and resides in the person of Christ: here is matter of terror to the enemies, and comfort to the friends and followers of our Lord Jesus Christ. And,

(1.) On the one hand, what matter of TERROR to his enemies, and all these that oppose him! The power of Christ hath a black side full of amazement to all his enemies; he is the chief cornerstone to some, but to others a rock of offence.

QUEST. Who are the enemies of Christ, to whom the doctrine may be terrible?

Alas! how terrible may it be to all ignorant persons, that live content without the saving knowledge of God in Christ! For he that hath all power in heaven and in earth, is to be revealed from heaven, in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them that know not God, 2 Thes. i. 8. How terrible may it be to all profane persons, that say, in effect, they will not have this man, this God-man to reign over them; but let us break his bands asunder, and cast his cords from us! For he will break them in pieces as with a rod of iron, and dash them like a potter's vessel, Psal. ii. 9. How terrible may it be to all hypocrites, that profess to know God, and have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof! The Lamb that is in the midst of the throne, is said to have seven eyes and seven horns; He hath omniscient eyes to find out all the corners of hypocritical hearts; yea, and he hath omnipotent horns to push and destroy them. How terrible may it be to all proud boasters of their own power and strength, that boast of the power of nature; the power of free-will, and think to spin somewhat out of their own bowels to be a robe of righteousness to themselves! But, as all power is given to the Lord Jesus Christ, so he will not give his glory to another. How terrible may it be to all the despisers of Christ, that with Herod, and his men of war, set him at naught and pour contempt upon all his ordinances and institutions, by slighting them and casting them behind their backs? Whom are you des-

pising? even him that can grind you to powder; for, "All power in heaven and earth is given to him;" therefore, "behold, ye despisers, wonder and perish." Whom do ye mock and revile? Hath he not power that will reach you? What will you do when he comes in the clouds, with power and great glory? In a word, How terrible may it be to all unbelievers who sit under the gospel, and yet sit his call therein, and slight his invitations? How will he send forth his armies and destroy these murderers? The Son of God is said to sit upon a red horse, and that there was given to him a great sword, Rev. vi. 14. He rides on a terrible red horse, with the sword of power in his hand, to take vengeance on his enemies; for, "If he whet his glittering sword, and his right hand take hold of judgment, he will render vengeance to his enemies, and a recompence to them that hate him," Deut. xxxii. 41. Who but these that are clean distracted would remain in a state of enmity and rebellion against him that hath all power in heaven and earth? It was a good counsel that Gamaliel gave to his followers, "Take heed that ye be not fighters against God. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

(2.) On the other hand, what matter of COMFORT does this doctrine afford to the friends and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, seeing he hath all power in heaven and earth given unto him? For, as they shall be kept by his power, through faith to salvation, so their enemies may fight with fury against them, but they shall never be able to prevail; for their Lord and Captain is said, Rev. vi. 2, to ride upon a white horse, with a bow in his hand, and a crown upon his head; and to go forth conquering and to conquer. We read of a cup of consolation, Jer. xvi. 7; and this doctrine holds it to the mouth of all the friends and followers of Christ. What comfort is here to the broken-hearted sinner, that is under the pangs of the new-birth, that the power of the Spirit rests upon Christ for healing of such? Luke iv. 18, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, and to heal the broken-hearted." Yea, what comfort is here to these that complain they are hard-hearted? For he hath all power to take away the heart of stone, and to give the heart of flesh. But here I especially speak of these that are in a state of friendship with this glorious and powerful Lord: surely such may encourage themselves in the Lord their God. Here is encouragement against the want and weakness of grace, that he having all power, is able to make all grace

abound, 2 Cor. ix. 8; and to make the feeble as David, and David as the angel of the Lord, Zech. xii. 8. Here is encouragement against apostacy and fear of falling away totally, in that he, who hath all power, hath said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," and is able to make us stand, Heb. xiii. 5. Here is encouragement against unbelief, and doubting of the promise of God; for, having all power, we may be fully persuaded that he that hath promised is able to perform, Rom. iv. 21. To doubt of his promise, is to doubt of his power; to discredit his promise, is to deny that he hath all power in heaven and earth. Here is encouragement against enemies without and within; the devil, the world, and the flesh: though thou art weak, and hast no power against them, yet he having all power, you may receive the comfort that Hezekiah gives to his subjects, 2 Chron. xxxii. 7, 8, "Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him; for there be more with us than with him. With him is an arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God, to help us, and to fight our battles." So here, 1 John iv. 4, "Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world." Wicked men and devils, their will is larger than their power: their will is to do many things that they cannot do; but it is not so with Christ, his power is as large as his will, if not vastly larger in certain respects; for, though he will not do all that he can, yet he can do all that he will; for, "All power in heaven and earth is given unto him." You see, believer, the might of your enemies; but see also that your Redeemer is the mighty God, as well as the everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace; and because he is the God of peace, he will bruise Satan under your feet, and destroy your enemies that disturb your peace. Here is encouragement against the danger and difficulties, the crosses and losses, reproaches and trials you may meet with in following the Lord Jesus; he, having all power, can easily make up what you seem to lose in his service; hence Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. It is said, "He had respect unto the recompence of reward." Therefore, whatever loss you sustain in the Lord's service, we may say to you, as the man of God said to Amaziah, 2 Chron. xxv. 9, "The Lord is able to give thee much more than this." Is thy cleaving to his way seemingly prejudicial to thy credit, wealth, or gain? Yet fear

not ; for he whose name you profess hath all power in heaven and in earth. Here is encouragement against the seeming hardness and difficulty of the duty or work the Lord may call you to ; for he having all power, is there any thing too hard for him, who, at the same time promises, that his grace shall be sufficient for thee, and his strength perfected in thy weakness, and to work in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure ? Therefore, says Paul, " I am able to do all things through Christ strengthening me." How can I deny myself, take up my cross, and follow the Lord ? Why, though we are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything of ourselves, yet our sufficiency is of God. Here is encouragement to pray without ceasing ; if you prayed to one that had no power to give what you ask, you might have little courage, comfort, or confidence in prayer : but he, having all power, is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, according to the power that works in us, Ephes. iii. 20. The conclusion of what we call, *The Lord's Prayer*, teaches us to pray in the faith of his power : for, after we have prayed for these things contained there, the conclusion is, " For thine is the kingdom and the power ;" hereupon we ground our assurance to be heard, that he who hath the kingdom, hath also all power in heaven and earth. Here is encouragement against all the confusions and commotions in the church of Christ upon earth, when the floods lift up their waves ; and when floods of division and defection, floods of profanity and impiety, and floods of error and heresy are like to overflow the church of Christ ; yet he who hath all power in heaven and earth, as Head of his church, and King of Zion, hath the command of the floods, and is mightier than the noise of many waters ; therefore, " Upon all the glory there shall be a defence ; the gates of hell shall not prevail." It is not in the power of all the devils in hell, and wicked men on earth, to thrust our Lord out of the earth ; for, he hath all power in heaven and earth ; and when he exerts his power, a covenant-reformation will revive, in spite of earth and hell ? " When the Lord shall build up Zion, he will appear in his glory." Here is encouragement against powerful lusts, powerful corruptions, powerful temptations, that you may be harassed with ; he that hath all power hath said, " I will subdue your iniquities ;" and that " Sin shall not have dominion." He it is who once suffered, being tempted that he might be able to succour them that are tempted, Heb. ii. 18 ; where you see, his ability, as Mediator, to succour the tempted, is founded

on his once suffering, being tempted ; which bespeaks power, joined with pity and sympathy. Here is the encouragement against the most desperate case : when soul-matters are at the lowest pass with you, and when you are brought to the utmost distress, to the utmost confusion, to the utmost perplexity, and, as it were, to the belly of hell, with Jonah ; yet here is a present relief, All power in heaven and in earth is given unto him ; whereby he is able to save to the uttermost ; his power reaches from the lowest hell to the highest heaven. Here is encouragement against the fears of death ; he that hath all power hath said, " O death, I will be thy plague ; O grave, I will be thy destruction : for I am he that lives, and was dead ; and, behold, I live for evermore ; I have the keys of hell and death." When death begins to stare you in the face, believer, you may say, " O death, where is thy sting ?" Where is thy power to hurt or harm me ? All power is taken from you, and all power is given to Christ, the power of the keys is in his hand ; and though death may tumble my body into the grave, and crumble my flesh and bones into dust, yet you have no power over a pile of my dust, nor shall one pickle of it be detained in the earth any longer than he pleases : for he that hath all power in earth, as well as in heaven, will command the earth and the sea to give up their dead, Rev. xx. 13. He that is declared to be the Son of God with power, by his own resurrection from the dead, will raise the dead with the same power by which he made the world out of nothing, and raised himself out of the grave : " For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God : and the dead in Christ shall rise first," 1 Thes. iv. 16. Therefore, O death, may the believer say, Let Sadducees and atheists doubt and debate the resurrection of the body as they will : " Not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God," nor believing that all power in heaven and earth is given unto Christ ; yet, as for me, " I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth ; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another, though my reins be consumed within me," Job xix. 25, 26, 27. Finally, here is encouragement, O believer, against the fears of safe landing in heaven ; when your body is to be laid in the dust for a while, fear not but your soul shall be led safely to heaven ; for he hath all power in heaven, as well as in earth ; he hath the keys of heaven and life, as

well as the keys of hell and death ; he hath all the keys of his Father's house, and many a million of chambers are there ; " In my Father's house are many mansions, and I go to prepare a place for you," John xiv. 2. Immediately after Christ had spoken the words of this text to his disciples, saying, " All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth," he ascended up into heaven in their view, as they were all gazing up after him ; and so he took them to witness that he had the keys of heaven in his hand, by which he opened the gate, and sat down with his Father upon his throne : and by the same key of omnipotency will he open the way to the heavenly mansion for you, believer, that where he is, there you may be also. There is no power in heaven to oppose him, and there is no power in heaven but what is given to him ; the King of Glory hath power to set the crown of glory upon your head ; he hath such power in heaven, that it will cost him no more to bring you there, but to say, " Father, I will," and it shall be done : " Father, I will, that these whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me : for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world," John xvii. 14. Take home then to you all the encouragement that this great truth imports. If you live in the faith of this power that is given to the Lord Jesus Christ, you may live in the joy of the Lord as your strength, and enjoy all these encouragements that his power carries in the bosom of it.

10. Hence see, in the last place, the duty of all that hear this gospel. If all power in heaven and earth be given to the Lord Jesus Christ, then surely it is the duty of all that hear me, 1. To try what interest they have in this power, that is delegated to, and resides in the person of Christ. 2. To trust him with their souls and their eternal salvation, as their powerful Saviour and Redeemer, to whom all power in heaven and earth belongs. Let me, therefore, exhort you to both these duties.

[1.] Let me exhort you to try and examine what interest you have in this power, or rather in this crucified Jesus, as he is the *power* of God, as well as the *wisdom* of God ; I mean not here that common interest in him that all the baptized members of the visible church have in Christ, whereby they have a sealed warrant to come to him, and take possession of him and his saving power as their sanctuary ; but I mean that special interest in him, whereby they are actually, as believers in Christ, possessed of that power in their

begun salvation. How shall that be known? Say you. I shall, for gaining of time, only say, There is a twofold mark, by which it will appear whether you have an interest in this power, namely, his laying out his power for you, and your laying out your power for him; for, if you have an interest in his power, then it is betwixt Christ and you, in some respect, as it is betwixt God and Christ as Mediator; God lays up all his power in Christ, and then Christ lays out all his power for God, and for his Father's glory; so they that are specially interested in this powerful Saviour, he exerts his power, and lays it out for them and their happiness; and they exert their power, and lay it out for him and for his honour. Try then by these two things:

(1.) Hath he exerted his power for you, and exercised his power in you? Hath the gospel come to you, not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance? 1 Thess. i. 5. I might here, if time allowed, speak particularly of the convincing power of the Spirit of Christ upon the conscience, giving the soul to see the natural power of death and darkness it is under; his enlightening power upon the mind and understanding, how the God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, shineth into the heart, to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Christ; his reigning power upon the will, by making the soul willing in the day of his power; and thereby his drawing power, and converting power upon the whole soul, in persuading and enabling to embrace this powerful Jesus, as he is offered to it in the gospel. What power did he ever give you to believe in him? You that say you believe in Christ, and yet never got power from Christ to believe in him, you may score out your name from the number of believers; for your faith is a powerless faith, it cannot save you; nay, it hath power to hurt you, but no power to help you. Faith that never had power to keep you from sin, will never have power to keep you from hell; the faith that had never power to lead you to duty, will never have power to land you in glory; the faith that never had power to bring you from self to Christ, will never have power to bring you from earth to heaven; that which makes true faith powerful, is, that it hath a powerful original; the power and acts of true believing are from God, Philip. ii. 13. All the activity of the will, before the conversion, lies in an opposition to the work of grace; till the power of God be put forth, no man is made willing to believe or receive Christ; the power that raises the soul to

faith, is the same power that raised Christ from the dead, Eph. i. 19; yet it is the act of the believer, in the day of power, as well as it is the work of the Spirit; it is an act of the soul put forth contrary to, and above the natural ability of the soul; and yet, in the meantime, this power, in making a man believe, is exerted so wonderfully, by the Spirit of faith, that the man sees nothing but weakness in ability, and utter insufficiency in himself; and, perhaps, hath no sense or feeling of power at all, but, in the sense of weakness, looks greedily and gladly to him that hath all power. It is the powerless sinner rolling itself over upon a powerful Saviour, saying, Surely in me there is no righteousness nor strength; I have no righteousness in me, but the righteousness of guilt, which is the righteous demerit of eternal death; I have no strength in me, but the strength of sin, which is like to pull me down to hell; and yet I am venturing to say, "Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength," Isa. xlv. 24. There I see it, there I seek it, there I settle my guilty soul upon it; and though I have it not in myself, yet I rest myself content that I have it there, and am well pleased that God hath put it in such a good hand. I ask then, Have ye ever thus got power to believe in him that hath all power? Was you ever, by the power of Christ, raised up from the place of dragons, when you was sore broken and covered with the shadow of death? Psalm xlv. 19. Was you ever brought, by this means, from blindness to sight, from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, from bondage to liberty, and from death to life; that is, in short, from a graceless to a gracious state, and from legal fetters to gospel freedom. In a word let me here ask, if ye would know that his power had been exercised in you, Whether or not he that hath all power in heaven and in earth given to him, hath communicate and given to you, at any time, some power both in heaven and in earth?

1. Hath he ever given you any power in heaven, or influence there, by virtue of his own power and intercession at the right hand of God? It is said of Jacob, Hosea xii. 4, that "He had power over the Angel, and prevailed, while he wept and made supplication to him." It was that Angel of the covenant, CHRIST, who hath all power in heaven and in earth. Now, tell me, got you ever any power with the Angel, in wresting with him? Got you ever, as it were, such a grip of him in your arms, as to say to him, Now, Lord, since I have got hold of thee, I will not let thee go, no; "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me?" And perhaps, he indeed

blessed you with such a glad heart, that, with Hannah, your countenance was no more sad, your heart was no more heavy, you could then fly on the wings of love to do him service. What, man! it seems you got some power in heaven, and power with the God of heaven; what other thing could it be than power in heaven, when you got power with him that hath all power in heaven?

2. Have you ever got any power in earth given to you from him that hath all power in heaven and earth given to him? Surely, if you have got any power in heaven, you have also got some power in earth; I mean, power to overcome the world by faith in him that hath all power in heaven and earth, 1 John v. 4. Got you ever power to triumph over the devil, the god of this world, saying, O blessed be God that ever Christ bruised the head of the serpent? Got you ever power to triumph and tread upon your lusts and corruptions in the faith of his power that hath said, "Sin shall not have dominion;" and in the faith of complete victory through him, whose name is "JESUS, because he saves his people from their sins?" And have you not some time a day got power over all things on earth, so as you could tread upon all the glory and grandeur of this world, and trample upon all the crowns and diadems, thrones and sceptres, in the earth, with a holy, humble, generous contempt and disdain, saying, Behold "I count all these but loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ?" And have you not got power to tread self to the ground, and to trample upon your own credit, your own name, your own righteousness, your own strength, while you have apprehended the glory of Christ as the Lord your righteousness and strength; and got power to become nothing, and a thousand times less and worse than nothing in your own sight, while he, that hath all power in heaven and earth, was *all in all* to you? "No man can call Jesus Lord, but by the Spirit of God." Can you say, I got power to call Jesus LORD, and to call myself a devil? I got power to say, "Truth, Lord, I am a dog," and yet to creep below his table for a crumb; yea, the time hath been, when I got power to pursue all my enemies with sword in hand; yea, to drown them in the Red sea of the blood of Jesus, and to overcome by the blood of the Lamb; I was more than a conqueror through him that loved me. Why, here is power in earth; what know you of that? Can you say, Whatever I be at present, yet, I think, you are telling me what I have known; I mind the time, I mind the place, I mind the occasion, when I got such power as you speak of?

Why, then, it seems he hath been exerting his power towards you, and exercising it in you; he that hath all power in heaven and in earth, hath given you some share of his power in heaven, and of his power in earth both; this evidenceth you have an interest in his power. But then, as they that are interested in his power are persons in whom he exerts his power, and lays it out for them and their happiness. So likewise,

(2.) They exert their power, and lay it out for him, and for his honour; if they have any power on earth, they desire and endeavour, through grace, to lay out their power for his Father's glory and honour. What power have you? none, indeed, but what he gives you, either in a way of common or special bounty. There is a natural power of eating and drinking; if you have interest in Christ's power, you will not dare to squander away that power, by eating to gluttony, or drinking to drunkenness; but, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God in Christ:" this will be your habitual desire, even in sitting down to your meals, to set the Lord before you, and to eat and drink that you may be fitted for the work wherein he calls you to serve him. There is an acquired power that you have less or more of; the Lord hath bestowed on you some gifts, some parts, some talents, of which he says, "Occupy till I come." Some have a secular power and authority in the state, as rulers, magistrates, judges, justices; some a spiritual power in the church, as ministers, elders, and other officers in the house of God; some have, though not a magistratical, yet a magisterial power, as masters of schools, over children; masters of houses and lands, over tenants and cottars; masters of families, over their children and servants: some have a providential power and superiority over their neighbours, by God's putting them in a more eminent station in respect of outward wealth and honour. Whatever power you have, if you be interested in Christ's power, or a true subject of his who hath all power in heaven and earth, you will endeavour to employ that power of yours for his honour and glory, and to advance his kingdom and interest. I know none but have some power or other, if they had a heart to employ it for the Lord. If you have no power or authority over your friends and neighbours, because of your inferior station; yet, have you no power of influences? May be you have had power to harm them by your ill words, your ill ways, your ill example; and, Oh! if the channel of your power and influence were turned to another airth,

you might have power to do good to others, instead of doing them ill; and power to commend Christ to them by your good advice and good example. O sirs, what should you do with that little power of yours, but improve it for advancing the great power of our Lord Jesus, for glorifying him, raising his honour and dignity, and studying to bring in some revenue to his crown? Your power must be employed either for or against him; if against him, then woe to you that will fight against him that hath all power in heaven and earth! But if you have any interest in his power, you will employ your power for him, saying, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. I know Abraham, says God, that he will command his children to fear me." If a true subject of Christ could command a thousand to come to Christ, and submit to his government, he would do it. No doubt the best believer here will be conscious to himself of a multitude of failures in this respect; yet, sure I am, according to the measure of power he receives from Christ, his heart will be engaged to employ all the power he hath for his honour.

[2.] Let me exhort you to come to this great and glorious Lord, who hath all power in heaven and in earth, and to trust him with your souls and your eternal salvation. You that never trusted him before, it is time to begin now; "Now is the accepted time:" and you that have truly done it formerly, it is a fit time for renewed acts of faith upon him, before you go to a communion-table. If you would have power to communicate worthily, then come to, and trust in him that hath all power in heaven and earth given to him, and given to him for the behoof of weak, powerless, needy, guilty sinners. Here is a mighty Saviour, a complete Redeemer: there is none like him in heaven or earth; for he hath all power of authority, and power of ability, both in heaven and earth, for the salvation of sinners: "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;" and that to him should all power be given; and, therefore, there can be nothing more pleasing to God, than that we give all trust and obedience to him. What can be more acceptable to God, than that we give all honour, all reverence, all love, all trust, all confidence, all submission to him, to whom he gives all power in heaven and earth? Yea, "This is his commandment, that we believe in him:" and he himself cries from heaven to the earth, saying "Look unto me, all the ends of the earth, and be saved; for I am God, and there is none else;" insomuch that it is treason, re-

bellion, and disloyalty, to disobey him that hath all power and authority in heaven and in earth. By virtue of his supreme power and authority, he hath given us ground to hope that our ministerial administrations in his name shall not be altogether in vain, and without fruit or success. We might be hopeless, considering the holiness of the God of heaven, and the sinfulness of men on earth, if it were not that he who hath all power both in heaven and earth is here saying, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations; and, lo, I am with you to the end of the world;" giving us to know, that by this gospel ministry of his appointment, he will gather in his people from the four winds. Come then, let us sow in hope, in hope of a seed-time and harvest, in hope of a seed to serve our glorious Lord; for his Father's promise to him shall be accomplished, namely, That he shall see his seed to his satisfaction; and who knows but it may be a seed-time in Dunfermline, or a seed to be created at this occasion? Let me then, in his glorious name, that hath all power in heaven and earth, who can put a creating power in his own ordinances, intreat and invite all the sinners within these walls to come to this powerful Saviour, and to believe in him, as such, for your own salvation; and this I do, by virtue of the commission that here he gives, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations." And what lesson means he shall we teach? Why, the sum of all is in his commission, and there is nothing more necessary for us to teach, or you to believe, than this, That "all power is given to him in heaven and in earth." In this word the powerful Saviour offers himself to you, man, to you woman; to you that are before me, and you that are behind me, and round about me: and if all the nations of the earth were within hearing of me, I would have allowance to teach them the same, and to call them to come to this powerful Jesus, by believing that he hath all power in heaven and earth, whereby he is able to save them.

To come to Christ is to believe in him, and to receive his testimony; and the testimony he here gives of himself in this word is, That he, as Mediator, hath "all power in heaven and earth:" and his call and command to each of you in particular is, that you believe in his name, by believing that he hath all power to save you in particular. Why, may you say, I do not doubt of his power, but I doubt of his commission to save me; for his power is most extensive, but I find his commission from the Father is limited to a certain number, John xvii. 2, "Thou hast given him power over all

flesh, that he may give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him ;” and it may be I was not given to him among the elect ; and therefore, though I believe his ability, yet I doubt of his commission to save me in particular. In order to remove this block out of your way, over which there is no occasion for you to stumble ; consider, that in the volume of the book, wherein Christ’s commission is written and recorded, there are two remarkable golden leaves, a folded leaf and an open leaf ; and of both these you read in that one text, John vi. 39, “ All that the Father hath given me shall come unto me :” there is a folded leaf ; but then it follows, “ Him that cometh, I will in no wise cast out :” there is the open leaf ; and in this open leaf it is written, “ Whosoever will, let him come,” Rev. xxii. 17.

Now, if the question be, Who are they that are written within the folded leaf,

I must say, It is presumption for you to inquire into that ; what God hath folded, no man, no angel, no devil, no creature can unfold, till God himself do it. If an angel in heaven should come to you, before you come to Christ, and say, You are an elect ; you ought not to believe him ; for it is a lie to tell you what he does not know. If the devil from hell should come and tell you that you are no elect, you ought as little to credit him, but tell him he is a liar for telling you what he does not know ; for that is the folded leaf that no creature can unfold. It is like the book you read of, Rev. v. 1—5 : and it is not lawful for you to pry within the folded leaf. It is not the first object of your faith to believe your election ; “ Secret things belong unto God, but to us the things that are revealed :” the things that are written within the open leaf ; and, till you read and subscribe what is written there, it is not possible for you to know if your name be written within the folded leaf, nor are you concerned to know. If it were possible for you to know your election before you come to Christ, it would do you no service, but real hurt : it would make you secure in your natural state ; and therefore it is, in infinite wisdom and mercy both, that it is hid from your eyes. Some are hardened with the very fancy of it, saying, If I be elected, I will win to heaven ; and so neglect God’s call but now the open leaf of Christ’s commission is before your eyes.

But, is my name there ? say you ; Yes ; if you be a sinner, your name is there, 1 Tim. i. 15, “ Jesus Christ came to save sinners : he hath a commission to save sinners : and all sinners in

every corner of the earth are called to look and read here, and then salvation will follow; "Look to me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for as I am God, and there is none else," Isa. xlv. 22; so, "All power in heaven and earth is given unto me," as Mediator. And therefore, in this open leaf of Christ's vast commission, write you down your name as a poor sinner, beside his name as a powerful Saviour, and that by believing; set down your name, I say, by believing, not what he hath folded, but what he hath unfolded to you, namely, that "He hath all power in heaven and in earth;" and then you are save and secure; you are won-gear if you believe what he hath revealed; your salvation lies in believing of this, that "He hath all power in heaven and earth given to him." It is our believing of this, that makes us preach to you with any hope of success; and it is your believing this, with application, that will bring in life to your souls. The matter comes to this, therefore, Do you believe that he, as Mediator, hath all power to save you? Why, may you say, since I dare not pry within the folded leaf, but only am required to believe what is revealed to me in the open leaf of Christ's commission, that extends to all the ends of the earth; and if this be all that I am to believe, that "He hath all power in heaven and earth," to save whom he will; really, Sir, say you, I believe that he is able to save all the world. Nay, but man, woman, the Lord is now dealing with you in particular; for it is not his absolute power, as God, that is the object of saving faith; but his relative economical power, as Mediator; therefore I ask again, Do you believe that he, as Mediator, hath power to save you in particular?

OBJECT. Why, say you, I think that is not my difficulty: I believe he hath a **POWER**, but I doubt if he hath a **WILL** to save me?

ANSW. Here is a grand objection of unbelief which I must endeavour to remove; and, in order thereto, I must tell you, that where faith is lively acted upon the power of Christ, the soul will have little doubt of his will; if you savingly believe his power to save you, you will certainly credit his will to save you; if you doubt of his will to save you, it is because you question his power to save you. We read, Numbers xi. 18, 19, 20. God promised Israel flesh in the wilderness for a whole month; What says Moses, ver. 21, "The people among whom I am are six hundred thousand footmen; and thou hast said, I will give them flesh

that they may eat a whole month." Where we may gather that Moses doubts if God had power to perform this. He doubted whether God had not out-promised his own power; and therefore the Lord says to him, verse 23, "Is the Lord's hand waxed short?" See also Psalm lxxviii. 19, 20. If it be not a doubting of God's power, why do we believe most when there is least danger, and believe least when there is most danger, that God is willing to help? Why, we believe his will least when the danger is greatest, because then greater power is required; so that the great obstacle is at the power of God, though his will is pretended. When Abraham overcame this difficulty, that God was able, nothing stood in his way; "He considered not his own dead body, nor the deadness of Sarah's womb, but was fully persuaded that he that had promised was able to perform," Rom. iv. 20. It is not said that he was fully persuaded that God was willing to perform what he had promised; but, so soon as he believed the power of a promising God, his faith had no more stop. And, if we search our hearts to the bottom, we will find our doubting reflects most upon the power of Christ: we shorten his hand, though we commonly say we are uncertain of his will. Though we cannot directly affirm that God will do a thing, because he hath power to do it; yet here is a mighty argument to help faith, when we are assured that he can: when power is at an end, faith is at an end; but, seeing the power of Christ is never at an end, our faith needs never be at an end, nor at a loss. Yea, in the matter of salvation, God hath expressed himself in scripture as much; nay, more for his willingness than for his power: Our God says in his word that he hath all power; but we have not only his word, but his oath concerning his willingness, Ezek. xxxiii. 11, "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked." Yea, I may say, God hath manifested his will to help and save people, when his power hath not concurred: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how oft would I have gathered thee!" But he never manifested his power where his will did not concur.

The question, therefore, is still this, Do you believe that he hath power to save you? Or, Are you willing to believe that, and to be saved accordingly? Christ's willingness prevents our unwillingness; none are truly willing till a day of his power, which is the day of his grace and good-will. And therefore, in the very na-

ture of the thing itself, if you be willing to be saved by his power from sin and wrath, and to believe that he hath power to save you, and to take hold of it for that end, his good-will hath prevented you. Say not, then, you doubt of his will, but not of his power; but, do you believe he hath all power to save you? O sirs, it is a great faith, and the fruit of his great power, if you can believe that he hath all power in heaven and earth given him for your eternal salvation, and this is the faith I call you to in his name. O that power would come from him, who hath power to give the Spirit of power, to cause you to lay hold of this power of his!

Behold, O sinner, he that hath power to damn you for ever, as you justly deserve, is offering his power to save you for ever; and if you can believe his Mediatorial power to save you, your salvation is begun; "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Here is the arm of the Lord revealed to you even Christ, and all power in heaven and earth in him; but, is he so revealed to you, that you believe this report of him; yea, this report and testimony that he gives of himself, "All power is given unto me?" A cordial assent to this divine testimony with particular application to yourself, is a true saving faith; such as no devil in hell, nor hypocrite on earth ever had; this is the very soul of "receiving and resting on Christ for salvation, as offered to us in the gospel." The gospel offer and revelation is the ground of faith; and Christ is received and rested on no other ways but by believing his testimony, and taking and trusting him at his word.

But, oh! what hinders your coming to this powerful Saviour by this faith of his power? What power on earth can withstand his power, who hath all power in heaven and earth given unto him? Tell me, is it a power of darkness and spiritual blindness that you are under? Behold, here is a powerful Prophet, that is able to open your blind eyes with the eye-salve of the Spirit's efficacious teaching and illumination; and this he is concerned to do by virtue of his prophetic office. Let me, therefore, ask you, in the words of this glorious Prophet, who is the light of the world, his words to the two blind men that came crying to him, saying, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on us," Matth. ix. 28. Christ says to them, "Believe ye that I am able to do this? Yea, Lord, say they: then Jesus, touching their eyes, said, According to your faith so be it unto you: and their eyes were opened." Well, sinner, though this were the very hour and power of darkness with you; yet, do you

believe that he hath power to give you light and sight? do you believe that he is able to do this? do you believe that all power in heaven and earth is given to him? When Christ is saying to you, Do you believe that I am able? Can you answer, Yea, Lord? Then I hope he is touching your eyes; and according to your faith so be it unto you.

Is there a power of guilt that you are under? Is the guilt of great sins, and the fear of God's great wrath lying like a heavy mountain upon your conscience? Behold, here is a powerful Priest that was able, on earth to forgive sins, and now he is exalted to heaven. Do you believe that he is able to forgive your sins by virtue of his priestly office? If you have the faith of his power; yea, but a grain of it, like a grain of mustard seed, you may say to this great mountain of guilt, "Be thou removed," and be thou cast into the sea of the Lamb's blood; "Who art thou, O great mountain before Zerubabel? Thou shalt become a plain." Have you the particular faith of his priestly power? Do you believe that he is able to forgive thy sin, man; thy sin, woman? Then, "Son, daughter, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee." What mountain can stand before him that hath all power in heaven and earth? The particular faith of his priestly office is true justifying faith; for it lays the stress of remission of sin upon the power of his blood, the power of his righteousness, and so gives it the glory and honour of its divinity, as it is the blood of God, and the righteousness of God: therefore, if you could say in his strength, you believe he is able to forgive your sin, then I could say, in his name, "Your sins are forgiven you."

Is there a power of rebellious lusts and corruptions that you are under, that hath been conquering and captivating you all your days? Behold, here is a powerful King and Captain of salvation, that hath all power in heaven and earth; and believe that he hath power to subdue the enmity of your nature, and the rebellion of your nature, and the rebellion of your lusts; and that this he is able to do, by virtue of his royal kingly office. To act faith the more successfully here, you are to deal with your rebellious lusts, as the man was to deal with his rebellious son under the law, Deut. xxi. 18-21. He was to bring him out before the magistrate of the place, saying, "This our son is stubborn and rebellious; he is a drunkard and a glutton;" and then orders were given to stone him with stones that he die: so, bring forth your rebellious lusts before the supreme

Magistrate of heaven and earth, that hath all power and authority both above and below, saying, Lord, it is a stubborn lust, a rebellious lust; whatever base kind of lust it be, it is a rebel I cannot get mastered or commanded; yea, it is a rebel against thy crown and government. Behold, this great Magistrate, this glorious King will give orders to stone it to death; yea, he will order so many words of power at this occasion, and perhaps so many words and exertions of power at another occasion, like so many mighty stones thrown by his powerful arm at the rebel, till at last it be stoned to death. O sirs, are you coming to this powerful King, by believing that he hath power to crush all your rebellious lusts? If you be truly believing his power, surely the power of sin will fall before the faith of his power, like Dagon before the ark; for no Dagon-lust can stand before the ark of his strength. The more you believe his power, the less power will sin have; and little power may it have this day.

Are you under the power of pollution and filthiness; heart or hand pollution, and filthiness of the flesh or of the spirit, and can hardly believe his will to save and cleanse you? yet, is there any grain of faith in you with respect to his power, saying with the leper, Matth. viii. 2, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean; Jesus answered, I WILL, be thou clean:" *q.d.*, If you truly believe my power, you have no reason to doubt of my will: I had never given you grace to believe that I have power to make you clean, if I had no will to make you clean; therefore, dost thou believe my power? then you possess my good-will; "I will, be thou clean." Let your faith, then, act more strongly than to say, "If he will, he can;" but if you believe he can, you may be sure he will cleanse you; for, though he will not do all that he can do, yet he will do all that he enables you to believe he can do unto your soul, when your faith is founded upon his promise, such as that, Ezek. xxxvi. 25, "I will sprinkle you with clean water; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you." Are you saying, "Lord, I believe, help mine unbelief;" I believe thou canst make me clean, even me? According to that promise, then, he is saying, "I will, be thou clean," even thou. There is a particular ME in faith's acting towards a powerful Jesus; and a particular THOU in God's dealing with that soul. It comes to close reasoning betwixt the poor sinner and the powerful Saviour, as if there were none but these two speaking together face to face, and mouth to mouth; yea,

and heart to heart; thou and me. It comes to close reasoning; and this ME in faith makes it the hardest thing in the world, and yet the sweetest thing in the world, to believe that Christ hath all power in heaven and earth, and that for me, for me, for me, and my everlasting salvation: for justifying, sanctifying, and cleansing of me. Do you believe that he hath power to save and cleanse you in particular? Why, man, according to your faith, so shall it be unto you.

What shall I say, O sinner, O enemy, O rebel! will you submit to him, by believing that he hath all power in heaven and earth! Who can harden himself against God, and prosper? As it is a dangerous thing to stand out against such a powerful Prince; so, I am sure, you could not stand out a moment longer, if you cordially believed that he hath all power in heaven and earth given unto him. O sirs, if you believed this doctrine, with application, namely, "That all power is delegated to, and resides in the person of Christ," and that so as he hath power to save THEE in particular, then salvation were begun. O then, put honour upon this powerful King of kings, and Prince of princes, by believing his power for your good and benefit. Art thou under the power of heart hardness and stupidity? Yet, O will you put honour upon his power, by believing that he hath power to heal thy backsliding, even THINE, and it shall be done? Art thou under the power of innumerable heart-plagues, insomuch, that none in the world hath such a plagued heart, and that no power under heaven can heal you? O will you come to this powerful One, and put honour upon his power, by believing that he is an able physician, to heal you, and you in particular. If there be any faith here present, to glorify his power, then, I can assure you, the power of the Lord is present to heal. Art thou under the power of the devil, and his temptations and fiery darts? What is the matter? Here is relief; only look to a powerful Lord, that came to bruise the head of the serpent, and destroy the works of the devil. Put honour upon his power, by believing that he is able to succour them that are tempted, and to succour YOU, and you are safe; for, the God of peace, and the God of power, will bruise Satan under your feet shortly. Are you under the power of unbelief and impenitency, and the want of all grace and good? O come to him, and glorify his power, by believing that he is able to make you believe; by believing that he is the powerful author of faith, and that, "He is exalted, by the right

hand of God, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins ;” and that when “ He ascended up on high, he received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that God the Lord might dwell among them :” gifts for men, even for you, and YOU in particular. If thou couldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God ; and if you believe his power, you see his power and glory in the sanctuary. Are you under the power of inability to believe his power, and inability to help yourself, and credit his power with application to yourself? Yet still, however strange the call may seem, it is not *I* but *HE* who hath all power in heaven and earth, that calls and commands you to believe in his name, and to glorify his power, by believing that God hath laid help upon One that is mighty. Though the hand of faith be not only weak, but withered ; yet it is he that hath all power that says, Stretch forth the withered hand, and take hold of his strength : for his power and strength is laid to your hand in the promise ; “ My grace shall be sufficient for thee ; and my strength shall be made perfect in thy weakness.” His power is laid to your hand in this word of faith that we preach ; so that you need not ascend to heaven for it, or descend to the deep ; nay, the word is nigh, and Christ in the word : there his power is offered to your faith. Again, Are you under the power of unwillingness, to believe his power for your salvation, under the power of enmity and unwillingness to be saved by his power? Let me ask you, Whether this power of unwillingness and enmity be easy or uneasy and weighty to you? If you be easy, and living easily under the power of enmity against Christ, then, it seems, you are easy and content though he put forth his power in your everlasting ruin : for one of the two must take place, the power of Christ is to be put forth either in the conversion and salvation, or in the everlasting destruction and confusion of every one that hears this gospel. Why, say you, If he be so powerful, able, and willing to save, then let him exert his power ; I am easy whatever he do. What ! are you content to want this powerful Jesus to save you from sin now, and from hell hereafter ! Then I take witness against you, that if he put not forth his saving power upon you before you go into eternity, you shall be inexcusable at the great day, when you stand before his awful tribunal : he will be just in pronouncing that dreadful doom against you, “ Depart from me, ye cursed !” and you shall have nothing to say for your defence, but that your ruin is of yourself ; and his damning power shall be just and

righteously exerted against you, because you did not care for his saving power. But if your enmity and unwillingness to believe his saving power, and lay hold upon it, be uneasy and weighty to you, then there is hope in Israel concerning you ; for his power to destroy the power of enmity, is put in a promise for you to believe and grip unto ; " Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power," Psalm cx. 3. Therefore, O glorify his power, by believing that he hath power to bow your will, and break your enmity ; and if you believe this with any pleasure and contentment, I can tell you, the day of power is partly come already, the day of believing is the day of power. In a word, are you under the power of death, dead really, under the power of spiritual death ; dead legally, under the power of the condemning sentence of God's law, that binds you over to eternal death ? Yet, so long as you have yet a natural life, a life of common sense and reason, though you cannot believe by the power of natural reason no more than Lazarus could come forth out of the grave by his own natural power, when he was dead and stinking there ; yet, because the power of God works upon the natural faculties, in the day of power, therefore, may I speak to the dead, in the name of him that hath all power in heaven and earth, over the dead and the living both, and who says, " The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live : " O dead sinner, hear and believe what he says, John xi. 25. " I am the resurrection and the life : he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. " O sinner, though you be dead, not only in a dead frame, but in a dead state, say not, What need you enjoin me to believe ? What can I do, who am dead ? Why, the question is not what you can do, but what he can do that calls you ; and it is not I that call you to believe, but he that hath all power in heaven and earth, and that can make you believe. Therefore, though you be dead and rotten in the grave of sin and security, yet he that is the resurrection and the life says, " Lazarus, come forth, come forth : Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light, " Eph. v. 14. Oh ! is there none here who are hearing the voice of the Son of God ? The voice of a mortal man hath no quickening power to make you believe, but if the voice of the Son of God be heard, faith comes by hearing of it : hearing him, and believing in him, go together ; " Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that hears my words, and believes on him that sent me, hath everlasting life,

and shall not enter into condemnation," John v. 24. If you have heard his voice, then you believe his power; and if you truly believe that all power is delegated to, and resides in the person of Christ, and that as Mediator he hath power to save you, then your salvation is begun: "He that believeth shall be saved."

Now, my friends, a powerful Prince and Saviour hath been offered to you in the word, to be received by believing: hath there been no power here to make you believe his power? Where there is no power, there is no faith. People may fancy they believe that Christ is able to save them; the preaching of the word may work a strong imagination that way: but hath the power of the Spirit, accompanying the word, made you believe that Christ is sealed and authorised of the Father, so as all power of ability and authority is given to him, and that with reference to your salvation, so as you have put your everlasting salvation over upon that power that resides in the person of Christ, as Mediator, and made you to rest and rely upon this powerful Prince and mighty Saviour for eternal life? Now that you may not be mistaken about the faith of his power, you may try it further by these following particulars.

1. If you have believed his power unto salvation, then the faith of his power and ability to save you hath been acted in the sense of utter weakness and inability to save or help yourselves: in the sense of inability to believe, inability to do, inability to think; "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God," 1 Cor. iii. 5. All power was lost in the first Adam, insomuch, that we are by nature without strength, and only under the strength of sin which is the law, 1 Cor. xv. 56. Therefore the faith of the gospel, and of strength in Christ, the second Adam, by virtue of the covenant of grace, presupposes the faith of the law, and of our being without strength of grace, and under the strength of sin.

2. If you have believed Christ's power unto salvation, then the faith of his power to save you hath begotten hope, 1 Pet. i. 3; insomuch that you are begotten again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead; that is, by the faith of his rising and reigning in heaven. If he had not risen and received the crown, and been set down upon the throne, the right hand of power, we had been left hopeless, 1 Cor. xv. 17. But his resurrection and exaltation is the ground of hope, 1 Pet. i. 2. Have you been begotten to a lively hope by this means, even to a hope

of life, a hope of salvation, a hope of rising and reigning in heaven with him ?

3. If you have believed, unto salvation, this power of Christ to save you, then the faith of his power, whereby he is able to save your soul, will be found standing upon his Priesthood, whereby he is able to satisfy God's justice. As Christ is a King upon the throne, because he was a Priest upon the cross, and able to save to the uttermost, because he was able to satisfy to the uttermost, or because he ever lives to make intercession, upon the ground of the atonement and satisfaction he made: so the true faith of his strength to save, stands upon his righteousness, whereby he was able to fulfil God's law, and satisfy God's justice. The faith of his ability then to save you is well founded, if it be built upon the faith of his ability to please God, and pacify his wrath on your behalf.

4. If you have believed unto salvation this saving power of Christ, then the faith of this power hath made you weak in yourself, emptied you of all strength and righteousness of your own, and made you see all your strength as well as righteousness, to be only in the Lord, and to close with him as the Lord your strength, because he is the Lord your righteousness. "Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength;" first righteousness, and then strength. It is remarkable, that according to the tenor of the new covenant, Christ's being our righteousness, is the very reason of his being our strength, Heb. viii. 10, 11, 12, "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after these days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest." Why will he give all these blessings? "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness," namely, through the righteousness of Christ. Hence the faith of Christ's power and strength, founded upon his righteousness, makes a man truly weak and empty in himself; for he sees his stock lies only in Christ's hand. And hence,

5. If you have believed Christ's power, unto salvation, then your faith of his power hath made you strong; "Strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might;" or, in the POWER OF HIS POWER, Eph. vi. 10. And hence, when you are weak, then you are strong; the faith of his power brings in power to the soul, and

strengthens the heart. Hence says the psalmist, Psalm xxvii. 13, 14, "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living;" and it follows, "Wait on the Lord, and be of good courage, and he will strengthen thy heart: wait, I say, on the Lord." According to the measure of faith in the power of Christ, such will be the measure of spiritual strength, power, and courage. And hence,

6. If you have believed his power unto salvation, then the faith of his power hath begotten joy in the Lord, and spiritual consolation; or, at least, some real relief from heart-trouble; "Let not your hearts be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me," John xiv. 1; intimating, that the more faith, the more freedom there is from heart-fears and fetters: and surely the faith of Christ's power, as Mediator, must, according to its measure, free the heart from all fears of hurt or harm, either from heaven above, or from earth beneath, because "all power in heaven and earth is given unto him."

SERMON CXXXIII.

THE FEMALE PREACHER, OR, THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA'S SERMON TO THE MEN OF THE CITY. OR, THE SELF-HUMBLING AND CHRIST-EXALTING INFLUENCES OF DIVINE DISCOVERIES.¹

"Come see a man which told me all things that ever I did; Is not this the Christ?"
—JOHN iv. 27.

IF our glorious Lord Jesus has been here present this day, conversing with us, as he did with the woman of Samaria, discovering us to ourselves, and discovering himself to us; if he hath been telling us what vile sinners we are, and what a glorious Saviour he is, so as the entrance of his word hath given light to us, to see our blackness on the one side, and his beauty on the other: surely it cannot but lead us to some such self-condemnation and Christ-commending exercise, as here this woman is employed in: "Come see a man that told me all things that ever I did; Is not this the Christ?"

In the preceding part of this chapter, there stands recorded a

(1) This subject was handled in one sermon, preached July 13th, 1729, immediately after the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper at Dunfermline.

very notable conversation betwixt Christ and this woman, the particulars whereof are too many to be considered at this time, though some of them may fall in our way, when we speak of the circumstances of her conversion: only, in the general, our Lord Jesus, as a wearied traveller sitting down by Jacob's well, and this woman coming to draw water, he seeks a drink from her, both to quench his thirst, and to take occasion of conferring with her, with a design of mercy to her soul. She apprehending him to be a Jew, refuses to give him a drink, upon an old quarrel that was between the Jews and the Samaritans: whereupon Christ shews her how she mistook her own mercy, and that he had better water to give her than that which she refused to give him, ver. 10; and that if she knew what a valuable mercy were at her hand, she would have turned a supplicant to him, and not suffer him to be so to her. But she still reasoning against his offer, he points out further the excellency of what he offered, ver. 13, 14; this raised some natural desire in her: but our Lord resolving to take hold of her heart, and knowing that the richest offer of his grace in the world will work no desire in the heart of sinners, further than what is natural and carnal, unless he effectively convince them of their sin and misery, and savingly manifest himself to them: therefore he takes this method with her.

1st, He convinces her of her sin and misery, and lets her understand that he knew all the lewdness and wickedness she was guilty of, by shewing her how many adulteries she was chargeable with, ver. 18. Whereupon she begins to conceive some high opinion of him as a Prophet, and to seek further light from him with reference to the right way of worshipping God, there being controversies about religious matters, and particularly about the place of public worship, betwixt the Jews and the Samaritans: and, indeed, the woman's discourse here shews that though she was a profane Samaritan, yet she was no ignoramus. She had knowledge of the controversy of the day she lived in, and the grounds thereof; and knew that the Messiah was to come: yet her knowledge was no sanctified knowledge. But now her conscience being awakened with a sense of sin, she is solicitous to have her mind informed; and accordingly is instructed at large by our blessed Lord Jesus, both concerning the place and the right manner of worshipping God. And thus from one thing to another, he leads her on, until,

2dly, He manifests himself to her, ver. 26. Christ's discourse about the change of religion that was to take place, brought the

woman to mind of the Messiah's coming; "I know," says she, "that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ; when he is come, he will tell us all things." And while she is expressing her high estimation of, and great desire after this coming Messiah, Jesus saith unto her, "I that speak unto thee am he." Christ may be present with people, and speaking to them, and yet they cannot know, or take him up till he reveals himself, as here he did to this woman; "I that speak unto thee am he."

No sooner did Christ thus kindly discover himself to her, than immediately this sweet conference is broken up by the return of the disciples, who had gone to the city to buy meat, ver. 8. The sweetest fellowship with Christ on earth is but of short duration; and the most pleasant manifestations may meet with very sudden interruptions; and poor sinners may have such a sweet time in Christ's company, that even the company of disciples may be an interruption to it.

But now, how she was affected with this discovery, is evident from two things.

1. She forgets her errand that she came upon; "She left her water-pot, and went her way:" having got a taste of the excellency of Christ, and a drink of the living water which he gave her, she minds no other water now; nay, she forgets all other things that before were in great esteem with her.

2. She spreads the name and fame of Christ in the place where she dwelt; "Come, see a man," says she, "that told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" Wherein we may notice,

(1.) An invitation; "Come, see a man:" having got a taste of his goodness, she would have the men in the city to taste and see with her.

(2.) A commendation; "a man that told me ALL THINGS that ever I did," a man that hath discovered himself to be God as well as man, in that he hath ript up and ransacked my heart and life. He had discovered her lewdness to her, and hereby represented all other things to her as seen by him. There is here implied a humble sense she had of her sinfulness, which Christ had given her a discovery and conviction of; and by his searching word she understood that he was the Searcher of hearts, and so commends him as "a man that told her all things that ever she did."

(3.) A conclusion, by way of interrogation and expostulation, "Is not this the Christ?" Importing no manner of doubt about it

in her own breast, but a strong affirmation, pointing at him unto them. He had told her what she was, and in this glass she saw her own vileness; and he had told her what he was, and in this glass she saw his glory: and by both these means he discovered himself to be the true Messiah, the God-man, the promised IMMANUEL, *God with us*; and her heart being full of Christ, and overflowing with the living water of the Spirit that he had given her, it vented itself and ran over in his praise and commendation unto others; "Come see a man that told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?"—I shall endeavour some further explication of this text upon a note of doctrine, passing over many others. What I mainly fixed upon is,

OBSERV. That those saving discoveries of Christ, that make persons to condemn and abase themselves to the lowest, lead them, at the same time, to commend and exalt Christ to the highest.

Self-searching, soul-humbling, and sin-discovering manifestations, issue in Christ-exalting commendations. I think it is remarkable in this woman, that kindly humiliation did not take place in her till after that Christ had clearly manifested himself to her, saying, "I that speak unto thee am he." It is true, when Christ first discovered her wickedness and lewdness to her, she appeared to be self-condemned and convicted, saying, "I perceive that thou art a Prophet," and a true Prophet indeed, that can tell me how many acts of lewdness I have been guilty of; her conscience flying in her face, and subscribing to the truth of what he had told her; but yet, as her first conviction appeared to be very partial and weak, in that, as some think, she seemed to shift any discourse about her own vileness, and started a question relative to a national difference betwixt the Jews and the Samaritans, to divert that subject concerning her baseness; so, I think we may conclude that her convictions before were very legal, driving her rather to her works and duties than to Christ; for instantly she falls a-questioning him about the means of worshipping God, as if when now she was convinced of her sin against God, her only way of obtaining his favour was by endeavouring to please him by our duties of worship, whom she had displeased by her wickedness and lewdness. And, indeed, the first airt that an awakened conscience looks to is the law, *the first Husband*. But now, when once Christ discovers and manifests himself

to her, she is kindly humbled under a sense of her vileness; yea, and of all her heart and life wickedness represented to her under that; and in the light wherein Christ discovered himself she saw all her abominations; "He told me all things that ever I did." She is now humbled and abased to the lowest: Why? Her sense of sin is not now partial but full; "He told me all things that ever I did." Neither is it now legal, but evangelical; for it was now in the glass of a saving manifestation, in the glass wherein Christ discovered his glory and excellency that she saw all her own filthiness and deformity. And while she is thus debased and humbled by the discovery of Christ, how does she commend and exalt him to the highest? She commends him to her neighbour citizens, and puts the greatest honour upon him, both as he is the true God incarnate, that by his omniscient eye could see, and so declare to her, "All that ever she did;" and as he is the true Messiah, the Anointed of God, "Is not this the Christ?"

The truth of this doctrine might be cleared from many scripture passages, that saving discoveries of Christ tend to make persons condemn and debase themselves, and to commend and exalt Christ, as it was with Job, chap. xl. ver. 4, 5. God having manifested his glory, he cried out, "Behold, I am vile! what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth;" as being unworthy to speak in the presence of such a great and glorious One; therefore he adds, "Once have I spoken, but I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further." And chap. xlii. 5, 6, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." See how the discovery of Christ makes the prophet Isaiah to condemn and abase himself to the lowest, and to commend and exalt Christ to the highest, chap. vi. 1, 5. He saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and his train filling the temple; then, says he, "Woe is me, for I am undone! because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts." To this purpose we may see Isa. xlv. 22, 25, "Look unto me and be saved, all ye ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." Well, what will issue upon that saving sight of Christ? Both the abasing of himself, ver. 23, "To him every knee shall bow;" and the high commendation and exaltation of Christ, "Surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength: In him shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory," ver. 24, 25. But passing

many other proofs, I suppose it will be found evident in the experience of all the saints, that every manifestation and discovery of Christ tends to work both these effects at the same time, even to make them condemn and debase themselves to the lowest, and to commend and exalt Christ to the highest.

This subject is very large, but I design, for shortening the work, to confine myself especially to the circumstances and effects of the discovery that Christ here gives of himself to the woman of Samaria, in the following method.

- I. I shall show what we are to understand by Christ manifesting or discovering himself to a person.
- II. What are these sin-discovering and soul-debasing effects of Christ manifesting himself; or, when may one be in case to say, that Christ hath told him all things that ever he did?
- III. What are these Christ-exalting commendations, wherein such discoveries of Christ vent themselves; and so notice the particular import in what the woman here says, "Come see a man that told me all things that ever I did: Is not this the Christ?"
- IV. I will shew the reasons of the doctrine, whence it is that saving discoveries of Christ have such a self-debasing and Christ-exalting influence. And then,
- V. Make application of the whole subject.

I. I will speak a little of Christ's discovering and manifesting himself to sinners. And here I would confine myself to the circumstances of the discovery that he makes of himself to this woman which wrought this effect in her, and which, in most particulars, will be found to agree with all the saving manifestations that our Lord makes of himself to his people, either at first conversion, or any renewed visit he makes to them. And here we may notice,

1. Some things relating to the means of the discovery that Christ makes of himself to this woman.
2. Some things relating to the manner of it.

1st, There are some things in the context relating to the means of this discovery.

1. One of the more remote means was his taking occasion to come to a place where she was also to come, and so casting himself

in her way, as it were. This is noticed very remarkably, verse 4th of this chapter, where it is said, "He must needs go through Samaria:" Whatever other reasons there were for his going this way, here was a special one; he must needs meet this woman, and with those Samaritans whom, on this occasion, he converted to the faith. If there be but one soul that Christ hath an errand to, the world will not keep him away from the place where that soul is. He must needs go through that place: there is a sweet necessity he lies under; he must needs bring a gospel ministry there; he must needs bring gospel-ordinances where he has any souls to meet with, and discover himself savingly unto. They to whom Christ hath discovered himself will find a merciful providence exercised about them, in his ordering their lot so, that either they are brought to the place where Christ and his ordinances are, or Christ and his ordinances come to the place where they are.

2. A second more remote means of this discovery is our Lord ordering matters so as her secular errand is made the occasion of her spiritual good and advantage, ver. 7. There comes this woman of Samaria to draw water. Providence may be intending much mercy to those who are both very unworthy of it, and very unconcerned about it. Little was this sinful woman minding any other thing but to draw water; yet a happy providence made her to meet with the Saviour of sinners. Some have come to ordinances as this woman did to Jacob's well, with no other view save upon some secular and carnal errand: may be to draw the water of damnation to themselves, or to draw in some applause to themselves amongst their neighbours, or merely from custom and curiosity, little minding any saving good, which yet the Lord hath prevented them with.

3. A third mean of this discovery is, Christ falls a discoursing with her, and upon occasion of his seeking, and her refusing him a drink of water, he shows his pity and compassion on her, as an ignorant and insensible sinner, having no knowledge of her real want and necessity, with respect to that better water which he had to give; and, particularly, he lets her know that the well of living water was in his hand to dispense as he pleased; and that as he offers his grace before we ask it, so he will not refuse it to them who ask it upon his offer and promise: "If thou hadst known, thou wouldst have asked, and I would have given thee living water." And besides, in his discourse he commends his wares to her, ver. 14, his gifts, his graces, his Spirit, as a well above all wells, "A well of

water springing up to everlasting life ;” and all to be freely dispensed by way of gift and donation. And this is the way he deals still with sinners in the free dispensation of the gospel.

4. A fourth mean of this discovery, is his working a work of conviction upon her conscience, by shewing her transgressions to her, and setting her sin in order before her, verse 18 ; and thereby discovering his prophetic office to her, and raising some esteem of him as a Prophet, verse 19. The freest offers do not prevail with sinners, till they be convinced of their sinfulness and misery. Indeed, it is not every sight of sin that will convince the sinner ; but Christ must set it home upon the conscience, and discover sin to them marked by his all-seeing eye, his all-searching eye ; for the woman knew pretty well how matters were with her, and yet, without any due sense, till he ript up and laid open her bosom, and made her see and understand that all her sins were naked and open unto the eye of him with whom she had now to do ; and though she did not know him to be the Christ, yet she begins to have some high thought of him as a Prophet that had the mind of God, and by whom God was discovering her sinfulness to her. But it does not appear, as yet, that she perceived any thing in him above ordinary prophets ; so gradually, by little and little, did he manifest himself to her. Only it is evident here, that in God’s order and method of working effectually on the hearts of sinners, as there is a discovery of sin that goes before a discovery of Christ, without which persons do not see their need of Christ ; so the more that Christ discovers sin, and touches the sinner’s heart therewith, it breeds the more respect and estimation of him, though it may be very weak and low at first.

5. A fifth mean of this discovery, is his opening up to her the nature of true spiritual and acceptable worship, ver. 21—24. Here he gives her such instruction as might tend to let her see that he was a Prophet above all prophets, that knew what changes were quickly to fall out with reference to the place of religious worship, and what sort of worship God would have, what a Spirit he is, and what service he requires. As faith comes by hearing, so discoveries of Christ, the glorious object of faith, comes by the means of instruction and divine teaching, such as the Lord Jesus here gives this woman. And this paves way to

6. A sixth mean of this discovery, namely, his working in her heart a kindly remembrance of, and high esteem for the Messias,

ver. 25. The longer she conversed with Christ, she is the more enamoured with him. Though he disclaimed the Samaritan worship, and declared they had no warrant for their religion ; yet having, at the same time, shewed that the Jewish worship was warrantable by the word of God, though yet their temporary way of worship was what his coming to the world was to give a burial to, and to abolish, upon which a more excellent way of worshipping God was to succeed ; I say, the more she hears him speak, the more she is enamoured with his discourse, and filled with great respect and regard to the Messias, from whom she expected such instruction as that ; “ I know that Messias comes, which is called Christ ; when he is come, he will tell us all things : ” not knowing, as yet, that she was speaking to him. She is speaking with a very high estimation of him, as the great Teacher of his church, that would fully reveal the counsel of God concerning his service and means of salvation. And now the woman, by these means, being brought to have precious thoughts of Christ, and to give such a notable evidence of her faith concerning him, then he discovered himself, saying, “ I that speak unto thee am he. ” When people are brought to sublime thoughts of Christ, then it is certain Christ is not far off from them. Thus ye have the means. We shall,

2dly, Notice the manner of the discovery that Christ makes of himself, “ I that speak unto thee, am he. ” Here is a clear manifestation and revelation that Christ himself gives of himself, “ I that speak unto thee, am he. ” It is not ordinary for Christ to give such testimony of himself : there must be some rare thing here : for, when John’s disciples came to ask him, “ Art thou he that should come, or may we look for another ? ” He does not say, “ I that speak unto thee, am he ; ” nay, but, “ Go tell John what ye hear and see ; the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them, ” Matt. xi. 5 ; let him draw the conclusion from these premises whether I am he or not ; but here he gives as clear a discovery of himself as in all the book of God, out of his own mouth. We know Peter gave a clear testimony, “ Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God ; ” the Father gave a great testimony to him, “ This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, ” but that Christ gave as clear a testimony of himself, is rarely to be found in all the New Testament ; yea, this discovery of himself is more remarkable, because he forbade his disciples, at that time, to

tell expressly who he was ; and when Pilate and Herod, and others, asked him, " Who art thou ? " He either gave them a very dark answer, or none at all. Christ is not lavish of his commendations in this manner ; therefore, there is some speciality here : and yet there is something in the manner of Christ manifesting himself to her, that is common to all the children of God, to whom he savingly manifests himself.

1. It was in a word, a home word spoken to her heart, that he discovered himself ; " I that speak unto thee, am he. " It was by speaking to her, that he manifested himself ; so it is in the word that he discovers himself to his own ; that word that comes into the ear of others, comes into their heart. The joyful sound goes through the very soul of the man, in a secret indiscernible manner ; this is plain in the case of this woman, both with respect to the word that he spake for her conviction, to discover her sin ; and in the word that he spake for her consolation, discovering himself as the Saviour. In the former he had said, " I know this is not thy husband that thou hast ; " the word went to her heart ; that is a true word says she, spoken by a true prophet, for I am living in whoredom. Thus God, in dealing with sinners by his word externally, makes it have an internal sound in the heart ; he whispers in the ear of a sinner, and makes him think, Alas ! that is very true ; I am just guilty of that sin : I cannot reclaim against what the minister says ; all is true ; I must take with the charge of God's word. So with respect to the latter, when he discovers himself savingly, it is in the word of grace ; it comes into the ear, but the finger of God sets it down to the heart ; the God that commanded light to shine out of darkness, shines into the heart ; and it is in the glass of the word that this light shines : " Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord. "

2. It was a particular discovery ; " I that speak unto thee, am he : " to THEE : so when God, in Christ, discovers himself, it is a particular discovery ; he calls his own sheep by name, John x. 3. As the word of conviction is particular, so the word of grace is particular, as if God were dealing with none other but that person. O ! has he spoken to thee, man ; to thee, woman ; in particular, by his word, and set it home upon thy heart ?

3. It was an immediate discovery he himself made of himself. This indeed is not to be expected in the manner that the woman here was privileged with : but though it is not now in an immediate,

but in a mediate way; yet where he savingly manifests himself, he takes the means in his own hand, and makes the soul find that it is none other but himself that is dealing with it; it is not the voice of men or ministers, but the voice of God that it hears, 1 Thess. ii. 13. The word comes with such light, life, and majesty, that the soul finds it is indeed, the word of God; it has a heavenly echo with it. And hence,

4. It was a clear and demonstrative discovery: "I am HE," says Christ to the woman. Saving discoveries are by way of demonstration, as the word imports, John xvi. 9. Thus he manifests himself to his people, as he does not manifest himself to the world, who remain encompassed and enveloped with the clouds and mists of gross darkness and ignorance, amidst all the literal knowledge they enjoyed.

5. It was a gradual discovery, by little and little, from one step to another, till he made all his glory pass before this woman; even so, where he manifests himself savingly, he does it gradually; "His goings forth are prepared as the morning." The work that is very sudden, seldom proves very sound. It is observed of the bad ground, that the seed sown did suddenly spring up; God's ordinary way of manifesting himself is gradual; "The path of the just shines more and more unto the perfect day." Then,

6. It was a sensible discovery that he gave of himself to this woman; her time was a time of love. After he had let her see that she was lying in her blood, and in the puddle of pollution, and after he had filled her heart with precious thoughts of the Messiah, the Deliverer, he would no longer hide himself from her. O how sweetly and sensibly does he manifest himself to his people, when they are apt to think he is far from them! As this woman was speaking of the Messiah, as the glorious person whom she knew not if ever she would have the happiness to see, "Behold, (says Christ), I that speak unto thee, am he." O! says the soul, will I ever get a sight of Christ? I know not if ever I will be so happy, why then he usually lets them know he is not far off.

7. It was a wonderful discovery he made of himself to this woman; there were many wonders in it; and, indeed, whenever Christ manifests himself to any soul, it will see some such like wonders as she saw. O wonderful, might she say! is he speaking to me, such a poor woman as I am, and such a base woman as I have been. Why, as there was no sibness, or relation, betwixt him and her, but

on the contrary a stated enmity and alienation : for, "The Jews had no dealing with the Samaritans;" yea, but he must deal with her, though she was no good woman : nay, a common whore, lying in whoredom, O wonderful ! Though ye were never such a great sinner, yet Christ is content to speak with you for your everlasting good : and it is an ill tale that may not be heard. Will ye allow Christ to speak to you ? Was it not wonderful that Christ should speak to this woman, in such a manner as he did ? How kindly does he speak to her that he might gain her heart with his love, and kill her with kindness ? One might have thought he would call her a base filthy devil, as it was said to himself most blasphemously, "Say we not well thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?" It was true of this woman of Samaria, she was a Samaritan that had a filthy devil ; yea, the Jews took all the Samaritans for incarnate devils. But does Christ call her so ? Nay ; and it adds to the wonder of his discovering himself to her, that she was a slighter of Christ, he was undervalued by her ; Art thou greater than our Father Jacob ? says she, ver. 12 : yea, she refused him a drink of cold water ; yet he bears with all these affronts, and manifests himself to her, even to her ; O wonderful ! Do not several such wonders take place, when the Lord comes to speak and manifest himself to you. O believers, O sinners ? Are there not wonders enough to be observed concerning this glorious person shewing himself ? He might dwell in heaven to all eternity, as he dwelt in heaven from all eternity, and be for ever happy ; the Father was good company to him, and he needed none of your company ; he had infinite delight in himself more than in all his creatures ; yet for all this, that he should speak and shew himself to you, how wonderful is it ! His discoveries are wonderful, in that he seeks nothing of us ; it is true, he made the fashion of seeking a drink of water from this woman, but that was only by the bye ; he got meat and drink enough when he got the woman to himself ; the great thing he was seeking was to get the woman divorced from all her base husbands, and married to himself ; yea, betrothed to him for ever ; yea, Christ's visits to some may be wonderful, not only to the sinner, that gets them ; but to the saints and disciples, that see or hear tell of them. We are told here, ver. 27, that the disciples, when they came marvelled that he talked with the woman ; though they durst not challenge him, yet it was matter of offence to them that he so freely conversed with her. Christ can demean himself, and stoop so low to a poor sinner

as is marvellous to flesh and blood ; there is more kindness and humility in him alone ; than in all his friends ; they being advanced by grace, are apt to forget themselves, and to become so proud as to despise others, though they themselves were once lifted out of the dungeon, and chosen out of the dust. But then,

8. It was a powerful discovery that he made of himself to this woman, as appears by the gracious effects thereof. Now her heart goes off all things else, she forgets her water-pot, her mind is set upon some greater things, she ran away to the city, that she might invite others to follow him, who had so wonderfully manifested himself to her ; and, indeed, all saving manifestations have a power attending them. The gospel comes not in word only, but in power ; Christ's word has a drawing power. He draws with loving kindness, while grace and love is poured from his lips. This word, wherein he visits the soul, has a gaining power, that wins the heart from all things, and makes Christ all in all. And his manifestations have a sanctifying, transforming power ; beholding his glory, we are changed into the same image ; and especially they lead to a self-debasing and Christ-exalting exercise. Which brings me to,

II. The second general head proposed, namely, What are these sin-discovering and soul-debasing effects of Christ's manifesting himself ? or when may one be in case to say, "He told me all things that ever I did ?" It is true, this is a part of what the woman spake to Christ's commendation, as an all-knowing God ; as well as to her own condemnation, as a vile sinner, brought under a kindly self-abasement, by the discovery she had of Christ, both as a kindly reprover, and a merciful Redeemer, a Christ, a Saviour. To give light to this particular, I shall only touch at this, how all things are told when only some things seem to be told ? How can this woman say, "He told me all things that ever I did," when yet it was only her whoredom and adultery that he discovered ? Or when may the discovery that Christ makes of himself be so humbling and abasing, that when but a small part is mentioned, yet all that ever we did is discovered ?

I answer, 1. It may be said consequentially : "He told me all things that ever I did ;" that is, by plain consequence. As we may see what the conclusion is, when the premises are related ; what the root is, when the fruit is discovered ; and what the fountain is, when the streams are discovered : even so, when Christ tells a person what evil fruit he hath brought forth, that person may easily infer,

that he hath told him that he is an evil tree: and by the streams of wickedness in the life, he leads people thus to the fountain of wickedness in the heart and nature. When he tells one of the black smoke that comes out of the chimney of his heart, he tells also, by plain consequence, that there is a fire of corruption within; and then is one abased to self-abhorrence, when by the discovery of one sin, in the light of a gracious manifestation, he is led, in a spiritually argumentive way, to infer his total depravation, both in nature and practice: he may say, consequently, at least, "He told me all things that ever I did."

2. It may be said inclusively and virtually; "He told me all things that ever I did." As he that offends in one point of the law, is guilty of all, James ii. 10, in counteracting the authority that enjoins all; so he that is humbled deeply for any one sin, may see therein, that he hath broken all the commands of God, and may be said, in a part, to have seen the whole. In transgressing of one command, he may see his being a transgressor of all the commands of God, and a continual transgressor thereof in thought, word, and deed; because, as every imagination of the heart is evil, and only evil continually: so, out of the heart, as out of a bitter fountain, proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witnessing, blasphemy, and all other pollutions beside. All the sins of people are included, inclosed, connected together as links in a chain; so that when one link is seen, the whole chain may be said to be seen. Suppose a chain whereof some links are above the ground, and all the rest of it hanging down into a dark and deep pit; when the upper links are seen in their connexion with the whole, then one may be said to have seen all, because all are included and inclosed in what he saw.

3. It may be said potentially, "He told me all things that ever I did;" because, by that one instance, he gave a proof of his ability so to do. He that could tell me this, could tell me all; he that could observe this, hath observed all that ever I did, and can as easily tell me all as tell me a part; for none but the Searcher of hearts, that sees all my goings, could have told me this. He that can save to the utmost, can see to the uttermost.

4. It may be said representatively, "He told me all things that ever I did;" for this discovery represented all other things, all my other sins. This representation is like that which is made in a mirror; if one set a looking-glass before you to see a spot in your

face, when you see that, at the same time you see all the spots there ; so, when Christ sets the glass of his word before you to see such a particular spot and blot ; in the same glass you have a view and representation of all the spots, and all the blemishes of your heart and way. For, we may conceive this representation like that which is made in a map ; if one shew you, for example, a particular city in the map of the world, why, at the same time, he presents to you all the terraqueous globe : the whole world at one glance ; so here, when in the light of the Spirit, Christ discovers to you one sin, in the same map you see the whole world of wickedness, a world of atheism, enmity, unbelief, pride, self, and other plagues innumerable.

Thus in the day of gracious manifestation, wherein Christ, the Sun of righteousness, discovers himself, the sinner, that is privileged with it, cannot but see a black sight of himself, which makes him say, in effect, He told me all the ills that ever I did ; he told me what I have been, and what I have done ; that I have been a sinner in Adam, and a transgressor from the womb : that I have done evil as I could ; and given innumerable instances of a carnal mind, which is enmity against God ; and of an unbelieving heart, which is enmity against Christ ; and of resistance to the motions of heaven, which is enmity against the Holy Ghost. When the sun shines into a dark house, by a small window, the beams discover innumerable motes and hovering particles of dust in that part of the house where the light is shining, by which we are made to see and understand that the whole house is full of motes and dust ; even so here, when Christ the Sun of righteousness appears and shines in upon the dark dungeon of a sinner's heart, and discovers any motes and blots that are there, then it appears that the whole house, the whole heart and nature is full of the dust and smoke of hell ; which makes the soul cry out with Job, " Behold I am vile !" and hence the more precious that Christ appears in any man's eye, the more vile does he appear in his own eye, and debase himself to the lowest ; he thinks himself the most loathsome sinner that ever was seen, when Christ tells him all that ever he did. So much shall suffice concerning the soul debasing effects of Christ's manifesting himself, imported in that expression, " He told me all things that ever I did ;" at one glance he gave me a view of all the sins that ever I was guilty of.

III. The third general head proposed, was, To show, What are these Christ-exalting commendations wherein such discoveries of Christ vent themselves, and which are imported in the words of the woman here, "Come see a man that told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" Here, confining myself to the matter and the manner of the commendation in the text, notice,

1st, The matter of the commendation, or in what respects she commends Christ to her neighbours; and it is particularly in two respects which are very comprehensive. 1. She commends him in his natures. 2. In his offices.

1. In his natures, as the Man-God, or the God-man, that told me all things that ever I did. Here is his human nature; but, O she saw his divinity through the veil of his humanity; "He told me all things that ever I did," and gave me thus an infallible proof of his being the supreme God. She was neither an Arian nor a Socinian; neither will any be so that gets such a discovery of Christ as she got. And surely the blasphemous Arians of our day bewray their ignorance, and want of true learning and spiritual knowledge, such as this poor woman had. O but a little glance of Christ's glory can make a poor illiterate woman wiser than the learned Rabbies, that were never taught of God, and yet think themselves the only wits of the world. Those to whom Christ discovers himself, as they will see, so they will commend him to others as God in our nature; "God manifested in the flesh." Who ever questioned but the Searcher of hearts, who knows all things, is the true and supreme God, that can give laws to bind the heart and consciences of men, and then disclose their hearts to them, and tell them all these things wherein they have violated and broken that law, in heart or way? Yet Christ is here declared to be such an one; "He told me all things that ever I did." Why, this can be no more denied, than it can be questioned whether it was the great God, the true and supreme God, that gave out the law upon mount Sinai? Nobody doubts that, say you; why then, it is declared in scripture that it was this same Jesus that did so; Psalm lxxvii. 17, 18, "The Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high; thou hast led captivity captive? thou hast received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell amongst them:" And of whom all this is spoken the apostle shews, Eph. vi. 8; and every believer knows. "He told me all things that ever I did;" he told me all my sins and trans-

gressions of his law, which he gave forth at mount Sinai. By a sanctified sight of some sins, he opened my eyes to see more and more; yea, to see all my sins, and that I was nothing but a mass of sin, enmity, and pollution. And thus I saw the Revealer to be the true and supreme God, even the eternal Son of God, clothed with human nature; "A man that told me all things that ever I did;" a man that told me what none but God can do; a man that proved himself to be God, by an argument of power upon my heart and conscience: an argument drawn from his omniscient eye, and driven upon my heart by his omnipotent hand.

2. In his offices he is here commended and exalted; "Is not this the Christ;" that is, Is not this the true Messiah promised, prophesied of in the Old Testament? This is her EUREKA like that, John i. 45, "We have found him, of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write;" even so I have found him, might she say: he hath been with me, and I have been, with him, he hath spoken to me, and I have spoken to him. He hath not only told me what I am, and what I have been, and what I have done, but told me what he is; and I have found him to be God as well as man. And who is he then, but the promised IMMANUEL, "God with us. Is not this the Christ?" That is the anointed of God, to the saving offices of Prophet, Priest and King; this the word Christ especially imports, and has a particular reference to. He is *anointed*, as a Prophet, to declare the mind to God; *anointed*, as a Priest, to make reconciliation with God; and *anointed*, as a King, to subdue sinners to God; and make them friends that are enemies to God: He is anointed with the Spirit above measure, John iii. 34. To render him a fit Prophet, he hath the Spirit of wisdom and understanding above measure; to make him a fit Priest, he hath the Spirit of love and compassion above measure; and that he may be a fit King, he hath the Spirit of power and of government. "Is not this the Christ?" That is, the Sealed and Sent of God, clothed with a commission from God to seek and save lost sinners, John vi. 27, "Him hath God the Father sealed;" that is, authorised unto this work, according as himself declares, Isa. lxi. 1, compared with Luke vi. 18, "Is not this the Christ?" Namely, he that is anointed that he may anoint; anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows. Believers are said to receive the anointing; but there is a vast odds betwixt the anointing of Christ, and the anointing of believers; for, Christ is the fountain, from whom all the streams flow; the sun,

from whom all the beams of grace shine: grace in believers, is like water in a brook; but grace in Christ, is like water in the ocean; grace in the believer, is like broken beams; but in Christ, it is like the bright centre of all light. He received the Spirit of all grace for this very end, to be bestowed upon others. The first Adam brought an emptiness on the whole creation: but the second Adam came to fill all things and persons; to fill Jew and Gentile, that of his fullness we might receive grace for grace. The oil of grace and gladness was poured out upon our IMMANUEL, of purpose that he might pour it down upon the barren mountains. Thus we see in what respects he is here recommended, or the matter of the commendation. Let us view,

1^{ly}, The manner of the commendation; or in what way she does it. We may read in the bosom of the text, several properties of this exercise of commending and exalting Christ, which saving discoveries of him lead unto. And,

1. It is an open and public commendation of Christ; for, she went away to the city, and says, O people, "Come see a man that told me all things that ever I did; Is not this the Christ?" She being formerly a lewd woman, had given open offence, and open scandal to the citizens, and now, upon the discovery of her sin, and the discovery of the Saviour, she gave as open and ready evidence of her repentance and conversion, by inviting them all to come and see him that had given her a conviction of her sin and vileness, and a manifestation of his glory and grace. Saving discoveries of Christ will lead people as openly to glorify and honour him, as they have before dishonoured him.

2. It is an experimental commendation of him; she commends him from her own experience and feeling; "Come see a man that told me all things that ever I did;" I have seen his face and heard his voice, and felt his power; he has convinced and converted me; therefore, from my own feeling and experience, I commend his grace unto you. It is like that, 1 John i. 3, "That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye may have fellowship with us." It was something like that of David, Psal. lxvi. 16, "Come and hear all ye that fear God, and I will tell what he hath done for my soul." Yea, he commends Christ not only to believers, but to others, as you see his resolution is, Psalm li. 13. Upon his getting a new visit, and the Lord's restoring to him the joy of his salvation, and upholding him with his free Spirit, "Then, says he,

will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee." Thus Paul set forth the abundant grace of God from his own experience, "I was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy,—and the grace of God was exceeding abundant, &c." 1 Tim. i. 13, 14. They that have experience of the things of Christ themselves, will be most zealous in manifesting the things of Christ to others, and in pressing them to come to Christ, as having proof and experience of his grace; and, indeed, they can best speak of Christ, to whom Christ hath spoken, and who believe, and therefore speak.

3. It is a charitative commendation of Christ: she is now filled with such Christian love to others, and particularly to those she was most concerned with, and interested in, that she would have them all drawn to Christ. She said to the men, "Come see a man that told me all things that ever I did." Perhaps there were some of them she had tempted to sin and wickedness before, she now would have them turned to Christ; a great change! They that have seen Christ cannot but desire that others may see him too, they would have all to come and see. O that all the world would come and see, come and wonder, come and admire him! as Abraham commanded his children and servants to seek and serve the Lord; so, if one that had got the discovery of Christ could do it, it would command thousands to come and see him, and serve him. When Christ discovers himself, and speaks into the heart of a man, it makes the man speak good of Christ. Again, a sight of Christ's face smites the soul with a likeness to him in love; and hence the sinner, immediately upon the revelation of Christ, is filled with a strange love: a love of complacency to the saints, and a love of benevolence to the souls of others.

4. It is a judicious commendation of Christ, that issues from the discovery of Christ. And here several things point out the judgment and wisdom by which she commends Christ unto them. It is evident from the method she takes, or would have them to take; she is not content that they rest upon her report only, but would have them taste and see themselves: she knew that their love would not terminate savingly upon her testimony; and therefore would have them coming to Christ himself. Again, it is evident how judicious it was, from her endeavour to draw them to Christ, with the very same hook that caught herself. Christ spake many good words to her; but the first thing that took hold of her heart and

caught her, was this, "He told me all things that ever I did." His heart-searching and discovering word was the means of her conversion; and she would have them drawn to Christ by the same means: "Come see a man that told me all things that ever I did: Is not this the Christ?" It is evident also how judicious it was by the gradation of her words, or the gradually rising steps of her commendation; she begins somewhat low, "Come see a man;" she goes on a higher note, "He told me all things that ever I did;" and she concludes with the highest commendation of him, "Is not this the Christ?" Not only God, but God appearing in all his glorious robes of grace, even IMMANUEL, "God with us." In a word, it is evident how judicious it is, from the manner of her arguing; she argues from his telling part of her secret wickedness, "That he told her all:" *q. d.* He could as easily have told me all things that ever I said, and all things that ever I designed, and all things that ever I thought, as he told me what I did: yea, I got such a broad look of all my sins in that one glass of a discovery that he gave me, that I cannot but own he "told me all things that ever I did." Again, she argues from the dignity that she saw joined with his humanity, that he was the true Messiah; and hence judiciously infers, "Is not this the Christ?" She was never at a college, to learn how to frame an argument; but having been at Christ's school for a little pleasant while, she there learned some heavenly logic; can such a man as this be any other but the Christ? The more clear discovery that any gets of Christ, the more skilful and expert they will be in commending him to others; as we see in our apostle Paul, after Christ was revealed in him, what clear discoveries did he make of Christ to others, as appears in the Acts of the Apostles, and in all his epistles.

5. It is a pathetic commendation of Christ, that issues from the discoveries of him. Her heart is full of Christ, and full of desire to praise, and exalt, and commend him to others; and her heart vents itself in several pathetic expressions: hence she spake first in a hortatory manner, "Come and see," says she; O citizens, slip not this opportunity, when such a glorious sight is to be seen. Next she spake in an assertory manner: she asserts some strange things concerning him, he is "a man that told me all things that ever I did;" he is a seer and revealer of the secrets of men, and therefore must be a prophet, and more than a prophet, a revealer of the counsel of God. And finally, she spake in a questionary and expostulatory

manner, "Is not this the Christ?" He can be none else but the Messiah, the Christ of God. She is not content to commend him in one particular, but she must go on and insist in his praise and commendation, and cannot think she can commend him enough; "Is not this the Christ?" She makes no question of it herself. And the design of her interrogation is to put it out of doubt with them. Who can this be but the Christ? How can it be any other but the Christ? They that have met with Christ, and got the heart touched by his grace, it is in a hearty cordial way they speak of him, and commend him to others. The sinner that hath met with a Saviour, O how gladly would he trumpet forth his praise if he could. There is something further here that points out the pathetic manner of the commendation, and that is an appeal to them as it were in the bosom of this question, "Is not this the Christ?" I appeal to you, might she say, if it be not so, that he is CHRIST, the *Anointed of God*. I cannot think but you must judge of him as I do; and, who will not think highly of him as I do? Indeed, the enlightened soul is ready to think all the world should be of his mind, the light and evidence is so clear to him; and hence they that have got a discovery of Christ, wonder that any would esteem otherwise of Christ than they. O be astonished that all the world is not wondering at his glory. O! what can blind them! What can bewitch them at this rate, that they are not of the same mind concerning Christ, and that they are not admirers of him as well as I am! Surely there is nothing appears with such evidence and demonstration as this glory and excellency of a God-man. Who can be so stupid and senseless as to reckon otherwise? "Is not this the Christ?" The proof is so plain to me, says the soul, and the light and power so great, by which Christ is discovered to me, that it is truly irresistible, and who, in all the world, can possibly resist the evidence of it? "Is not this the Christ?" O how pathetic is the commendation!

6. It is a practical commendation that issues from a saving discovery of Christ, and such is that of the woman of Samaria here; and hence, she says not, *Go see* him: but *Come see* him. They that truly invite others to come to Christ, will not be content to send them to him, but they would share themselves of more and more of Christ. Their language is not, *Go see*, but, *Come see*. It would have argued no great esteem of Christ, nor high commendation of him, should the woman have said, I have seen him already; go ye

and see him next ; they might have thought she had enough of him : but, *Come see* him, says she ; *q. d.* Come along with me, and I will go upon your head, like a captain, and lead the van myself. I have seen him to my heart's content, and am desirous to get another sight, a new sight of him : and I would have all the people in Samaria, the whole town to go along with me. I have been an ill woman, a base woman, that have led some of you to sin ; and may I now be the happy instrument of bringing you to the Saviour. I have led some of you to the gates of hell : O let me now lead you to the gate of heaven ! If I have tempted any of you to wickedness, O let me now be instrumental in turning you to righteousness ; yea, to the Lord my righteousness, whom I have got a saving sight of ; and, therefore, let me give you a good example, for all the ill example I have given you. Here was a change indeed, and a practical commendation. Surely they commend Christ most effectually, who do it not only by their profession, but by their practice ; not merely by their counsel, but by their example : and who can say not only, *Go see* ; but, "Come see a man that told me all things that ever I did." It is a *come see* that makes others to go also ; Zech. viii. 21, "Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts, I will go also ;" there is one : ver. 23, you find more following ; "We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you." Thus it was the church's not only commending of Christ, but diligently seeking after him whom she commended, that made the daughters of Jerusalem say, Song vi. 1, "Whither is thy beloved gone, that we may seek him with thee ?" And we see how effectual this practical commendation of Christ was, that the woman gave to the Samaritans, as you may read, ver. 30, 39, 42. She was the blessed instrument of drawing many there to the Lord Jesus.

IV. The Fourth general head proposed, was, To give the Reasons of the Doctrine, whence it is, that saving discoveries of Christ make persons to condemn and debase themselves to the lowest, and commend and exalt Christ to the highest : or, what influence a saving discovery of Christ hath upon this self-debasing and Christ-exalting exercise ? I shall consider the reasons of this two-fold effect jointly, because they necessarily go together, and are influenced by the same means ; they are like the two scales of a balance, that which makes the one scale fall and go down, makes the other rise and go up ; so that discovery of Christ which brings down self to the dust, does at the same time set up Christ upon the

throne. When the haughtiness of man is brought low, then the Lord alone is exalted, Isa. ii. 11.

1. The first reason then, why the saving discoveries of Christ do humble self to the lowest, and exalt Christ to the highest, is from the special light wherein Christ is seen. They that see the glory of Christ with the one eye, they see, at the same time, their own unworthiness with the other. The same light that discovers the holiness of God, discovers the vileness of man. The same light that discovers the fulness of Christ, discovers the emptiness of the creature. That light that discovers his infinite merit, discovers the infinite guilt and demerit of sin. When the righteousness of Christ is seen, the unrighteousness of the sinner is seen at the same time, and in the same light: and hence, no wonder then, while the poor soul is astonished with the view of God's glory in the face of Christ, he is also astonished with the view and apprehension of his own baseness and brutishness; and has the meanest thoughts of himself, when he has the highest thoughts of Christ. The more a man converses with Christ, the more he converses with himself: and the light that discovers Christ, discovers the soul to itself: and therefore the discoveries of Christ cannot but tend to debase self, and exalt Christ.

2. When Christ is discovered, then the love of God to the soul is discovered, and this fills it with humble wonder. O! how astonishing a thing is it, that God's love is manifested to one so full of sin and wickedness! This debases the soul in its own sight, because it knows itself to be so unworthy of his love; this works humility: but yet unworthy as it is, the love of God is manifested to it: this quickens love in the soul, and love excites praise. O! how shall I manifest love to him that hath manifested love to the like of me! Thus the love of Christ constrains both to the debasing of self and exalting Christ.

3. The third reason is, from the special work of the Spirit: there is a speciality in the work of the Spirit upon the soul to whom Christ is savingly discovered; "Lord (says Judas, not Iscariot), how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not to the world?" John xiv. 22. God manifests his love to the world, in outward respects; but to his own, in his privy chamber. It is the work and office of the Spirit to set home the love of God upon the hearts of his people: and to every one of them alone, as it were: he takes them aside, that they may have some private conversa-

tion with Christ; such as this woman had, when Christ was the only preacher, and she was the only hearer. O but the view of this distinguished grace raises in the soul both David's note, "What am I, and what is my father's house, that thou hast brought me h' therto?" And Mary's note at the same time, "My soul doth magnify the Lord."

4. The influence that the discovery of Christ hath upon the self-debasing and Christ-exalting exercise, flows from the spiritual end and design of these saving discoveries and manifestations of Christ; this is God's great end in discovering Christ, 1 Cor. i. 29, 30, 31. "Of God, he is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." For what end? "That no flesh should glory in his sight: but that he that glorieth might glory in the Lord:" that is, that self may be condemned and debased, and Christ alone may be commended and exalted. And this is the great end of the Spirit's work; when he comes to testify of Christ, what is his design? Why, says Christ, John xvi. 9, 14, "He will convince the world of sin; and he shall glorify me;" that is, he will humble the sinner, on the one hand, and exalt the Saviour, on the other; and so lead the sinner to condemn himself, and to commend Christ.

5. It arises from the special power and efficacy that is in saving discoveries of Christ, for working all saving effects; why, "Beholding his glory, we are changed into the same image," 2 Cor. iii. 18; and changed, as in other respects, so in this particular, that self is pulled down, and Christ set up: we are changed from pride to humility; from self-love to self-leathing; from self-indulgence to self-abhorrence; and from self-seeking and self-exalting to a Christ-exalting disposition and exercise. All the graces of the Spirit issue from a saving discovery of Christ, and come in that way to a lively exercise: "We beholding his glory, as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth: of his fulness have we all received, and grace for grace," John i. 14, 16. We cannot see his fulness, without sharing of his fulness; yea, to see his fulness is to share of it; this is the strength of that *for* which we have in John iii. 2, "We shall be like him, FOR we shall see him as he is;" so here, "beholding his glory, his fulness of grace and truth, WE receive out of his fulness." Now, the more of Christ's fulness and Spirit, that one hath, the more will he have of Christ's ends before him; which is a debasing of the creature, and a glorifying of God, that he may be all in all.

6. This exercise doth arise from the divine splendour of the discovery; for, when Christ discovers his face, then the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ, is discovered, 2 Cor. iv. 6. When Christ is seen, then the glory of God's perfections and the splendour of his attributes is seen. Now, every thing in God dashes the sinful man that sees it, and makes him nothing in his own eyes; and, at the same time, makes Christ, in whom that divine glory shines, to be all in all to the man; so that he cannot but set Christ above all, and give him, in all things, the pre-eminence. Thus you see, the reasons whence it is, that saving discoveries of Christ make the subjects thereof, to condemn and debase themselves to the lowest, and to commend and exalt Christ to the highest, as the woman of Samaria here does; "Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did: Is not this the Christ?"

V. The fifth thing proposed, was, To make some application of the whole. And this we shall essay in an use of information, examination, and exhortation.

1st, We shall improve this subject in an use of information, by deducing the following inferences. Is it so then, that saving discoveries of Christ have this effect, to make one, at the same time, to condemn and debase himself, and to commend and exalt Christ, saying, "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did; Is not this the Christ? From this text and doctrine we may see and learn the following lessons.

1. Hence see why pride and self-conceit, self-righteousness and self-justification prevail so much in the world, and in the visible church; and what makes people, notwithstanding all that ever they did, yet to be vainly puffed up, instead of condemning and debasing themselves: why, because they have never got a saving discovery of Christ; Christ hath never touched their heart, and told them all that ever they did: they are strangers to the power of the word. It is very strange how wicked men will justify themselves, as those, John viii. 48, "Say we not well, that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?" Here was the greatest blasphemy imaginable, to say this of Christ; yet they justify it, "Say we not well in this?" Christless men will justify their ill words, and base works and evil actions. What say you, Sabbath-breaker? Why, was it not well done, say you? it is but a work of necessity, a needful business. What say you, drunkard? Why, it was but a hearty bottle with my friends; and was it not well done? What say you, whore-

monger? Why, it was but a trick of youth; and what is the matter of that? What say you, swearer? Why, it was neither banning nor swearing that I intended; it was but a single word, and a word in passion. What say you, scold and railer? Why, say you, I think they deserved all that I said to them; I am sure I loosed my tongue upon such a man, and gave him his holy day's name: and was it not well done, and well said? Indeed, you will hardly get a sinner at all; if you will take every person's excuse, and everybody's judgment of themselves, they will justify all that ever they did; or, at least, make it but a matter of moonshine. A common strumpet, such as this woman was formerly, may think nothing of all her base and lewd behaviour. The most notorious sinner goes lightly under the burden of his sin, without any self-condemnation or self-debasement, till Christ and they meet together; and until he show them, by one glance, all things that ever they did.

2. Hence see, the greatest of sinners may conceive hope of mercy at the hand of our merciful Lord Jesus, from such instances as this: yet, let not wicked sinners indulge themselves in sin, and presume that God will not notice their lewdness, and secret as well as open wickedness; for the time is coming wherein Christ will, either in a way of mercy or judgment, tell you all things that ever you did, Psalm. 1. 21, "Those things thou hast done, and I kept silence: thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee and set them in order before thine eyes. Consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, when there is none to deliver." If this remarkable instance of grace, to such a base woman, be abused by you to licentiousness, and your opening a door of presumption to yourself expecting mercy in a continued course of wickedness, you are under a terrible delusion: for, God will wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of him that goes on in his trespasses." But, if you would enter in at the door of hope that is opened to you, in such examples as this, O seek, that in a merciful way, he may discover your sins to you, so as to make you know, at the same time, that he is the Christ, the anointed of God, to save you from your sin.

3. Hence see, that the word preached doth then only do saving good, when it comes close home to the heart, and when Christ is seen there: for here, see how the word of Christ came home with power upon this woman's heart, "He told me: he told me all things

that ever I did." The word was the searcher and discernor of the thoughts and intent of the heart: and the searching word was the strong hook that caught her; and she saw Christ therein; "Is not this the Christ?" Then the word is effectual and prevails, when Christ himself is seen; Christ is the best preacher himself; the only powerful preacher, who, by his word, can open the eyes: and by a sanctified sight of one sin, discovers all to the man; and in that discovery shews himself to be the Christ.

4. Hence see, that saving illumination is the best antidote against Arianism. Here the enlightened woman professes her faith of Christ's Deity, and thereupon of his being the Christ; she sees him to be the true God, "who told her all things that ever she did;" and thence declares him to be the true Messiah; "Is not this the Christ?" If Christ were not the true God, he could not be the true Messiah: and consequently, they who deny his supreme Deity deny that he is the Christ. And thus blasphemous Arians are guilty of denying the Lord that bought them: and they that thus deny him were never enlightened by him. A saving discovery of Christ will afford a poor illiterate person an argument from experience, and spiritual feeling, more strong and powerful, for proving the supreme Deity of Christ, than all the learned and logical arguments in the world, which a man may be fraughted with, and yet remain an Atheist; and, indeed, Arians are Atheists, whatever they profess: for, "He that denies the Son, denies the Father also:" because, to deny the necessary existence of the Son, is to reject the necessary paternity of the Father, who yet is as necessarily Father as he is God; and to deny both the Father and the Son is to condemn the necessary procession of the Holy Ghost from both; so that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is denied, when the supreme Deity of Christ is impugned. Alas! sirs, this atheistical world needs such a turn and measure of enlightening grace as this poor woman got.

5. Hence see, that persuasion, with application, is in the nature of saving faith, both objective and subjective. Persuasion objective, assuring the man that this is the Christ; and subjective also, assuring the man that as he is the Christ, the anointed, so he is anointed for my behalf; anointed, as the woman here suggests, as a Prophet for me, to tell me all things that ever I did; and, at the same time, that he told me all my sins, he told me that he was the Christ, anointed to save me: and hence she glories in him as the Christ. Whenever he manifests himself, faith brings in holy triumph in the

Lord, even under a sight of the greatest sinfulness. Indeed, such a sight as this woman got, namely, of the guilt of all the evils that ever she did, would have caused trembling, instead of triumphing, if faith's view of Christ discovered to her, had not carried, in the bosom of it, a fiducial persuasion of his being a Christ for her; which, whenever she saw, then she was kindly humbled; which leads me to another inference.

6. Hence see, that true gospel-humiliation and evangelical repentance goes not *before*, but it is a fruit of faith, and of Christ manifesting himself to the soul; for then, and not till then, does she cry out, O! he hath told me all things that ever I did. Now she sees all her sins in the brightest light. By the light of the stars we may see some things, by the light of the moon, we see more; but by the light of the sun, we see most of all. By the light of nature, people may see some sins; by the light of the law, more, much more: for "By the law is the knowledge of sin;" but, by the light of the Sun of righteousness, most of all is discovered; but with this difference, that the moonlight of the law shews the disease, and no more, leaving the sinner to die in that disease, and perish; but the sun-light of the gospel discovers the remedy. "The Sun of righteousness arising with healing under his wings. And when no less than the blood and righteousness of God is seen to be the healing medicine, then the disease appears to be infinitely great; and yet the sight is infinitely sweet, because it is a sight of that wonderful healing, under these wings and rays of the Sun of righteousness; this makes kindly and pleasant humiliation.

7. Hence see, that saving discoveries of Christ are very rare in our day; for, very few are thus exercised, either in condemning and debasing themselves, under a sense of all that ever they did; or in commending and exalting Christ, and dealing with others to come and see him. Oh! how few humble walkers, and hearty commenders of Christ are to be observed! Few taking kindly with their sin, and few breaking forth into the praising commendations of Christ! When this woman got a discovery of Christ, she kindly takes with her whoredoms, and all her sins that ever she did, and zealously breaks forth into the praises and commendation of Christ. But whence is it, that the land we live in, the Church of Scotland, is not taking with, and kindly acknowledging all that ever she did, and taking with all her whoredoms and adulteries, and treacherous breaking covenant with her God, to whom she solemnly gave her

hand? Whence is it that there is so little zeal in commending and exalting Christ in his supreme Deity, in a day wherein Arian¹ blasphemers open their mouth against him? Whence is there so little zeal for the reviving of our broken covenants, national and solemn league, even in a day wherein the obligation thereof is denied? Why are we neither humbly condemning ourselves, and taking with our national sins, nor highly commending Christ, and exalting him in his injured honours, truths, and prerogatives, but rather conniving with, and winking at, all the dishonours done to him? Why, what is the matter? The reason is, saving discoveries of Christ, which should work the contrary effect, are very rare. When the Lord hath a mind to build up Zion, he appears in his glory, as he did in the days of our Reformation; but now he hath justly hid himself from the God-provoking, Christ-despising, gospel-slighting generation. But, O sirs, if he would yet appear and discover his glory in the sanctuary, then we might expect Reformation times; but, as matters stand, we look as if a stroke and judgment, that hath been so long threatened, were suddenly to fall upon us with a terrible vengeance. There were little hazard of the present rumour of war,² if the Lord, who is a man of war, were not against us; and if the Lord carry on his controversy, it will be little wonder, though we should see the land turned into a field of blood and desolation, before we see another communion solemnity here. God hath borne long with us; but how much longer he will do so, who can tell? Forty years' peace in the church is a wonder, &c. But,

8. Hence see, that a meeting with Christ makes a marvellous change upon a person or people that are so privileged. Before this woman met with Christ, or rather before he met with her, she was nothing but a common strumpet; but now she is humbled to the dust for the sins she had formerly indulged herself in, and commends and exalts that Lord whom she had dishonoured. She is brought from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; from being exercised in corrupting and debauching her neighbours

(1) That Arianism was gaining ground in Scotland, at this time, was formerly noticed; and the process, before the supreme ecclesiastical court, relative to this affair, was this year terminated, with no very adequate sentence against the propagator of it; as any one may see who consults the printed process relative to that affair.

(2) About this time the nation was mightily alarmed about a rupture with Spain; which, as was affirmed, had entered into a formidable alliance with different powers, in order to recover Gibraltar and Portmahon, and place the Pretender on the throne of Britain.

to a kindly concern for their soul's everlasting welfare, to get them brought to Christ. Saving illumination and acquaintance with Christ creates in the heart a sympathy with the case of poor Christless sinners: "Come see a man that told me all things that ever I did: Is not this the Christ?" This leads me to

Use 2. Namely, an use of trial and examination, whether you have met with Christ, and got a saving discovery of him at this occasion or formerly. O how shall I know, say you, if I have met with Christ, and if he hath discovered himself to me? Why, if you have, then this discovery has led you to these two things. 1. A humiliation of self to the lowest. 2. An exalting of Christ to the highest.

1st, What self-humbling disposition and abasement hath been wrought in you? Are you laid low in the dust, and made vile in your own eyes, by Christ discovering you to yourself? Have you got a discovery of your own sinfulness, ugliness, and unworthiness? Hath Christ fallen a discoursing with you, and told you all things that ever you did? Hath he told you of your ill life, your wicked heart, your depraved nature? Hath he told you of your unbelief? For when the Spirit comes, he reproveth the world of sin; because they believe not in him. Hath he told you of your secret sins, and discovered to you what none but himself could tell you? And, have you taken it from himself without saying, who has gone and told the ministers this and that of me? Hath he told you of your wicked thoughts and intentions, and made the word the discernor of the thoughts and intents of your heart? Hath he told you your spiritual wickedness, your atheism, ignorance, enmity, carnality, pride, self, and hypocrisy, and made you to know the plagues of your own heart? Hath he told you of the fig leaves you have been covering yourself with, and the false refuges you have been running to, and chased you out of your refuges of lies? Hath he told you your secret, as well as open sins, and so told you some things, as that thereby he hath discovered the rest to you; and you have been led by the streams to the fountain of sin within? And, has he given you, by one glance upon the map of your corrupt nature, a view of your total depravation? Hath he told you your proper name by calling you a dog, and by making you take with your name, saying, "Truth, Lord, I am a dog," a devil, a monster! "Behold, I am vile!" Why, it is a glorious internal light that discovers this internal vileness. What makes you, with Job, to abhor

yourself? Why, it says, *Now your eyes see him*, Job xlii. 5, 6. What makes you, with Paul, look upon yourself as less than the least of all saints: yea, as the chief of all sinners, the worst of all sinners, the vilest of all sinners? Why, it says, "He hath revealed his Son in you." It is not natural for proud man to think so basely of himself; it is the Spirit of Christ that hath told you what you are. But here, to prevent any mistake, it may be asked,

QUEST. May not one who hath not the Spirit of God, nor a renewed conscience, be able to discern his own vileness?

ANSW. There is a double knowledge or understanding that men may have of themselves—viz., speculative and practical. As to the general speculative knowledge, a man may have this; common sense and reason may tell him his sin, and he may know himself to be a sinner, as being guilty of gross sins, such as drunkenness, whoredom, swearing, and the like. But there is a particular practical knowledge and understanding, which is two-fold, viz., either from the Spirit of God without us, or from the Spirit of God within us. That practical understanding which is from the Spirit of God without us, is what also the unregenerate may have. The Spirit of God, not yet received, but without a man, may come and make such discoveries of his sin, and guilt, and wickedness, as may make him cry out, That he is undone, undone. Such a knowledge had Nebuchadnezzar of the God of Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego. Such a knowledge also, it seems, Cain and Judas had. But the Spirit of God within us gives spiritual light and sense upon the conscience, and rectifies the judgment; whereas the Spirit of God, without a man, discovers sin mainly in order to hell and wrath, making him say, Undone, undone. The Spirit of God within a man makes him see the vileness of sin, and lament and mourn for that, saying, "Unclean, unclean. O wretched man that I am! Behold I am vile!" This affects him more than the wrath of God; yea, even when he sees the wrath of God is turned away, and that the shower is over his head, and bath lighted on the head of the Cautioner, even then he abhors himself for his own wickedness more than ever. This is from the Spirit of God within, and a gospel-light. The Spirit of God without a man, and the Spirit of God within him, differs as much as daylight differs from lightning. A flash of lightning from Sinai, or the fiery law, terrifies and astonishes the man, and makes him tremble and quake under a sense of sin; but the daylight of a saving discovery of Christ makes one see him-

self the chief of sinners, and yet fills him with holy triumph in the Lord the Saviour. A lightening confounds and surprises; but the daylight gives a clear, distinct, and sedate view of things as they are, with quiet and composure. Now, try if you have got a humbling view and discovery of Christ, or a word from him, that hath filled you with self abasement, so as you reckon you cannot have vile enough thoughts of yourself, because he hath, in effect, told you all things that ever you did.

2dly, Try what Christ-exalting and commending exercise you have been brought under; or what disposition is wrought in you to commend and exalt Christ to the highest. If Christ and you have met together, as he did with this woman of Samaria, then the meeting hath wrought in you the same effect, the same disposition to commend and exalt Christ, which you may try by these particulars.

1. If you have met with Christ in this manner, then you have seen him to be the CHRIST indeed, the God-man, the Anointed of the Father, the true Messias. Hath he told you, in effect, "I that speak unto thee am he? I that speak unto you by this gospel am he? Hath he borne home this upon your heart with convincing light and evidence, so as you have been brought to the apostle's faith, John vi. 69. "We believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God?" The faith of this is of such importance, that Christ hath said, "If you believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." Now, hath he spoken to you, as you were made, in effect, to think and say, I believe and am sure, that he that spoke unto me was he. It was not the minister only that I heard, but the word came with such light, life, and power, that I think no minister on earth, nor angel in heaven, could make the word to go through my heart as it did. It was like the sound of the voice of the Son of God.

2. If you have met with Christ in this manner, then he hath made such a gradual approach and discovery of himself to you as to raise in you gradually more and more a high esteem of him as a Prophet sent of God to teach you, and to tell you all things, as it was with this woman; and though he himself, and all his words are precious to you, yet there are some particular words among many that have taken more impression, and stick more fast than others. Though Christ spake many good words to this woman for her instruction, yet the word that made the first and deepest impression, is what she especially kept in heart, "He told me all things that

ever I did ;” and what she saw in this more clearly at first, she saw more clearly after Christ gave her a clearer manifestation of himself. If the saving discovery of Christ commenced and began, when he gave her the first discovery of her lewdness and whoredom, and conveyed light, at the same time, into her mind to perceive that he was a prophet, yet she was much in the dark, and took not up all that was intended by this discovery, till after he clearly discovered himself ; and then the former lesson is clearly taken up in all the parts of it. “ Therefore now,” says she, “ He told me all things that ever I did.” Some may have such obscure and cloudy discoveries of Christ at first that, though they raise a high esteem of Christ, yet the soul may be at a great loss to know what the full meaning of such a word is that Christ spake to their soul, till after they get a brighter discovery of him ; and then they may come to be more perfectly instructed in the same lesson, which, at first, they did not so well apprehend ; and in this his dealing with them, may be like that, John xiii. 7. “ What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.”

3. If you have met with Christ in this manner, then your mind is set above the world, and you have left it behind you as the woman here left her waterpot and ran to the city. O sirs, when Christ appears to a man, he thinks no more of the world than a potsherd ; he counts all but loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ ; yea, the most valuable things in the world are undervalued when Christ is discovered. As naturalists tell us, the loadstone will not draw in the presence of the diamond ; neither does the world in all its glory and gallantry draw the heart of any to it in the presence of Christ. The reason of this is, the Sun of righteousness darkens all the stars of creature-enjoyments, and makes them disappear and vanish. A drink out of the fountain of living waters makes all worldly comforts to be nothing but broken cisterns that can hold no water. They whose hearts were never weaned from the world, never met with Christ. Again, ..

4. If you have met with Christ, then your hearts will be set upon the work of commending him to others, and particularly to your neighbours and friends, that they may become acquaint with him also. Thus the discovery of Christ vents itself in the woman here, “ Come see a man that told me all things that ever I did. Is not this the Christ ?” A manifestation of Christ gives men such a fill of the fulness of God, that they must have a vent : and as, in

every saving manifestation, there is something of the nature of Christ communicate, who loves to communicate of his fulness; so they to whom Christ dispenses of his grace and fulness, love to communicate also of what they have; not that the saints are to make a blaze of their religion to every one they meet with, or to cast pearls before swine; but the love of Christ discovered to them, fills them with such ardent love to him, as obliges them, in all proper ways, to trumpet forth his glory and honour. They see such a glory in him, that they think all should wonder at him and own him; "Is not this the Christ?" They reckon none so obliged to free grace as they, and therefore they think it well becomes them to spread the savour of his name. They know also, by remembering what they themselves were before they met with Christ, they know what a sad state they are into who want acquaintance with Christ; therefore, both out of love and regard to the glory and honour of Christ, and out of love, pity, and compassion to the perishing souls of others, they desire and endeavour to commend Christ to them; both by their words and actions, both by their talk and walk, as the woman of Samaria did. What heart then and disposition have you got to commend Christ to your neighbours and friends, to your children and servants? If you have no heart nor disposition to such exercise as this, surely you cannot make it out that you have met with Christ.

5. If you have met with Christ, then it will be your hearty desire not only to commend Christ, and speak of him to others, making him the great subject of your conversation, but also to have them taste what you have tasted, and see what you have seen, without resting merely on your report; "Come see a man that told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" Rest not on my report, might she say; but, O come and see him! My friends, spiritual converse about Christ, is much out of fashion in our degenerate age; yea, to enter on spiritual discourse in some companies would be to expose a man to scorn and ridicule—a sad instance of estrangement from Christ and religion. But are there not some professors, whose speech of Christ, and of the things of God, betrays them and bewrays them; for, either it is but the outside of religion they talk of. For example, How well such a man preached, and how long such a man preached, and how many tables, or how many strangers were at such a communion, and all such little-worth questions, no better than idleness; treating of the shell and not the

kernal of ordinances ; or, if they enter upon any substantial conversation, either they soon weary of that, or give evidence of such a selfish spirit as bespeaks an inclination to commend themselves rather than to commend Christ. The import of their language is rather, Come and hear me, than Come and see Christ. But, O sirs, a meeting with Christ will fill the soul with a desire that others may share of what they share, and see what they have seen, with a desire to take the most effectual method that may be for drawing them to Christ. Hence, as this woman speaks out her very heart, so she attempts to draw them to Christ with the very same hook with which she was drawn ashore herself : "He told me all things that ever I did ; is not this the Christ?" Therefore, come see him.

6. If you have met with Christ, and conversed with him, you will think long for another meeting with him, another sight of him ; for this was the woman's disposition here, "Come see the man." She spake as if she desired to be the foremost in returning again to see him. If you think you have got enough of Christ, it is a sign you have got nothing of him savingly. If you have got a saving sight of him, then you will desire more and more, and still more, till you see him face to face in Emmanuel's land. The disposition of these that have attained to a sight of Christ, and apprehended him by faith is exemplified by the apostle Paul, Phil. iii. 12, 13, 14. It is strange, as if they had attained nothing, apprehended nothing, in comparison of what they aspired after and would be at : "Not as though I had already attained ; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which I am apprehended, of Christ." And again, "I count not myself to have apprehended ; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth to those things that are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." It is possible, that unsound professors may fancy they have attained much, and yet have attained nothing ; and resting on their attainments, they rest upon nothing but a shadow. It is possible that sound believers may judge they have attained nothing, though yet they have attained much ; and hence neglecting their attainments, they press after more and more of Christ. As Paul here, "I count not myself to have attained : I count not myself to have apprehended." What count you of your attainments, man, when the great apostle Paul counts nothing of his, though he was one of the most clearly enlightened, and highly privileged men in the world? Happy

is that soul who has attained the knowledge of Christ, and yet is as far from thinking that he knows or has attained as much as may suffice him, that he rather counts as if he knew nothing, or had attained nothing; and therefore presses after more of Christ. O for the other sight of him! O for the other meeting with him! O for another communion! another blink of his beauty and glance of his glory. Thus the happy woman counts not herself to have seen or attained enough of Christ, but longs for another sight. It is an excellent mark of a meeting with Christ, to be longing for more and more of Christ here, and for full vision of him in the higher house, and to be in a case practically to discover this in an exemplary commendation of Christ to others; while it is not only the matter of your religious talk, signifying only, Go, see him, but the import of your exemplary walk; "Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did: Is not this the Christ?"

Use 3. Another Use should be by way of Exhortation. And our exhortation shall be tendered, 1. To believers who have got a discovery of Christ; 2. To unbelievers who are yet strangers to him.

1st, To you, believers, who have got a saving discovery of Christ working these effects upon you, leading you to condemn and debase yourselves to the lowest, and to commend and exalt Christ to the highest. O let me exhort you to walk suitable to such a meeting with Christ; that is, 1. To a humble walk, like one to whom Christ hath told all things that ever you did. 2. To a holy walk, like one that would commend and exalt a holy Jesus, saying, "Come, see a man" that hath so and so spoken to me: "Is not this the Christ?"

[1.] I would exhort you to a humble walk. O believer, hath he given you a sight of yourself, and of your own vileness and baseness, "Walk humbly with thy God:" and, in order to this, still keep the glass before your eye, wherein he hath discovered you to yourself. There are several glasses wherein the saints behold themselves, which makes them have low thoughts of themselves.

1. The looking-glass of the law of God, which discovers to them the vileness of their nature, thoughts, desires, and affections: When the law comes, sin revives. The law is a light by which all things are reprov'd and made manifest, Eph. v. 13. Keep this glass before your eye, even you that are wholly delivered from the law as a covenant of works, yet make constant use of it as a light;

both a light to your head, to inform and convince you of your sin and wickedness; and a light to your feet, to direct you in the paths of righteousness.

2. There is the glass of a renewed understanding and a rectified judgment that the saints see their vileness in; when they have an impartial rule, and eye-salve with it, then they see themselves as they are. If a man be blind, he cannot see himself, though he have never so clear a glass before him; "Take heed that the light that is in you be not darkness," Luke xi. 35. Wherever spiritual light and wisdom is, there is a clear sight people have of themselves.

3. There is the glass of Conscience, sprinkled with the blood of Christ; this every true believer carries about with him. Whatever the understanding sees, the conscience comes and lays it at his door; and the conscience being renewed and reconciled to God, it is then God's messenger to inform, to rouse, to arraign, and condemn. Conscience brings in all our unworthiness and charges us with it; and then, what base and low thoughts have we of ourselves! Oh! I deserve to be in hell, says the soul! I deserve no mercy at the hand of God!

4. There is the glass of Experience, in which every saint looks on himself, and beholds he is vile. Why, the sad experience he hath of a treacherous backsliding heart, notwithstanding of all the love of God and Christ manifested in him; the sad experience of the law of the members, warring against the law of the mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin and death, and making him cry many times, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death?" The sad experiences of many inward lustings, fightings, and reigning corruptions, and desperate departings from the Lord. Alas! how vile does the saint see himself in this glass.

5. There is the glass of the Holiness of GOD, the glass of his infinite pure glory, Rev. iv. 8, 10, "When they cried, Holy, holy, holy Lord God almighty, which was, and is, and is to come; then the twenty-four elders fell down before the throne." What made Isaiah to cry out of his uncleanness, but a view of this holy and infinitely pure glory of God. It was a view of the glorious holiness of Christ that made John the Baptist say, "O! I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose the latches of his shoes;" and yet he hath Christ's testimony, that there was not a greater prophet than he. Oh! how vile is a man in his own eyes, when he looks to himself in this glass!

6. There is the glass of the LOVE of GOD, and of his grace and mercy in Christ: we may appeal to you that have experience of it, of any thing in the world hath a greater power to humble the soul, and lay it in the dust than this, even the consideration of the infinite love of God! "I was a blasphemer, and a persecutor; yet I obtained mercy. O such a monster of sin and wickedness as I am, and yet I have obtained mercy! O such a dog, such a devil, and yet I obtained mercy!" O sirs, when a child of God sees the grace of God in the glass of a manifestation, O how low does he sink in his own esteem. All the storms and blustering winds will not melt a rock of ice; but when the sun-beams arise upon it, how is it then melted and thawed? Thus nothing in the world melts and thaws the hard heart so much as the hope and sense of divine love. When a child of God sees the grace of God in the glass of a commendation, as when Christ says to the soul a word like that, Song iv. 7, "Thou art all fair, my love, and there is no spot in thee." What! O what is this that a God is saying to the like of me, the blackest, the basest of all sinners! O, how low does self sink before the love and grace of God.

7. There is the glass of the Spirit of God shining upon the word of God, into the understanding and the conscience, and giving light to see into these other glasses. As he is the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, and giving the knowledge of the law of God, the holiness of God, the love and grace of God in Christ; for the clearest eye, and the clearest glass both, will show nothing without light; so it is the Spirit of light that sets all these things home upon the soul, and makes it apply all to itself, and so it becomes yet more vile in its own eyes. I shall add,

8. There is the glass of the example of God, of God's humility, his stupendous humility and condescension. God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, humbling themselves for our good. See how God the Father humbles himself, Psalm cxiii. 5, 6, "Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high; who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth? It is a step of great condescension that he should apply himself in his providence to our wants and necessities; and especially, that he should concern himself so far with sinners, as to send the Son of his love out of his bosom to redeem them. See how God the Son humbled himself when he stepped out of his Father's bosom, out of the ivory palaces, where he was made glad from eternity; yea, though he

was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, yet he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. The glass of his suffering and humiliation, wherein he stept as far down as hell to quench the flames of infinite wrath, is a glass, indeed, wherein we may see sin to be infinitely evil, and ourselves to be ineffably vile. See also how the Holy Ghost humbles himself; what a vast condescension is it for God the Holy Ghost, to undertake to teach such indocible creatures as we, to wash such lepers as we, to purge such polluted souls, and to dwell in our hearts and bosoms, so full of unsavoury stems of hell? Hath a God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, given us such examples of humility, and shall not this move us to step a little down the hill? O proud sinner, does God humble himself in your sight, and will not you humble yourself before him? Can a man look into the glass of God's humility, and yet be proud?

O believers, keep these glasses in your eye, and walk humbly before him, who hath set the glass before you, wherein you have seen your vileness, and hath told you all things that ever you did. O maintain a deep and humble sense of your own vileness and baseness; and the rather, that such a fountain of sin and wickedness remains yet within you, as endangers you of doing all the same evils again that ever you did, even after he hath told you all things that ever you did. The body of sin and death that remains in you, will incline you to sins of all sorts and sizes: surely, then, you cannot walk too humbly and circumspectly. I know no extreme of self-abasement you can run into, but will deserve the name of pride rather than humility. It will be pride, and not humility, in you to deny any thing that God hath done for you in the way of grace, because you are so vile in yourself; that smells as if you were not pleased that God should get all the glory, but incline that you should have had some of it. O proud blasphemer, come down from your altitude, and be content frankly to own and acknowledge that grace hath done much even for you. Again, It will be pride, and not humility, for you to deny and refuse to take Christ by the hand, when you are down in the dust; or to take what help he offers you, even when you are lying in the mire. It was Peter's pride to say, "Lord, thou shalt never wash my feet;" and yet no doubt he took it for humility. Again, it is pride, and not humility to refuse the consolations of the Spirit, because you are conscious of your own vileness and abomina-

tion; do not lay upon yourself a load of self-censuring, more than God himself does; "I said in my haste (says David), I am cast off from before thine eyes," Psal. xxxi. 22. David was in haste when he said it, and so may you say, Will God allow any favour or comfort to such as I am? It is pride and arrogancy to measure God by your thoughts, and to limit his mercy. Again, it is pride, and not humility, for you to deny him the praise and commendation due to him from you, lest you be not a fit hand for doing it. Why, says one, I think I would desire to commend Christ to others, and speak to his praise, but I am afraid I prove a hypocrite, and prove a scandal to religion. Why, man, woman, whatever come of you, let not Christ want his due, and it shall not fare the worse with you; therefore, "Walk humbly with thy God;" or, as the word may be read, "Humble thyself to walk with thy God." It is best humility to be found in the way of duty; and it is pride to withdraw from it, upon any consideration of self-unworthiness.

[2.] I would exhort you to a holy walk, and thereby to commend and exalt Christ, as the woman of Samaria here did, saying, both with your lip and life, "Come see a man that told me all things that ever I did; Is not this the Christ?" Where she both takes shame to herself, and gives glory to God in Christ; and as our chief happiness lies in the enjoyment of God, and our holiness lies in glorifying him, which is our chief end; so the way to glorify him, is to commend and exalt Christ with our hearts, lips, and lives. The text leads me to direct you particularly to this part of holiness, namely, to commend him to all that you have opportunity to converse with, and to converse with before the world. Hath he met with you, as he did with this woman? O then commend him, and preach forth his excellency. Here is a way how every private Christian may be a preacher of Christ. This belongs not to ministers only, but even you who are followers of Christ, among the female sex, that cannot regularly be preachers of Christ in a ministerial way; yet, O poor woman, it is comfortable that you may be a successful teacher and preacher of Christ in a Christian charitable way, by your spiritual communion and conversation. O woman, commend Christ to your husband: O man, commend Christ to your wife. O parents and masters, commend him to your children and servants. O believer, commend Christ to your neighbours and friends, and all that you have regular access to.

1. Commend him humbly as this woman did; "He told me all

things that ever I did :” she kept her eye upon her own baseness, and vileness, and unworthiness, which he had discovered to her. Saints have a double eye, viz., a carnal eye, and a spiritual eye ; or the eye of sense, and the eye of faith. When they look upon themselves with the carnal eye of sense, then they forget all that ever they did and what Christ told them and convinced them of, and are apt to gaze upon their own parts and gifts ; and then self creeps in and spoils their pleasant exercise. But when they look upon themselves with the spiritual eye of faith, then they loath themselves, and commend Christ to purpose, and set him up to the highest when self is sinking to the lowest in remembrance of all that ever they did, as he told them.

2. Commend him highly also, as this woman did commend him as the great God, the searcher of hearts, the glorious JEHOVAH ; when Arians and atheists at this day are pulling him down from his throne, if it were possible. O set you him up, and commend him from your own experience, as the God-man that told you all things that ever you did. Commend him in his offices, saying, “ Is not this the Christ ?” the sealed and consecrated of the Father, to be the Prophet, Priest, and King of Zion ? Is not this JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU, “ The Lord our righteousness ?” Is not this JEHOVAH-ROPHI, “ The Lord our physician ?” Is not this JEHOVAH-SHAMMA, the IMMANUEL, “ God with us ?” Is not this the promised MESSIAS, in whom all the promises of God are Yea and Amen ? Is not this the only Saviour, in whom all our salvation lies, being made of God to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption ? O there is more to say to his commendation, than the tongues of angels can trumpet forth to eternity. Again,

3. Commend him zealously as this woman did, *Come and see HIM* ; it is not, come and hear what I have to say of him ; but, Come see himself. Let these whom you commend him to, understand, that what you would be at, is, that they should never rest till they see, and taste, and handle this word of life ; and know, to their experience, what you know. And thus also,

4. Commend him feelingly as this woman did, “ Come see a man that told me all things that ever I did.” You should let strangers to Christ know, that what you speak of Christ, you have felt and experienced. If you know the terrors of the Lord, you will persuade men, with an aching heart, and with holy fear and trembling ; and if you know the consolations of God, you will speak of

them with holy triumph, and as if your heart were leaping within you. Experience is the mother of affection ; commend him feelingly and affectionately. And yet,

5. Commend him cautiously, as you also find this woman did. I think it is also remarkable, in this short account that she gives of her converse with Christ, that she hid, in her own bosom, that special part of Christ's discourse to her that made most for her own consolation, particularly, that glorious word, wherein he clearly manifested himself to her, saying, "I that speak unto thee, am he." No, she relates nothing of this ; but tells them of that part of the conference, which made most to her shame, as well as to his honour : "He told me all things that ever I did." As if she was content, that Christ should be exalted on the ruins of her reputation ; to let her name be debased, that his name might be exalted. Indeed, it tends most to her praise, that she commends Christ to them in that particular that made most to her shame ; and she tells them no more of what he said. Here is wisdom and caution : and indeed there are some precious things that Christ speaks to his people when they are alone, that is not fit to be blazed abroad to every one, especially to these that are yet strangers to Christ ; but, in commending Christ to them, it is safest to treat of these particulars that make most for the debasing of ourselves, and for the exalting of Christ.

6. And lastly, O commend him practically, as you see this woman did, while she says not, Go see ; but, "Come see a man that told me all things that ever I did." O believer, after a communion if you have met with Christ, either now, or formerly, commend him, not only verbally, with your mouth ; but practically, with your life ; saying, in effect, Come see him. The life of commendation, is the commendation of the life ; not of the lip, that says, Go see : but of the life, that says, Come see ; your *Go see* will not convince any that you are in earnest ; but a *Come see* may make them follow your example. When you say, Go, and pray ; go, and praise ; go, and worship ; go, and do this and that excellent service ; they only hear you : but when you go before them, and say, Come, and praise ; come, and worship ; come, and let us seek after Christ, then they both hear and see you ; and are the more apt to come and see with you.

O believer, give evidence that you have met with Christ, by living TO him as your end, and ON him as your all ; he died that you should not live to yourself, but to him : and now he lives, that you

may live upon him : “because I live (says he), ye shall live also.” O sirs, let it be seen that you are three story high ; and that there is a new addition made to your spiritual stature, by the light of a new discovery of Christ. The light of reason may make people good moral men ; the light of gifts, good scholars ; but the light of grace and experience, good and holy Christians. O believer, beware of such a practice and conversation, as will give occasion to the world to say, Take up your communicants ; they can tittle and drink, swear and debauch, as well as their neighbours. Oh ! will you give occasion to Christ to say, “He that sat at table with me, and ate of my bread, hath lift up his heel against me ? These are the wounds that I have got in the house of my friends ?” O see that your conversation be a practical saying, “Come and see the man that hath told me all things that ever I did ; Is not this the Christ ?” And let the leading part of your practice lie in this, a going again to see Christ, and attending and depending upon him, in all the duties of religion, in order to your getting more and more acquaintance with him. For, as it is a saving discovery of Christ that works this self-debasing, Christ-exalting effect : so the more of this you get, it will fit you still the more for commending of him humbly and practically.

Let your walk then appear to be a gospel-walk, a walking in Christ, and a going still again and again to seek him and see him, that you may be the more like unto him ; and that beholding as in a glass his glory, you may be changed into the same image from glory to glory. It is but a dunghill on which the sun shines, and yet reflects no beams ; but the sun shining on a ball of silver, or upon a bright glass, or a still water, it will make another sun by reflecting the beams of it. Thus the broken beams of the glory of God, shining on Moses in the mount, made him come down full of glory. And, O sirs, the more of the glory of Christ you see, the more of the glory of God’s holiness will appear about you, and the more of heaven ; of which it is said, they shall be like him, for they shall see him as he is. The more frequently you return to see Christ, the more fit will you be for resisting the snares and temptations you meet with ; for your heart is a magazine of hell where corruption lies, like a barrel of gunpowder, ready to take fire with the least spark of temptation, and to blow you up in the flames ; but the more you come to see and converse with Christ, the more you will get of the living water, which Christ gave to this woman ;

“The Spirit as a well of water, springing up to everlasting life :” and if you can get that barrel of powder sunk into the bottom of this well, or the flood of the Spirit to drown and overflow it, will you not then be more proof against all the sparks of hell, and fiery darts of the devil? O believer, is not the Spirit promised as floods upon the dry ground, to drench the dry powder? And does not your profession oblige you to this attendance and dependence upon Christ for more and more of the Spirit? For what mean you when you say, “Is not this the Christ?” Do you not mean, Is not this the Anointed of God; anointed with the Spirit, to give the Spirit? Therefore, let your constant recourse be to him on this errand, taking as many along with you as you can, by the influence of your advice and example, saying, “Come see a man that told me all things that ever I did; Is not this the Christ?”

2dly, I would close with a word to these that are yet strangers to Christ, that never met with him, nor got such a discovery of him as leads to this self-abasing and Christ-exalting exercise. And may I be allowed by you, O you that are believers in Christ in this house, to personate you in a few words, and speak to these that are strangers to Christ in your name. O Christless sinner, “Come see a man that hath told us all things that ever we did; Is not this the Christ?” The hearts of all that are acquaint with Christ, join with me in saying to you, Come see him, come see him; “That which we have heard and seen, declare we unto you, that you may have fellowship with us in our fellowship with the Father and the Son, by the Spirit.” There are some here that can say, we have heard his voice, telling us all things that ever we did; and we have seen his glory as the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth; and, “Is not this the Christ?” Come see a man that hath opened our eyes, and sometimes dispelled all our clouds and darkness; “Is not this the Christ?” anointed to teach and instruct the like of you. Come see a man that hath pardoned all our sins, and washed us in his blood; “Is not this the Christ?” anointed to be a Prophet to teach and instruct the like of you. Come see a man that hath pardoned all our sins, and washed us in his blood; “Is not this the Christ?” anointed to be a Priest to justify guilty sinners like you. Come see a man that hath subdued all our iniquities, and sometimes given a dash to the power of sin and Satan in us; “Is not this the Christ?” anointed to be a King to ransom slaves of the devil like you. O come see a man, of whom we can

sometimes say, he hath healed all our diseases ; “ Is not this the Christ ? ” anointed to be a Physician for healing such desperate diseases as yours are. Come see a man that hath convinced us of all our sins and vileness of heart and way, and drawn out our hearts to him as the God-man ; “ Is not this the Christ ; IMMANUEL, God with us ? ” You need not say, where shall we see him ? you have neither a journey to go down to hell, nor up to heaven ; “ The word is nigh ; ” and in the glass of this word he is to be seen. All the believers here can say, we never saw him any where but in this word of the gospel, and in these public ordinances ; and there he lies as open to your view as to ours. The word is the immediate object of our faith, wherein we see him ; and when we hear him speaking to us in his word, and hear with spiritual understanding, then we see him. To hear and know his voice, is all one with seeing him ; it is in his word, that we hear him telling how polluted and filthy we are, and thus all that ever we did ; and hear him telling how fair and lovely he is, and thus shewing us that he is the Christ ; so that we see him in what he tells us in his word ; and as we have seen him there, so you may see him here ; you have the same glass, the same Bible, the same word, the same promise, the same gospel-mirror to see him into, that ever any saint on earth saw him in, since he ascended to heaven : “ The word is nigh, even in thy heart, and in thy mouth. ” O then, rest not on our report of him only ; for, what he hath told us concerning ourselves, and concerning himself, will not profit you, if you do not come and see that our report is true. Come and see him yourself, by believing and taking it on his own word, that he is the Christ, anointed for your behoof.

But what is this I am doing, speaking to you only in the name of believers ? Here (however base a worm I am) my office warrants me to speak to you in a greater name than theirs or ours ; yea, in his name, the latchet of whose shoes we are not worthy to unloose : In his name, then, who is the glorious JEHOVAH, the God-man, that can tell you all things that ever you did, and thereby give you convincing evidence that he is the Christ, I call you to come and see him. He can tell you some things about you, O sinner, that the world does not know, and cannot tell you. And may I presume in his name, to tell you something, perhaps, yet a secret, which if he would bless, you might therein hear him, telling you all things that ever you did. Let me allude to what past between Christ and this

woman in the context, upon their first meeting; and, perhaps, there is more than an illusion in it.

Christ hath been at this occasion, offering you the living water; and if you be saying with this woman, whether in jest or earnest, "Sir, give me this water that I thirst not;" Christ is in effect, saying, "Go call your husband and come hither;" bring whatever husband you are in league with, that so your league and covenant with death, and your marriage with hell may be disannulled. If you be saying with this woman, "I have no husband;" why, then you may hear Christ saying, in effect to you, "Thou hast well said, I have no husband;" for as long as you are not married to Christ you have no head, no husband, that can do you any service. But, "Behold, you have had five husbands;" you have had many husbands, and whom you are now married to is not your husband, your true and lawful husband. O harlot sinner, you have been married unto many a black husband all your days; you have been married to the law, the first husband; married to your own righteousness and self-conceit; you have been married to the world; married to your lusts; yea, and married to the devil; your heart hath been joined to idols; and now, by this, he is telling you all that ever you did. He is telling you what you have been, and what you have done. Have you been a common strumpet, a common whoremonger, a common drunkard, a common swearer, a common Sabbath-breaker, a neglecter of prayer in secret, and in your family? Yea, you have been a hypocrite, an atheist, a blasphemer, a persecutor, a murderer, an injurious person, unjust, unfaithful to God and man, unmerciful, unbelieving, impenitent. He is telling you your secret faults, not only what you did in such a company, but what was that you did in such a private place, "When thou wast under the fig-tree I saw thee," says Christ to Nathaniel, in another case; so says Christ to you, when thou wast under the dark shade, hiding thyself from the eyes of men, my eye was upon thee; under the cloud of night I saw thee: and, "Can any hide himself in secret places that I cannot see? do not I fill heaven and earth, says the Lord?" Yea, I saw, all that ever you thought, or did, or designed to do; and I saw into thy heart and wicked nature from whence thy atheistical practices did spring. And now, if by his word he be telling you all things that ever you did, then what do you say to this question, "Is not this the Christ?" Is he at one glance giving you a view of all your lewdness, all your baseness, all your vileness?

Then do you perceive that he is a Prophet, when he tells you how many false husbands you have had? O! "Is not this the Christ?" Is not this the only true Husband with whom your soul should match? Is he the man that hath told you all things that ever you did? O then, "Will you go with this man?" Will you marry the man, the God-man, the Christ of God? He is content, even after all your whoredoms to receive you for a bride, even after you have been adulterously matched with the devil and your lusts; will you match with this man, and quit with all your base husbands that have been haleing and dragging you to hell, and say, "What have I to do any more with idols?" Oh! my five husbands have ruined me; my false unhappy matches can give me no comfort, either in death or through eternity, but rather contribute to my eternal condemnation. But here is a glorious, wonderful match in my offer, "A man that hath told me all things that ever I did: Is not this the Christ," that is anointed to save me from the guilt of all that ever I did, and to save me from sin and wrath. O then, is it a match? is it a bargain? Why, say you, Who is he that I may match with him? Where is this Christ? Behold, man, woman, he is saying to you in this word, "I that speak unto thee, am he;" though it be by a poor sinful messenger that I am speaking to you, says Christ, yet, "I that speak unto you, am he." And now, O hath he discovered himself to you in this word, and drawn out your heart to the match? Then think not strange that you meet with some interruption in his converse with you; but go your way and leave your waterpot behind you; and give up not only with your unlawful husbands, but even with your lawful works and endeavours, in point of trust and confidence: for your own black righteousness, and doings of yours, will never draw a drop of living water to you; but let your heart say, "In the Lord only have I righteousness and strength; I will go in the strength of the Lord God, and make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only." O may it be heard tell of you in the city of Dunfermline, as it was heard of this woman in the city of Samaria, that you have met with Christ; that by your words and walk henceforth you are determined to say, "Come see a man that told me all things that ever I did; Is not this the Christ?"

END OF VOL. V.

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