



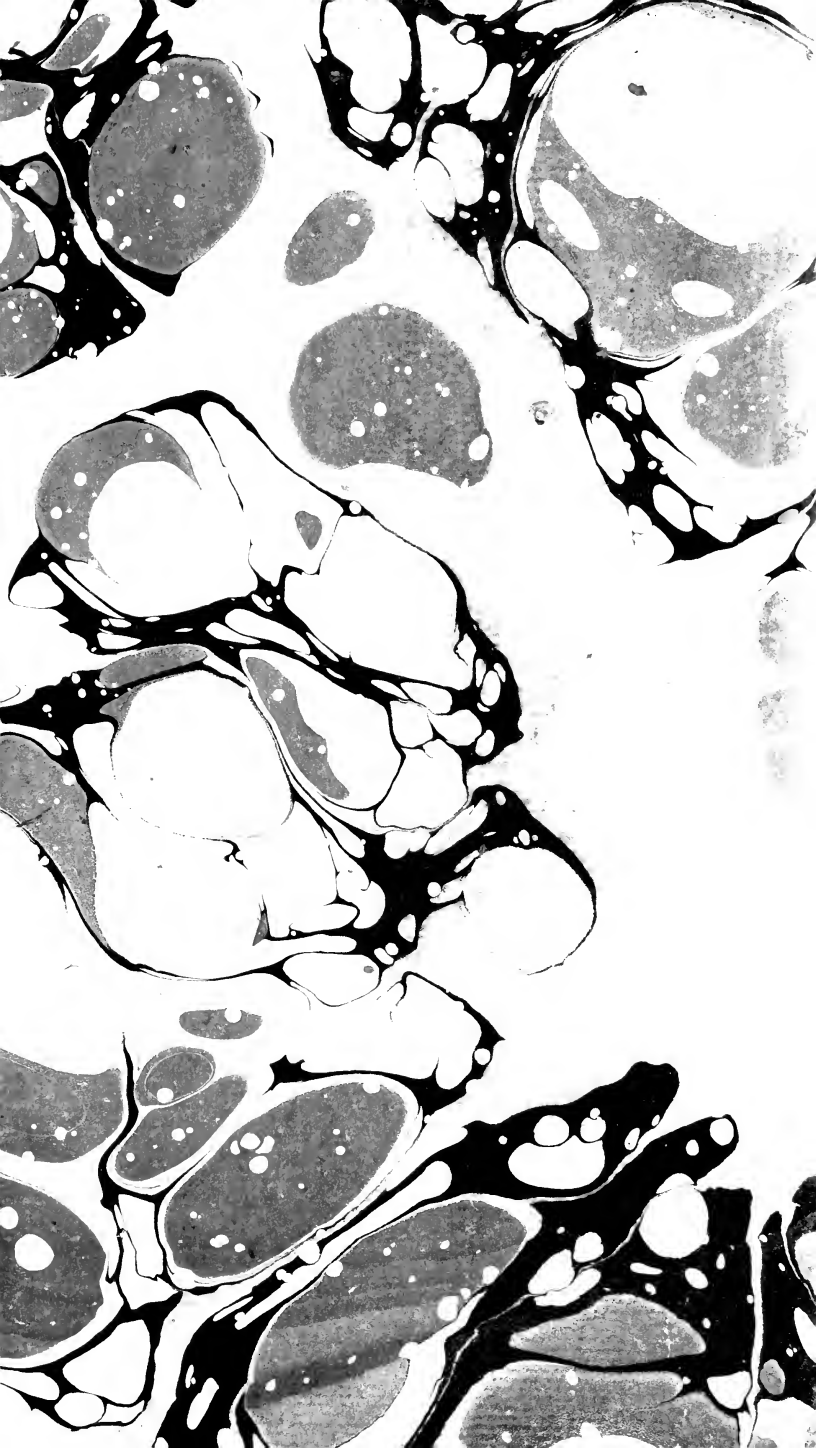
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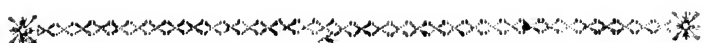
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BY

Professor Henry van Dyke, D.D., LL.D.







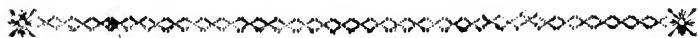
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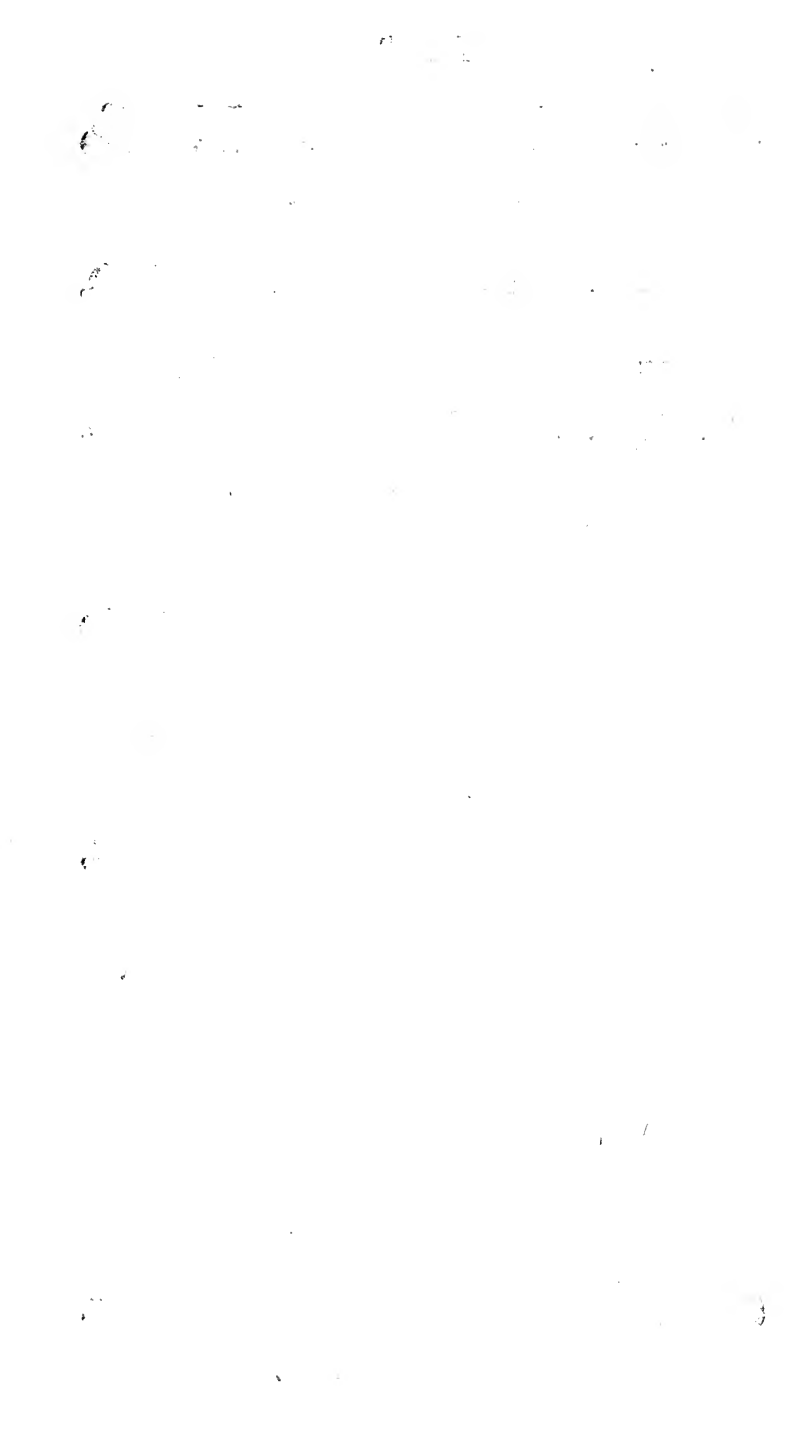
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with an ELEGIAC POEM and large CONTENTS.

Christ sent me to preach the gospel. 1 COR. i. 17.

VOL. VI.

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T H E C O N T E N T S.

S E R M O N LXXXVIII.

THE promising God, a performing God, Page 13

GEN. xxviii. 15.—*For I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.*

After an introduction, and the words viewed in their connection, divided, opened up, explained, and the sense wrapt up in a doctrine, the following general topics of discourse are handled, viz.

1. What is to be understood by the Bethel-visits that God may allow his people, 18
2. Some of the dark days that may follow these Bethel-interviews, mentioned, 23
3. The promise explained, *I will not leave thee*, &c. though dark days may intervene between the promise and the accomplishment, 29
4. Some grounds offered upon which they may be assured that God *will not leave them, till he hath done that which he hath spoken to them of*, 41
5. Several inferences deduced for the application, 45

S E R M O N LXXXIX.

The Combination and Conjunction of Joys ; or, the joyful Approach of the Saviour, chearfully welcomed by the Church's Echo of Faith, 61

PSALM xlvii. 7.—*Lo, I come!*—

SONG ii. 8. *Behold, he cometh!*

The words being complexly viewed and explained, and the scope of them summed up in a doctrinal proposition, the following general heads of method are prosecuted, viz.

1. What

1. What comings of Christ to his people are joyful to him and them, pointed out, 63
2. What makes his coming joyful to *him*, evinced, 67
3. Shew what makes his coming joyful to *them*, 68
4. What expressions of joy in him are imported in his, *Lo, I come!* 71
5. What expressions of joy in them are imported in their *Behold, he cometh!* 74
6. Whence is this combination and conjunction of joys, 77
7. Inferences deduced for the application of the whole, in an use of information, trial, and exhortation, 80

S E R M O N XC,—XCIV.

The Time of Need, a Time of Love, 90

EZEK. xvi. 8. *Now, when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee; behold, thy time was a time of love.*

The words being viewed in their spiritual meaning, analized, explained, and a doctrinal proposition raised from them, the following topics of discourse are handled, *viz.*

1. The sinner's time of need and misery, as described in the context, spoken of, 91
2. God's time of love, as here also represented, considered, 92
3. That he shews his love at such a remarkable juncture, as makes it appear, their time of need is his time of love, evinced, 97
4. That this is matter of wonder and admiration, pointed out, 103
5. Inferences deduced for the application of the whole, 105
 - Use* 1. Of admiration, *ibid.*
 - 2. Of examination, 106
 - A word of advice, 108
 - 3. Of information, by propounding and answering several questions, 112
 - 4. Of examination; how to know if a *time of trouble* has been a *time of love*, 126
 - 5. Of exhortation; to two sorts of persons, 156
 - (1.) To these whose time was *never* a time of love, *ibid.*
 - (2.) To such whose time has *been* a time of love, 163

S E R M O N X C V.

Sensible Prefence, Sudden Absence; or, the Believer's most comfortable Interviews but of short Duration. Page 175

GEN. xxxv. 13. *And God went up from him, in the place where he talked with him.*

Having viewed the words in their scope and connexion, divided, explained, and taken up their sense in a doctrinal observation, the following heads of method are proposed, viz.

1. To speak a little of the communion that God's people may have with him, 178
2. Offer a few remarks concerning their missing and finding the Lord, 181
3. To enquire in what respects they may miss him, where they enjoyed him, 184
4. Assign the reason of this dispensation, 188
5. Make application of the whole subject, 190

S E R M O N X C V I.

The Mounting Christian; or, the Eagle-winged Believer, 203

ISA. xl. 31.—*They shall mount up with wings as eagles.*

After an introduction to the words, the scope of the prophet in the preceding verses, the words themselves viewed as they stand connected with the preceding and subsequent clauses, and their sense expressed in a doctrinal proposition, the following general topics are handled, viz.

1. The wings wherewith they mount up, spoke of, 208
2. The things wherein they mount up, mentioned, 209
2. The seasons when it is especially they mount up, 213
4. The manner how they mount up, 215
5. The reasons why they mount up, examined, 217
6. Application made of the whole subject, in several uses, 219



THE CONTENTS

S E R M O N XC VII.

The River of Life, proceeding out of the Throne of
God and of the Lamb, Page 232

REV. xxii. 1. *And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb.*

The words being viewed in their scope, their sense ascertained, explained, and summed up in a doctrine, the following general heads of method are profecute, viz.

1. Some remarks offered for clearing and confirming the doctrine, 234
2. The property and quality of the water of this river observed, 236
3. The import of its being said to proceed out of the throne of God and the Lamb, 239
4. The reasons why this river is said to proceed from thence, 241
5. Inferences deduced for the application of the whole, 244

S E R M O N XCVIII, XCIX.

The Comer's Conflict; or, the Beginner's Battle
with the Devil, when essaying to come to Christ
by Faith, 260

LUKE ix. 42. *And as he was yet a-coming, the devil threw him down and tare him. —*

The Author having considered the words in their connexion, divided, explained, and raised a doctrine from them, the following particulars are illustrated, viz.

1. The import of coming to Christ, opened, 262
2. In what respects matters may grow worse with people, even when they are thus coming to Christ, 263
3. The reasons why people come to Christ for help, and why they whom he undertakes to help, may find their distress grow, before their deliverance come, 264
4. The application of the whole subject, 265
 - (1.) Satan's temptations to heart-blasphe-my, cautioned against, 270
 - (2.) He tempts to heart wandering, 273
 - (3.) To the omission of duty, 275
 - (4.) To the commission of sin, 276
 - (5.) To unworthy apprehensions of God, 277
 - (6.) To self-murder, 281

S E R M O N C.

Dark Providences cleared in due Time. Page 287

JOHN xiii. 7.—*What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.*

After taking a view of the words in their scope and design, analyzing and explaining them, deducing an observation from them, and confirming it by an induction of scripture instances, the following general heads are proposed, viz.

1. To mention some things the Lord doth towards his church and people, that are dark and mysterious, hidden and unknown, 292
2. To shew in what respects these things that he is doing for them, may be hid and unknown to them, 297
3. For what reason the Lord takes this way of doing, so hid, dark, and mysterious, that what he doth they know not, 301
4. To observe some seasons when it is that he makes them know what new they are in the dark about, 303
5. To deduce some inferences for the application of the whole, 309

S E R M O N C I.

The Great Trumpet of the Everlasting Gospel, 322

ISA. xxvii. 13. *And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown; and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mountain at Jerusalem.*

The words being copiously viewed, both as to their literal, typical, and spiritual meaning, accurately analyzed and explained, their spiritual sense expressed in a doctrinal observation, and each branch of the doctrine confirmed and illustrated from express texts of scripture, the following general topics of discourse are insisted upon, viz.

1. The state and condition of sinners by nature, as outcasts, ready to perish, considered, 328
2. The duty of sinners to come to a Saviour, the great Lord-deliverer, and glorious object of worship, 331
3. The

THE CONTENTS.

3. The means spoke of by which the Lord gathers these sinners thus to him, *viz.* the blowing of the great gospel-trumpet, 334
4. The efficacy of these means, and shew why it is promised they *shall come*, 343
5. The end for which they shall come, *viz.* their worshipping in his holy mountain, 346
6. Inferences for the application of the whole, 349

S E R M O N CII.

The Sum of the Gospel; or, God in Christ, p. 359

MATT. iii. 17.—*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.*

The words being viewed in their connexion, explained, and summed up in a doctrinal proposition, the following general topics of discourse are prosecuted, *viz.*

1. To speak of God's being in Christ, 362
2. To enquire how God is in Christ, 365
3. To shew that in Christ alone, he is well-pleased, 374
4. To make application of the whole subject, 376

S E R M O N CIII.

Present Duty before approaching Darkeness, 393

JER. xiii. 16. *Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness.*

The Author having considered the words in their connexion, divided, and explained them, and taken up their sense in a doctrinal observation, he proposes the following general heads of method, *viz.*

1. To speak a little of this glory that is given to God, and what it is to glorify him, 396
2. To enquire how, and by what means, we are to give him glory, 397
3. What is imported in the expression, *Give glory unto the Lord your God*, 403
4. To speak of the motive here assigned, *Before he cause darkness*, 405
5. To deduce some inference for the application of the whole, 410

S E R M O N

S E R M O N CIV.

The Great Ruin, and the Great Relief; or, Help from Heaven to Self-destroyers on Earth, p. 424

Hos. xiii. 9. *O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help.*

The words being viewed in their scope and connexion, analyzed, explained, and a variety of observations taken notice of from them, the two branches of the text are copiously handled, viz.

1. That man's ruin and destruction is only of himself, and his own sinfulness, 427
The improvement of this truth, in a suitableness to the design of the day, 439
2. That our relief and deliverance is owing only to God, and his sovereign mercy, 455
What fruitful lessons may be gathered for our use and improvement, 459

S E R M O N CVI.

Chambers of Safety in Times of Danger, 468

ISA xxvi. 20, 21. *Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.*

After an introduction into the subject, an explication of the words, and a doctrinal proposition laid down, illustrated, and confirmed, the following heads of method, are treated, viz.

1. When may the time be said to be a threatening time, so as a storm is evidently approaching, 472
2. Why the Lord will take care of his people's safety and security in such a time, 475
3. What chambers he wants them to come into, for their safety, 478
4. The application of the subject, 481

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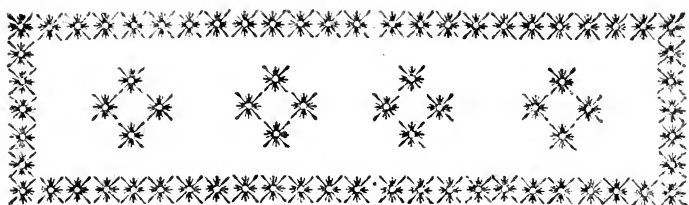
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S E R M O N LXXXVIII.

The *promising* GOD, a *performing* GOD *.

GENESIS xxviii. 15.

For I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.

AT the last sacramental solemnity of this sort, I spoke a little upon the great plea and prayer of faith upon the divine promise, in the words of David, 2 Sam. vii. 25.—*Lord, do as thou hast said.* We may now look upon this text that I have read, as the gracious answer of God to that prayer of faith, in the words of the great God himself to Jacob, *I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of ; or, till I have done as I have said.*

What God said once to Joshua, chap. i. 5 —*I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.* Even so, what God said to Jacob here, doth equally belong to all believers in Christ ; *I will not leave thee, till I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.* Hath God condescended to speak to you, and *caused you to hope in his word of grace, or promise, at this, or any former occasion ?* Here is good

* This sermon was preached on a thanksgiving-day, immediately after the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, at Abbot's-hall, October 24d, 1733. It hath now undergone six impressions.

news to take away with you, that the promising God, will, in due time be a performing God, and that you may not think long, and *weary or faint in your mind*, apprehending what a weary time it may be between the promise and the performance. Here is supporting encouragement in the mean time, *I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.* What I have said I will do, and will not leave thee till I have done it.

In the preceding part of this chapter, you find Jacob was forced to flee from his Father's house upon the account of the wrath of his brother Esau : he is hastened away to Padanaram ; and on his way he comes to Luz, which afterwards, on the account of a notable emergent, was called BETHEL, where God signally appeared and discovered himself to him in great glory, suitably to his strait. Here he was benighted, ver. 11. and was obliged to ly in the open field. Some of the saints and servants of God have been put to great hardships, through the violence and rage of their persecuting brethren. But though Jacob's bed was hard, yet his rest was sweet ; while he had a hard pillow of stone under his head, the Lord appeared to him in a dream, and spake comfortably to him. God's time of speaking comfort to his people, is readily when they are most destitute of other comforts ; then he is most kind, when brethren come to be most unkind.

You may observe two things, first, what God *shewed* to Jacob ; and then, what he *said* to him.

1. What he *shewed* to him ; he manifested to him his *glory*, as the God of providence, and the God of grace in Christ, who is here represented to him by the ladder reaching from heaven to earth, ver. 12. ; and all the intercourse between heaven and earth is by this ladder.

2. What he *spake* to him, ver. 13. *And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set upon earth, and the top of it reached to heaven : and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.* As the vision was suitable to his present case, letting him understand that he had a good guide, and a good guard, not only the angel of God,
but

but the Lord of angels ; so the words that God spake to him were suitable to his present need. The Lord spake from the top of the ladder ; for all the glad tidings we receive from heaven, come thro' Jesus Christ. Here are former promises made to Abraham and Isaac, his father and grandfather, repeated and ratified to Jacob ; whereby God intimated, that he would be the same to him that he had been to them. Here are fresh promises made to him suited to his present condition. He was to leave his kindred, and to want their presence ; God promised to be present with him ; *I am with thee*. He was in the fear of Esau : God promised, saying, *I will keep thee*. He was journeying to an unknown place : God promised to *keep him in all places whithersoever he went*. He was apprehensive he would never see his own country again : God promised he would *bring him again to that land*. He seemed to be left of all his friends and relations : God promised, saying, *I will not leave thee*. Providence seemed to cross the promise, while he is thus going as an exile to a place far distant : God assures him of the performance of all he had said, in due season ; *I will not leave thee, till I have done that which I have spoken to thee of*. When God speaks to his people, he speaks to the point ; he speaks to the case ; his words are suited to their present exigencies ; and not only so, but to their future straits also. Jacob knew not, but God knew and foresaw what hardships he would meet with in his uncle Laban's service ; and in a suitableness to the event that was to take place, he assures him, saying, *I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of*. This was such a gracious manifestation, and such a wonderful intercourse that God had with Jacob, as obliged Jacob to put a remark upon the place, and call it BETHEL, the *house of God*, the *gate of heaven*.

The text is not so much a *new* promise, as a repeated confirmation of what he had *before* promised, for establishing and fortifying of Jacob's faith ; for, says God, *I will not leave thee, until I have done that*

which I HAVE spoken to thee of. Where we may observe two things.

1. A confirming word concerning the issue ; or what he would bring out of these promises, that they shall not be mere sayings, but doings ; *I will do what I have spoken to thee of.* Have I said it, and will I not now do it ? *In the end the vision shall speak.*

2. A supporting word in the *interim*, that faith may not faint in the mean time before the accomplishment come, *I will not leave thee, until I have done it.* Jacob might think, Alas ! it may be a long time between the promise now made, and the accomplishment of it. What will become of me in the mean time ? And, indeed, he had dark days, and hard service before his hand ; and there was long twenty years between Bethel-visit here, where he met with God, and God spake to him in this manner, and Peniel-visit, when he wrestled with God and prevailed, and when God came to do for him some of the great things he had here spoken to him of. And in that interval of twenty years, between Bethel and Peniel, many vicissitudes and changes, trials and difficulties occurred in Jacob's lot ; but for this support in the mean time, God assures him that he would never leave him, *until he had done that which he had spoken to him of.* Hence the doctrine I would speak a little unto, is,

OBSE RV. *That whatever dark and dismal days may befall the children of God, upon the back of sweet Bethel-visits, that he allows to them ; yet he will not leave them, till he hath accomplished all the Bethel-promises that he made to them.*

He will never leave them, till he do what he hath spoken to them of. He will go on, till he hath done as he hath said. We may say of our Lord Jesus, when once he hath spoken to a soul, and begun to do graciously, as Naomi said to Ruth concerning Boaz, Ruth iii. 18. *Sit still, my daughter, till thou knowest how the matter will fall : for the man will not rest, till he hath finished the thing this day.* Even so, when Christ hath begun
to

to speak kindly, the poor believer may sit still and wait patiently, till the appointed time of accomplishing his word ; for, the God-man will not rest until he hath finished the thing. We may be *confident of this very thing, that he that hath begun the good work in us, and said the good word to us, will perform it, and finish it, Phil. i. 6. ; I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.*

We find how this doctrine was verified, both in Jacob and his seed.

1. In Jacob's own *person*. After this discovery of God that he enjoyed at Bethel, many dark days, and much hard service he endured, yet God did not leave him. When Laban cast down his countenance on him, and said, putting him in mind of his Bethel-visit he made to him, and the Bethel-vow he caused him to make, Gen. xxxi. 13. *I am the God of Bethel.* Yea, God never left him, till he did what he spoke to him, both in prospering him in the place where he was a stranger so long, and in bringing him back to his own land though he was in great danger ; when Laban was pursuing him behind, and his brother Esau meeting him in the face, yet God preserved him according to his word, and brings him back to the land he promised to bring him to, and then sends him to visit Bethel, Gen. xxxv. 7. where he built an altar, and called it EL-BETHEL ; that is, the *God of Bethel* ; and so remarked the goodness of God to him, in not leaving him till he had *done all that he spoke to him of.*

2. In Jacob's *seed* this doctrine was verified, particularly with reference to the promise made to them, concerning their inheriting the land of Canaan, and expelling the Canaanites to make room for them. See and compare Josh. xxi. 43,—45. with Josh. xxiii. 14, 15. and 1 Kings viii. 56. God will take his own time of doing what he hath spoken ; but he will be sure to do it, whatever difficulties intervene between the promise and performance.

In handling of this subject, I would incline to observe the following method, through divine assistance.

1. What

- I. What we are to understand by the *Bethel-visits*, that God may allow his people.
- II. Consider some of the *dark days* that may follow upon these Bethel-interviews.
- III. Consider and explain the *promise* here made, that he *will not leave them, till he hath done that which he hath spoken to them of*, notwithstanding of the dark days that may intervene between the promise and the accomplishment.
- IV. Offer some *grounds* upon which the believer may be assured, that God *will not leave him, till he hath done that which he hath spoken to him of*.
- V. Deduce some *inferences* for the application.

I. The *first* thing proposed was, To shew what we are to understand by the *Bethel-visits* God may allow his people. In order to this, I premise, it is sure none are acquaint with what we call a *Bethel-visit*, except these that are in a peculiar manner blessed of the Lord, as Jacob was, of whom his father Isaac said, *I have blessed him, and he shall be blessed*, Gen. xxvii. 33. They are the blessed objects of God's love, and the blessed heirs of the promises; brought into covenant with God, and joined to the Lord by converting grace and saving faith. And as none are acquainted with Bethel-visits but these that are thus blessed; so it is with great variety, that the Lord's people do enjoy such appearances of God. Though they have not all experience of Bethel-interviews with God, of the same measure and degree with that of Jacob; yet they have such experience of meeting with God as are substantially the same. Whatever difference there may be in circumstances: yet they are such, as they may call the place **BETHEL** the *house of God*, the *gate of heaven*.

In the illustration of this point, I shall here observe,
 1. The substance. 2. The ordinary circumstances of such interviews with God as may be called Bethel-visits.

1st, The *substance*, or substantial part thereof, is God's gracious meeting with them, so as they may have it to say, *The Lord God of the Hebrews met with us*,
 Exod.

Exod. iii. 18. And that either in public ordinances, or in secret duties, by night or by day, in the city or in the field; and this meeting hath these two things especially in it, which we find was in Jacob's meeting with God here in Bethel, the one is the manifestation of his glory, and the other is the communication of his mind.

1. This Bethel-visit includes a *manifestation of his glory*. Jacob here sees the glory of God in Christ represented as the ladder reaching between heaven and earth. Why then you may call that a Bethel wherever it hath pleased God to reveal Christ in you, and to open your eyes to see his glory in the face of Jesus Christ, as the way to the Father, and as the ladder by which you may ascend up to heaven. Have you seen at this, or any former occasion, Christ to be, as it were, the ladder set upon the earth, in his humiliation, and reaching unto heaven, and so that all the rounds and steps of the ladder are compleated in his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and sitting at the right-hand; *by him do we believe in God, who raised him from the dead, that our faith and hope might be in God?* 1 Pet. i. 21. And have we thus, by faith, stept up the ladder, the only way? Hath thus the God that *commanded light to shine out of darkness, shined into our hearts*, not our heads only, but our hearts, to give us the *light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ*, so as our hearts have gone out after a revealed Christ? Well this is one substantial part of a Bethel-visit, the manifestation of his glory.

2. This Bethel-visit includes a *communication of his mind*. Jacob here not only hath God manifesting his glory to him, but also communicating his mind as a promising God, saying, I am your father's God, *The God of Abraham and Isaac*; and in testimony that I will be your God also, I will do so and so to you: and thus he communicates his mind to him by promises of grace. Why then, you may call that a Bethel-visit, when God comes and intimates his love, or communicates his mind, and speaks into your heart by some word of
grace

grace and promise, opening up some secret truth of the gospel to you, and opening your understanding to apprehend, and your heart to apply it, and causing you to hope in his word, as *Yea* and *Amen* in Christ. If God hath spoken a word to your heart, and made you take him at his word, so as you can look to him and say, *Remember the word on which thou hast caused me to hope*, wherever it was, you may say the name of the place was BETHEL, and that you *found him in Bethel, and there he spake to you*, Hof. xii. 4. Now, concerning these visits, we may remark four things.

(1.) That the Lord may allow a Bethel-manifestation and communication to his people, and yet they may not *know that God is present with them*, in such a manner as he is, till an after reflection thereupon. Hence said Jacob here, ver. 16. when he awaked out of his sleep, *Surely God was in this place, and I knew it not*. God's people may be surpris'd with his visits, that tho' they cannot but be conscious of his coming, when he approaches to them, yet they may not be sure about the qualities of that visit, whether it was a saving divine manifestation, till they come to examine and reflect upon it, and find that it was none other but the powerful presence of God: for, they carry their own evidence along with them; *Surely he was here*.

(2.) Bethel-visits fill the soul with a *holy awe of God*, ver. 17. *How dreadful is this place?* They that see God will see cause of holy trembling and blushing before him, and the sight will humble and fill them with holy awe and reverence. Saving discoveries do not elevate and puff up with pride, but impress the soul with holy dread. The sweet pleasure and joy that attend the discovery is tempered with holy fear and awe, in so much, that they *fear the Lord and his goodness, and rejoice with trembling*. The place where God manifests himself is both a joyful and a dreadful place. Praise is the most joyful and heartsome exercise; yet God is said to be *fearful in praises*, because of the dread and awe of God that is on the heart of these that praise him; for, *Great is the glory of the Lord* which they see who *sing in the ways of the Lord*.

(3.) Divine

(3.) Divine visits are *not excluded from any place*; even here, where Jacob little thought of meeting with God, here he meets with him, he finds him in Bethel, and says, *This is the house of God, and the gate of heaven*. Wherever we are, in the house or field, if we meet with God there, we may call it the *house of God*, and the *gate of heaven*: for, heaven is in his gracious presence.

(4.) Divine visits are *quickenings*, ver. 18. He rises early in the morning, and sets about solemn worship of the God that appeared to him. He sets up the stone for a pillar, and anoints it as a memorial of what past, and gave the place a new name. As sweet communion we have with God ought to be remembered; so his grant of mercy calls for our return of duty, Jacob is here also quickened to vow himself away to the Lord, and promise to serve him; and, indeed, our vows and promises are then regular and evangelical, when they are the fruit of God's manifesting himself in the covenant of promise to us, and to Jacob here: for, whatever we promise, we can perform nothing but in virtue of his promise to us.

2dly, As to the *ordinary circumstances* of such Bethel interviews with God. Several of these may be gathered from the history of Jacob, and will be found to correspond with the believer's experience, as in these following particulars.

1. That in the Lord's ordinary way of dealing, when he deals effectually with poor souls, and when he hath a mind to bring them to a Bethel, he readily brings them to a *wilderness*, and there deals powerfully with them, and *speaks kindly to them*; or, to *their heart*. Thus here Jacob is in the wilderness, being banished from his father's house. Though he was a son of the promise, yet he was forced to run to a strange country. God allures his people, and brings them to a wilderness, and then speaks comfortably; gives them the *valley of Achor for a door of hope*. Some here readily have come to this communion, or the like, and have found themselves in a wilderness of confusion, darkness, and despondency, and yet had, ere all was

done, ground to call the place BETHEL, by reason of his meeting with them, and speaking kindly to them.

2. The sweetest discoveries of God are readily ushered in with the *darkest nights*. God's visit is ordinarily like the break of the day upon the back of a dark night. And, indeed, *Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning*, Psal. xxx. 5. As it was literally in the dark night that God visited Jacob here; so you will see what a dark night of trouble, distress, and perplexity Jacob was in when he met with God at Peniel, and wrestled with the angel and prevailed; *Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him till the break of day*, Genesis xxxii. 24. He had been before this compassed with clouds of fear on the account of Esau, who was meeting him with four hundred men. You that are in a dark night of fear and distress may be encouraged to wait on, for readily the Lord ushers in manifestations of himself with the darkest nights.

3. As the Lord is pleased to usher in sweet manifestations of himself with a dark night; so readily a *dark night follows* upon their sweet manifestations.—And many times they are as a blink before a storm; and the people of God often find this to their sad experience, making them see ground to be sober after their sweet experiences. Jacob had a good night in Bethel; but new straits followed upon it, particularly in the hard service and harsh treatment he met with from Laban. Here is a visit; and presently follows a night of trouble again. We mention this, not for your discouragement, but that you may not be surprized; for, there may be a sudden turn in your spiritual affairs: *I said, my mountain stands strong; but thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled*.

4. Sometimes the night that follows upon the Lord's manifesting himself may be *darker*, and the darkness of it *greater* than the night they had before their Bethel-manifestation. Jacob was in a strait before the Bethel-visit, through the fear of Esau; but after that kindly visit, the strait was greater, and the night darker, while
he

he had not only the fear, but the feeling of Laban's displeasure : perhaps you had a dark night before the Lord paid you a visit ; but what if a darker night shall follow upon that visit, even some grievous temptation to raze all again. The church was brought to *the banqueting house, and his banner over her was love* ; yet afterwards to the dark shadow, where she cries, *I sought him, but I found him not*. What a sweet communion had the disciples with Christ at the last supper ! yet followed with the darkest night of temptation, trouble, and scattering : the shepherd of Israel himself being smitten, the sheep were scattered. When the Lord allows you sweet Bethel-interviews and blessings, you may mistake them, and think they presage nothing, but a life of joy and comfort henceforth, and that former trials are at an end ; and yet they may be only preparations for approaching trials, and encouragements to faith and hope under future troubles. This leads me,

II. To the *second* thing proposed, which was to shew, what *dark and dismal days* may follow upon these Bethel-discoveries. There are these following dark days, or rather dark nights, that may follow upon Bethel-visits.

1. A dark night of *long absence*, a night of *weary desertion* may follow. Jacob had not, for twenty years, such a night as he had at Bethel : there may be long twenty years travel between Bethel and Peniel. Perhaps you had much heavenly-warmness by a live-coal from the altar, when God manifested himself, and you got a heart to close with Christ. The place was like a heaven upon earth to you ; but, perhaps, many a weary day you have had since that time. May be you have never had such a gale since that time. Or, if this communion hath been a Bethel to you, think it not strange, though a night of absence and hiding may follow, and though the night be long.

2. A dark night of *forgetfulness* may follow upon the Bethel-visit, so as it is hard to know how secure people may grow ; and they may lose the sweet im-

pression of the visit, and have little or no kindly remembrance of the sweet days they had at Bethel.— This dark night followed upon Jacob's meeting with God here; it seems he had much forgotten it, till God puts him in mind of it, saying, Gen. xxxi. 13. *I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and vowedst the vow.* Jacob, might he say, do you not mind the time? do you not mind the place? do you not mind the two pillars? do you not mind the promise? do you not mind the Bethel, where I shewed my covenant to thee, and accepted thy vows unto me? Be not discouraged with the fear of Laban behind pursuing you, and Esau before meeting you; it is enough to drive all fears and discouragements away, that *I am the God of Bethel*; I am the same God now, that I was at that day to you: however, Jacob had lost the sweet impression, and lost the kind remembrance of Bethel, till God himself was the remembrancer. In the dark night of oblivion, all may go out of sight, and out of mind.

3. A dark night of *temptations, fears, and discouragements* may follow upon a sweet Bethel-visit. The gracious encouragement that God gave to Jacob afterwards, shews, what fears and discouragements he was under, and under which he was ready to sink, if God had not supported and comforted him from time to time.—Well, even after a Bethel-visit you may be grievously tempted, to call all that you met with but a delusion; yea, to think it was Satan that was working with you, and not the living God; and to think that your coming to a communion-table was but a taking a seal of your own condemnation. Some may be tempted to fear that God hath a controversy with them, and does not observe their affliction. It seems this was a part of the dark night that came upon Jacob; and therefore God shews him that it was an ungrounded jealousy; *For, says he, I have seen all that Laban hath done to thee,* Gen. xxxi. 12. Though thou wast not sensible of my care, yet I have all this time had a special care about thee, and increased thy stock, notwithstanding

standing of what Laban did. It is hard to believe the divine care in a dark day, wherein we apprehend his displeasure; and yet when he returns, he can make us see he had a special care of us, when we know not of it; and that he hath been doing all things well, even when we were fearing all these things were against us.

4. A dark night of *wants* and *straits* may follow upon Bethel-visits; both outward and inward wants: temporal wants, such as Jacob mention, when he complained that Laban had *changed his wages ten times*, Gen. xxxi. 41. Spiritual wants, and want of comfort, such as Jacob was under, when in his strait he could draw no comfort, even from an old Bethel, till God gave him a new visit, by telling him, that he was the God of Bethel. Think not strange, though, upon the back of Bethel-visits, you be trysted with great straits, outward and inward, and perhaps can draw no comfort from a back-look upon Bethel; for, whenever you can draw comfort and encouragement from it, you may reckon it a new visit; when, in a dark day, you can remember him from the *land of Jordan*, and remember what God did to you at such a time.

5. A dark night of *persecution*, even by friends and brethren, may follow upon Bethel-visits, as Jacob found after this visit, when persecuted by Laban, his father-in-law, and Esau his brother, that was conceived in the same womb with him, though God mercifully restrained their anger and fury, that they got not their will of Jacob; *For the wrath of man shall praise God, and the remainder thereof he will restrain*. Think not strange then, even from Bethel-meetings with God, though you should be tried with a dark night of persecution, even from envious friends and false brethren. The church and spouse of Christ speaks of a Bethel, Song i. 4. *The king hath brought me into his chambers, we will be glad and rejoice in thee*; and yet a hot and scorching persecution followed, verse 6. *The sun hath looked upon me*. Why? *My mother's children were angry with me*. There is hardly any persecution more grievous and violent, than that of angry brethren; but

but they are under a restraint ; they can go no further than God permits : only we need not think strange to see church-persecutions, even after Bethel-visits.

6. A dark night of *backsliding* and *relapse* into former unwatchfulness, security, and sloth may follow upon the Bethel-visit, though it was solemnly renounced at Bethel. Jacob seems to have been under a lamentable decay, as to the exercise of faith that once he had at Bethel, till once God returned and quickened him again. Christ said to his disciples after the communion, *Ye shall all be offended, because of me this night ; you shall all turn your backs upon me : you may lamentably relapse to these sins that were renounced. I know not your particular case ; but whatever it is, it hath been the sad experience of God's remnant. You may relapse to the omission of known duty ; yea, to the embracement of known idols, the very thing that parted between God and you. This is a sad and sorrowful night, that you need to take care you bring not upon yourselves through unwatchfulness, in so provoking the Lord to anger with you, as he was with Solomon, 1 Kings xi. 9. It is said the Lord was angry with him, because his heart turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared to him twice. What a sad matter is it, if after a Bethel-interview with God you turn your back upon the God of Bethel ! Will you also go away ?*

7. A dark night of *strange dispensations* may follow upon Bethel interviews. Various trials, vicissitudes, and changes, such as was in Jacob's lot, between the time of Bethel-promises and Peniel-performances thereof ; Jacob did not want chastisements : *If his children break my law, I will visit their transgressions with rods, and their iniquities with stripes ; nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail, Psal. lxxxix. 30,—33.* God may cover your table at Bethel, but behold afterwards the ordinary means of relief may fail you, as it was with Jacob in Laban's family : even so, the means of spiritual relief may fail you. You may go to preachings, and return as dark as before. You may go to your closet, and

and that mean may fail you. You may go to public ordinances and sacraments, and these means may fail you. Though at Bethel you, perhaps, thought, Oh ! I will never be what I have been ; I will never do as I have done ; I will never doubt nor fear any more : yet all this may be out of sight, and *the comforter that should relieve your soul, may be far from you*, Lam. i. 19. Strange dispensations may befall you. *All God's waves and billows may pass over you, and deeps call unto deeps*, Psal. xlii. 7.

8. A dark night of *perplexities* amidst these strange dispensations may follow upon Bethel-interviews. Thus it was with Jacob before he came off from Laban's house, he knew not what to do till the Lord directed him to *arise and return to the land of his kindred*, Gen. xxxi. 13. You may come to such a night of perplexities that you know not what to do, or what hand to turn you to. You may come to look upon yourself as in a perishing condition, and to say your *strength and hope is perished from the Lord*. *Remembering your affliction and misery, the wormwood and the gall*, Lam. iii. 18, 19. What shall I say ? May we not observe, with fear and trembling, that some who have met with God have afterwards come under dreadful and dark clouds both in point of *sin* and *misery* !—Some have been so far left to *sin* after manifestations, as deservedly to be called devils : Peter got such a discovery of God in Christ, that the Lord says to him, *Blessed art thou Simon Bar-Jona : flesh and blood hath not revealed these things to thee, but my Father that is in heaven*. Yet instantly Peter is left so far to sin, that Christ says to him, *Get thee behind me Satan ; thou savourest not the things that be of God*, Matt. xvi. 17, 23. And what think you of his denying his master with curses ? Let us not imagine they are all strangers to Bethel-interviews with God that deny, or do not zealously own the cause and interest of Christ this day. But let us fear and tremble to consider how far the children of God may be left to depart from him and his way, in a dark time, and in a day of temptation. It is possible that good men may be left

left to sin, and to justify their sin. I will be loth to say, that they are all wicked that justify their sinful proceedings in public matters at this day, and that justify their persecuting rage and anger at their brethren, when I consider how Jonah justified his anger against God, saying, *I do well to be angry*. So it is possible that even some, that have met with God, may justify their anger at their brethren, saying, *We do well to be angry even unto death*, and angry even to suspension, deposition, excommunication *. I hope none need be offended, if I have charity for some that are of that opinion, thro' their ignorant zeal, while carried away like Barnabas, with the dissimulations of the day, and whose eyes God will open in due time, to see that their anger was as ill founded as that of Jonah's. For, if ever God met with them at Bethel, when he is pleased to return, their eyes will readily be opened, and they will see they did ill to be angry with their brethren that were contending for the rights of their mother's house : yea, another merciful turn upon their hearts will make them say, as Jacob's sons once did of Joseph, *We are verily guilty concerning our brother*. So we hope of some, if ever they have met with God at Bethel, surely upon the Lord's return they will regret their miscarriage, and say, *We have verily been guilty concerning our brother*.—However, as some that have met with God may come under dreadful clouds of *sin* ; (for we are not to unfaint them all, and every one that are carried down the stream of defection, though we are to have no charity for their ways, yet let us not meddle with their state, till we see if God shall reclaim them) so in point of *misery*, some that have met with God may be put to say, Oh ! he breaks me with breach upon breach, and runs upon me like a giant ; yea, while *suffering his terrors*, they have in a manner been *distracted*, and sometimes *curst the day wherein they were born*.—Thus you may see what dark days may follow upon Bethel-interviews

* Our author is here alluding to the conduct of the church-judicatories, in the prosecution, at this time, carrying on against the reverend Mr. Ebenezer Eiskine, and his brethren, formerly laid open, Vol. V. Serm. LXXXIV. See likewise Serm. LXXXII, LXXXIII.

with God; and, yet, after all, the promise stands good to all the seed of Jacob that have met with God at Bethel. *He will not leave them, till he hath done that which he hath spoken to them of.*

III. The *third* general head proposed was, *To consider and explain this promise, I will not leave thee, till I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.* For explaining hereof there are these following questions that we would propound and answer. 1. How God *speaks* to his people? 2. How he doth or *accomplisheth* that which he hath spoken to them of? 3. *When* is it that he will do that which he hath promised? 4. What is the *import* of this privilege, that he *will not leave them*? 5. In what *sense* it is said, he *will not leave them, till he hath done what he hath promised*?

1st, How God *speaks* to his people, when they have a Bethel-visit of him? I answer, in a few words.

1. He speaks *divinely*, he speaks like himself, letting them know that it is he that speaks: as he said to the woman of Samaria, John iv. 26. *I thus speak to thee, am he*; so says he here to Jacob, *It is I that speak to thee; I will not leave thee, till I have done that which I have spoken.* Never man spake like this man: man's speaking only reaches the ear, but God speaking reaches and touches the heart. Hence,

2. He speaks *powerfully*, as it is said of Christ, *He spake as one having authority, and not as the scribes*: so, when the Lord speaks, there is power and authority accompanying the word, either in its first coming, or in its after-working, upon the heart. *Ye received the word, not as the word of man, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which worketh effectually in you that believe,* 1 Thess. ii. 13,

3. He speaks *particularly*, as here to Jacob, *I will not leave THEE, till I have done that which I have spoken of to THEE.* People may hear the word delivered in general to all the congregation: but it doth them no good, till they hear it in particular spoken to them. Then God calls the person by name, and says *To thee I speak*; and the heart says, *It is to me that God is*

speaking. O ! hath God spoken to thee, man, to thee, woman ?

4. He speaks *kindly and comfortably* ; Hof. ii. 14. *I will allure her, and bring her to the wilderness ; and then speak comfortably to her.* His kindness in speaking appears most evidently when it is in a wilderness case he communicates himself : every word he speaks to Jacob here, is a word of kindness. O the light, life, strength, and comfort that the word brings when God speaks it ! He hath a view both to their present comfort and their future support, when he speaks with them in Bethel.

5. He speaks *plainly* and not in parables ? for he opens their understandings to apprehend, and their hearts to apply ; *For to them it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven ; to others it is not given,* Mat. xiii. 11. The word of grace is a sealed book, till the Lion of the tribe of Judah open the seal.

6. He speaks *suitably* to their case ; for, he hath the *tongue of the learned, to speak a word in season to the weary*, Isa. l. 4. He adapts his words here to Jacob's weary case, as I shewed in the explication. He gives them a word that suits their difficulties. Sometimes they have difficulty about this, and sometimes about that and the other affair, and they come with their burdens before the Lord, and he presents a word relative to them.—Sometimes they are burdened about their *provision* ; and he gives a word for that : *Bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure.*—They are burdened with *fears of danger* : and they get a word for that : *Fear not, for I am with thee : The eternal God is thy refuge.*—Sometimes they want *direction* ; and get a word for that : *I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not ; I will lead them in paths that they have not known ; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight.*—They want the *Spirit* ; and they get a word for that : *I will put my Spirit within you : and the water that I give shall be in you a well of water springing up to everlasting life.* They want *strength* for duty or trial ; and they get a word for that : *My grace shall be sufficient for thee, and my strength shall be per-*

perfect in thy weakness.—They want *pardon* ; and they get a word for that : *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.*—They want to have *sin subdued and mortified* ; and get a word for that : *Sin shall not have dominion over you.*—They want something for the *church* ; and they get a word for that : *That the wall shall be built in perilous times ; that at evening time it shall be light ; and upon all the glory there shall be a defence.*—They want a blessing for their *children* ; and they get a word for that : *I will be thy God and the God of thy seed* *.

2dly, The next question here, was, *How* he doth what he hath spoken to them ? *I will do what I have spoken of to thee.* Why,

1. He will do it *faithfully* : *Not a word shall fail of what he hath spoken,* Josh. xxi. 45. The history of Jacob shews how faithfully God accomplished his promise, and all that he spoke to him ; and he hath *faithfulness for the girdle of his loins.* *God is not man, that he should lye, nor the son of man that he should repent.* He will do what he hath spoken, surely, and certainly ; *The vision shall speak, it shall surely come.*

2. As he will do certainly what he hath spoken, so he will do it *wonderfully*, and he will work wonders before he do it not ; *Heaven and earth shall pass away, before one jot of his word fall to the ground.* And it is in a very marvellous and mysterious way, that God doth accomplish his word through a world of dark dispensations, *through fire and water he brings them to a wealthy land.* Though impassable mountains be in the way ; yet he will come and do what he hath said, and give his people occasion to say when he comes, *It is the voice of my Beloved, behold he cometh skipping upon the mountains, leaping upon the hills.*

3. He will do what he hath spoken, and do it *remarkably*. Thus he did what he said to Jacob ; and if the believer may put a remark upon the Bethel-visit, when

* See a vast many more of the cases of the saints stated and solved, Vol. V. Sermon, LXXXVIII.

he comes to promise ; much more upon the Peniel-viſit, when he comes to perform what he hath promiſed. In the Bethel-viſit, we ſee him by faith in his word : but in the Peniel-viſit we ſee him by ſenſe in his work ; for then he not only *ſays*, but *does* what he hath ſaid, and ſhews himſelf *face to face*.

4. When he doth what he hath ſpoken, he doth it *ſurprizingly*. Jacob was not expecting ſuch a way of God's accompliſhing his word. Psalm cxxvi. 1. *When the Lord turned back the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream*. He ſweetly ſurprizes when he comes to do what he hath ſpoken : *Then was our mouths filled with laughter, and our tongues with ſongs : the Lord hath done great things for us whereof we are glad*. Again,

5. When he doth what he hath ſpoken, he doth it *gloriously*. His glory ſhines in all his works, and eſpecially in accompliſhing his promiſes, *that are Yea and Amen in Chriſt*. He makes the glory of his wiſdom, power, holineſs, the glory of his mercy, truth, and faithfulneſs to ſhine in the accompliſhment ; he doth more than he hath ſpoken, and is better than his word, Exodus xv. 1. When God accompliſhed his promiſe of delivering Iſrael out of Egypt, and out of the hand of Pharaoh and his hoſt, then their voice was liſted up, ſaying, *I will ſing unto the Lord ; for he hath triumphed gloriously*.

6. When he doth what he hath ſpoken, he doth it *ſeaſonably* ; *The viſion is for an appointed time, but at the end it ſhall ſpeak and not lye : though it tarry, wait for it ; becauſe it will ſurely come, it will not tarry*, Hab. ii. 3. It will not tarry beyond the appointed time, nor beyond the proper time ; and therefore, let faith wait upon a faithful God, who will do as he hath ſaid.—
'This leads,

3dly, To the third queſtion, *When* is it that he will do what he hath ſpoken to them of ? You may take the answer of this in the following particulars.

1. Some things he hath ſpoken relate to a day of trouble ; and when that day comes he will do what he hath ſpoken to them of ; *I will be with him in trouble ; I will deliver him, and honour him*, Psalm xci. 15.—

Hence

Hence his people never enjoy more of his presence and pity, than in days of tribulation and affliction. And sometimes he lets the trouble come to an extremity, before he sensibly accomplish his promise of help, *I was brought low, and he helped me*, Psalm cxvi. 6.

2. Some things that he hath spoken to them of, relate to a day of *temptation*: and when that comes, then he will do what he hath spoken. He hath said, Rom. xvi. 29. *The God of peace will bruise Satan under your feet shortly*. He hath said, 1 Cor. x. 13. *That he is faithful, and will not suffer them to be tempted above what they are able to bear; but with the temptation will make a way to escape*. And hence it is, for ordinary, in a time of great and grievous temptation, he opens some door by which they escape from time to time, while they wait upon him.

3. Some things that he hath spoken relate to a day of *work*, of great work that he puts into their hand; and when that day comes, he doth that which he hath spoken. He hath said, *That he works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure*, Phil. ii. 13. He hath said, that he *will strengthen, he will uphold with the right-hand of his righteousness*, Isaiah xli. 10.—And hence it is, that his people can sometimes say with Paul, *I can do all things through Christ strengthening me. Though we are not sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing as of ourselves, yet our sufficiency is of God*. And hence the church, Isaiah xxvi. 12. *Thou hast wrought all our works in us*. And David, Psalm lvii. 2. *I will cry unto God most High, unto God that performeth all things for me*.

4. Some things that he hath spoken of relate to a day of *warfare*: and when that day of bloody battle comes, he doth that which he hath spoken. He hath said concerning this, even he *who is the Captain of salvation*; the Lord mighty in battle hath said, for the encouragement of his soldiers, *Who go a warfare upon their own charges?* 1 Cor. xi. 7. *He is the strength of their salvation, that covers their head in the day of battle*, Psalm cxi. 7. And hence it is, that according to
his

his word, his people are said *always to triumph in Christ Jesus*, and to be *more than conquerors*. See Psal. xviii. 30, 32, 34. *The word of the Lord is tried : He is a buckler to all those that trust in him. It is God that girdeth me with strength : He teaches my hands to war ; and bows of steel are broken by mine arms.*—All their ability to stand in a day of trial and danger flows from this.

5. Some things he hath spoken of relate to the day of death : and when that comes, he will do what he hath spoken to them. He hath said, *Death shall be swallowed up in victory*, 1 Cor. xv. 54. He hath said, Hosea xiii. 14. *I will ransom them 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.*—And hence it is, that as all believers in Christ are blessed in death, for, *Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, and that sleep in Jesus* ; so some believers have got the sensible and comfortable view of this, even when passing through that valley between time and eternity, and have fallen a singing in the midst of the valley, and saying, *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. Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil ; for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.* With the staff of the promise in their hand, they walk through Jordan dry shod.—And when the soul is separated from the body, then it enters into the *rest that remains for the people of God*, according to that which he hath spoken.

6. Some things that he hath spoken relate to a day of judgment ; and when that day comes, then he will do what he hath spoken to them of. He hath said four times in one chapter ; namely, John vi. *That he will raise them up at the last day* ; and 1 Thess. iv. 12. *That if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so, upon the same ground, and with the same certainty, them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him ; and that the dead in Christ shall rise first, and meet the Lord in the air ; and so shall they ever be with the Lord.* He hath

hath said, 1 Corinth. xv. 52. *That in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the sound of the last trump, the dead shall be raised incorruptible : That this corruptible shall put on incorruption, this mortal shall put on immortality.* He hath said, Colos. iii. 4. *When he who is our life shall appear, we shall appear with him in glory.* He hath said, Phil. iii. 21. *That he will change our vile bodies, and make them like his glorious body, according to the working, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.* He hath said, *That the saints shall enter into the joy of their Lord, and shall judge the world.*

What I have said, may give some light to the question, *When will he do what he hath spoken to his people?* He will do all that he hath spoken, partly here, and perfectly hereafter. He hath promised eternal life to the believer : *He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life.* This he doth in part here, and to perfection hereafter ; and we may appeal to every believer of any standing, if the promise of heaven and glory be not, even in part, allowed him here by a personal possession. He is possessed of heaven, not only,

(1.) By *union* to Christ, so as his Head is in heaven, Christ the Fore-runner having taken possession, and gone to *prepare the place for him* ; so that he *sits with him in heavenly places* ; but also,

(2.) By *communion* he hath some personal possession, if you consider what heaven is.—Is heaven a state of *light*, perfect light ? The believer hath the begun possession of this, in so far as *he hath the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.*—Is heaven a state of *liberty*, perfect liberty ? The believer hath the begun possession of this, in so far as at any time his *bonds are loosed, and the Spirit of God is poured out upon him ; where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.*—Is heaven a state of *love*, perfect love ? The believer hath the begun possession of this, in so far as *the love of God is shed abroad upon his heart, by the Holy Ghost ; and the love of Christ constraineth him to duty and service.*—Is heaven a state of perfect *holiness* ? The believer hath the begun possession of this, in so far as *he is sanctified in Christ Jesus, and going on*

to perfection : yea, is already perfectly holy in desire.—Is heaven a state of perfect joy? The believer hath this also in begun possession, when he is filled with joy and peace in believing ; yea, sometimes with joy unspeakable and full of glory.—Is heaven a state of triumph and victory? The believer hath the begun possession of this, when he boasts in the Lord, and says, Thanks be to God, which always causes us to triumph in Christ.—Is heaven a place of praise and wonder at the grace of God, and the glorious perfections of God? The believer hath the begun possession of this also, when sometimes his heart is filled with the high praise of God, filled with wonder at his matchless love and distinguishing grace. He would invite all the world to wonder and praise. Yet, O what a small portion of heaven hath he here, in comparison of what he shall have ! He shall drink of the river of pleasure for ever. Yet that part he enjoys here, is the earnest of the full possession, and the evidence that he will do all that he hath spoken to them of, concerning grace and glory, and every good thing.

athly, The next question was, What is the import of this privilege, *I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of?* Why, how can it be said he will not leave them ; when yet, after Bethel-visits and Bethel-promises given them, they may be trysted with such dark nights as I have been speaking of? For clearing this subject, there are these two remarks I would offer.

1. The first remark is, “ That there are *some respects* wherein God may be said to leave people ;” as,

(1.) When he takes away his *word*, his *candlestick*, his *ordinances*, and brings a famine, *not of bread and water, but of the word of the Lord*, Amos viii. 11, 12. This is the worst famine in the world.

(2.) When he takes away his *Spirit*, and *commands the clouds to rain no rain*, Isaiah v. 6. This is a fearful leaving ; for, though the word and ordinances remain, yet, if the Spirit be away, then the word can
do

do no good, it hath no power to convince or convert, to confirm or comfort.

(3.) When he takes away his *ear*, and doth not regard their prayers; when he doth not *suffer them to pray*, nor *answer their prayer*, but *shuts them out*, Lam. iii. 8.

(4.) When he takes away his *hand*, his help and assistance, and leaves persons to themselves, to their own lusts and counsels; *My people would not hearken, Israel would have none of me: therefore I gave them up to their own heart lusts; and they walked after their own counsels*, Psalm lxxxi. 11. Alas! a sad leaving! But then,

2. The second remark I offer is, "That there are *some remarks wherein God will not leave his people.*" Either,

(1) He will never leave them *really*, but in *appearance*. And hence they many times think, and fear he is away, when he is really present; *Verily God was in this place, and I knew it not*, says Jacob. Or,

(2.) He never leaves them *absolutely*, but in some respect: he may leave them in respect of the *influence* of grace, though he doth not leave them as to the *presence* of grace. He may leave them in respect of *comfort*; though he may allow the influences of grace, yet he may deny the comfort of grace. He may leave them in respect of *assistance*, though he may allow them the comfort of grace, yet he may deny them that assistance and strength they want, and also the sensible answer of their prayers. Or,

(3.) He never leaves them *totally*, but in some degree. He may leave them to be buffeted by Satan; but will not leave them to be overcome by Satan. And he may leave them to be harrassed and captivated by strong corruptions; though he doth not leave them to be conquered thereby. Or,

(4.) He never leaves them *finally*, but for some time, he may *hide his face for a little moment*, but *with everlasting kindness will he have mercy on them*, Isa. liv. 7, 8. He will never leave them, so as to forget to do what he hath spoken to them of.

This promise then, *I will never leave thee*, it says, that *something* of God is ever with them, and in them. They have in them *a well of water, springing up to everlasting life*, John iv. 14. God loves to stay where once he comes, *I will not leave thee*.—It says also, that he will not *stay* away: though he hides himself out of sight, he will not be long away.—It says, that in whatever respect he may be said to leave them for a while, yet he will *return* to their joy; *Now you have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you*, John xvi. 22.—It says, there are some things God will never *deprive* them of, never take away from them. He will never take away his love and favour; *For he hath loved them with an everlasting love*. He will never take away his covenant of peace and of promise from them; *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*, Isa. liv. 10. *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*, Heb. xiii. 5.

5thly, The next question is, In what *sense* it is said of Jacob, and of all the spiritual seed of Jacob, that *God will not leave them, until he hath done that which he hath spoken to them of*? To explain this a little further, I shall shew, 1. In what sense we are to understand this *interim* promise, *I will not leave thee*. 2. In what sense we are to understand this particle *until*, which seems to point at a period of this promise.

[1.] In what sense are we to understand this *interim*-promise, *I will not leave thee*? Why, whatever way he may be said to leave his people, yet,

(1.) He will never leave them *Godless*, but will still be their God: for, his covenant with them is, *I will be their God*: they can never be so far left, but that God is still their God, and they may still go to him as their God.

2. He will never leave them *Christless*: he hath given Christ, *the unspeakable gift of God*, to them; and he will never recall that gift; *For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance*: they shall still have *Christ in them the hope of glory*. Hence,

3. He

3. He will never leave them *Spiritless* : he hath given his Spirit to you who are believers ; and this anointing which you have received of him abides in you ; *I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever,* John xiv. 16. The Spirit may be hid in the believer, but never absent.

4. Hence he will never leave them *comfortless* : John xiv. 18. *I will not leave you comfortless ; I will come to you.* However the *streams* of their comforts may be abated, yet the *spring* of comfort still remains ; and hence the well of consolation now and then springs up.

5. He will never leave them *helpless*, but still be to them *a present help in time of trouble* : even when they have destroyed themselves, yet in him is their help. He helps their infirmities when they cannot pray. He helps them up, when they are down. He helps them forward when behind.

6. He will not leave them *hopeless*, even when they are saying, *My hope is perished from the Lord* ; yet he opens to them a door of hope in the valley of Achor. They are never again *without God and without hope in the world.* Their hope lives. Yea,

7. He will not leave them *faithless* : *For he hath prayed for them, that their faith fail not.* Their faith may indeed languish, and be like to give up the ghost, as that of the disciples, when they said, *We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel* ; but now we doubt of this fundamental article of our creed. But when their faith was just at the failing, the Lord Jesus restored and revived it.

8. He will not leave them *friendless* and *fatherless* : he is a friend that sticks closer than a brother ; and as *a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them* : as a father chastises his children, so the Lord chastiseth them ; as a father provideth for his children, so the Lord provideth for them, that they may not be in total want, between the promise and the time of the performance.—Thus he *will not leave them, until he hath done that which he hath spoken to them of.* He will not

leave dealing with them ; he will not leave blessing of them ; he will not leave guiding of them and guarding of them ; he will not leave making all things working together for good to them, and working for the accomplishment of his promise.

[2.] In what sense are we to understand this particle, *until*, which seems to point at a period of this *interim*-promise. Surely the meaning is not, that when *he hath done that which he hath spoken to them of*, then *he will leave them* : but rather that then they will no more need such an encouraging word as this, *I will never leave thee* ; for then they will be free of all fear of his leaving them. But the word imports,

1. That there may be a *considerable time* between the *promise* and the *accomplishment* ; between the time of God's speaking to them, and the time of his doing what he hath spoken. There was twenty years distance between these two in Jacob's case.

2. It imports, that in this interval God is *carrying on* his work : *I will not leave thee, until I have done it*. Saying and doing is all one to God, he speaks the word, and it is done ; and when he hath spoken the word, it is always a-doing, till he hath done it completely.

3. It imports, that though he be still carrying on his work, yet it may *be hid from our eyes*, what way he is doing it ; and though we may suspect, on this account, that God hath left us, and left his work, when we do not see him with us, nor see what he is doing ; yet he is not away, when he is delaying the accomplishing of his word, to our sense and feeling, but only taking his own time and his own way, *whose ways are infinitely higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts*.

4. It imports, that this interval of time, wherein God is carrying on his work, though in a way hid from our eyes, is the *time of faith*, wherein we are called to wait upon a promising God, believing that not only he will be a performing God in due time, to our sensible feeling and experience ; but that he is a performing God at present, making all interveening

providences so many steps towards the accomplishment of his word, though to carnal sense and reason, they may seem to be so many letts and impediments to hinder the accomplishment thereof. Joseph had it revealed to him once and again, that he would be lord over his brethren, and that all the family should yield obedience to him. How was this accomplished? Why, he is thrown into a pit; he is sold into Egypt for a slave; and afterwards he is cast into a prison: these seemed all so many letts and obstructions, in the way of such advancement — How could faith keep its ground here? unless it should shut its eye upon providences, and open its eye upon providences, and upon a promising God, and then it would see all these seeming letts to be so many steps towards the accomplishment of the promise, *I will not leave thee, till I have done what I have spoken*: therefore, let faith see and believe, that I am still carrying on my work, and doing what I promised, whatever secret hidden ways I take to bring about my counsel; I am still doing, and *will not leave thee, till I have done what I have spoken to thee of*.

IV. The *fourth* general head proposed was, To offer some grounds of the doctrine, upon which the believer may be assured, that God *will not leave him, till he hath done that which he hath spoken to him of*, and that he will be all that he hath promised to him at Bethel.

1. Believers may be assured of it, upon the ground of the *unchangeableness* of God. There may be many vicissitudes and changes in thy case: it is only the communion-day above that shall have no more night. Thou wilt certainly change, and change ere it be long: but darest thou say, God will change as oft as thou dost? Thinkest thou that he will change in his love, when thou changest in thy frame? No; he will rest in his love, *Whom he loves, he loves to the end*. Thy security stands upon God's immutability; *I am the Lord, I change not; therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed*, Mal. iii. 6.

2. Believers may be assured, that God will *not leave them, till he hath done what he hath spoken* ; and assured upon the ground of God's *foreknowledge*. What makes men many times alter their sentiments, is, because there are many things fall out contrary to what they projected ; but God foresaw what would be ; he foresaw that even after a Bethel heart-burning interview with God, thou wouldst grow lukewarm and indifferent ; yet notwithstanding of this, he met with you in Bethel, and spake with you there ; and therefore he *will do what he hath spoken to thee*. He foresaw what a prodigal, what a backslider you would be, yet he gave his word to you ; and therefore he will not go back.

3. You may be assured he *will not leave you*, believer, *till he hath done what he hath spoken* : because he is *faithful* : Heb. x. 23. 1 Theff. v. 23. *Faithful is he that hath promised, who also will do it*. Though, when his children break his law, and keep not his commandments, then will he visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquities with stripes ; nevertheless his loving-kindness will be not utterly take from him, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail. Once hath he sworn by his holiness, that he will not lye unto David, Psal. lxxxix. 30,—35. *God is faithful who hath called you to the fellowship of his Son*.

4. Believers may be assured of this upon the ground of the *divine power* ; or, because God is *Almighty*, and able to do what he hath spoken. The apostle says, Rom. xi. 23. *The Jews shall be grafted in*. Why ? *For God is able to graft them in again*, having once promised it, and said that he will do it. It is enough to support our faith, that he is able to do what he hath said. Abraham's faith leaned upon the power of God, Rom. iv. 21. *He was fully persuaded, that he that had promised was able to be perform*. You may then be assured, believer, *that he will never leave you, till he hath done what he hath spoken* ; unless you can suppose, that he hath out-promised his own power, and said more than he is able to do.

5. It is evident he *will not leave you, till he hath done what he hath spoken*, if you consider the *experience*
of

of his people, and your own experience. The experience of God's people, from the beginning of the world, who have always found God to be as good as his word, and the same God, that he manifested himself to be at their Bethel-meeting with him. They have still found him to be the God of Bethel, whatever jealousies they entertained of his love ; yet, upon their return, after their dark days was over, they found that his *word endureth for ever*, and that he never came short of his promise ; but notwithstanding all their temptations, they were continually with him, holding them by his right-hand, Psal. lxxiii. 23. They still found him welcoming the returning prodigal, saying, *This my son was dead, and is alive, was lost, and is found.* Now, is it consistent with their experience ? And will he take a singular way with you ? Yea, thou dar'st not deny, believer, but thou hast found God to be still the God of Bethel, even though many times you were fearing that God would never smile upon you again ; yet, upon your looking back to his holy temple, you have been made to say, *O he is the same, and his love is not altered nor changed ; and that he hath not forgotten his promise.* Hence, how many times have believers reason to set to their seal to David's exercise and experience, Psal. xxx. 9, 10, 11. when he is crying, *What profit is there in my blood, If I shall go down to the pit ;* They fell a praying, *Hear, Lord, and have mercy upon me ; Lord, be thou my helper ;* and then have been made to say, *Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing, thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness.* May not then experience assure you, that *he will not leave you, till he hath done that which he hath spoken.*

6. The everlasting nature of the covenant of promise may assure you of this ; *Though my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, well ordered in all things, and sure,* 2 Sam. xxiii.

5. The bargain was not left to your making a covenant with him, but God himself made it with you ; and therefore you shall *be kept by his power, thro' faith to salvation.* Though thou should'st change a hundred times,

God

God will not change one word of the sweet bargain he made with you : because,

7. It is his *bargain* made with Christ ; *I have made a covenant with my Chosen, and my covenant shall stand fast with him*, Psal. lxxxiv. 3. And hence, *If his children break my law, I will visit their iniquity with rods : nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not take from him*, ver. 30, 33. And because I will not take it from him, I will not take it from them. Your assurance then of his not *leaving you, till he hath done what he hath spoken*, may stand upon the everlasting love that he hath to Christ, and the standing bargain between Christ and him. He cannot fail you, because he cannot fail his Son in Christ, who hath sealed the covenant with his blood, and in whom therefore *all the promises are Yea and Amen to the glory of God* : and so the glory of God in Christ, the glory of his mercy and truth in Christ, obliges him to do as he hath spoken.

8. There is one ground of assurance more that I offer, as it lies in the bosom of the text, namely, the *divine will and pleasure* ; *I WILL not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken*. I WILL NOT ; it is my will and pleasure not to leave you till all be done. You have a word, 2 Sam. xii. 22. *The Lord will not forsake his people for his great name's sake* : Why ? *Because it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people*. Thus it is said, Deut. vii. 7, 8. *The Lord set his love upon Israel* ; Why ? *Because he loved them* : he will, because he will. *And who hath resisted his will* ? His will is uncontrollable ; and hath he manifested his will in this, that *he will not leave you, till he hath done what he hath said* ? Then you may be assured of it, for he will do all his pleasure ; and well may you say, *Thy will be done*. The covenant of grace is made up of *I wills*, Ezek. xxxvi. 25. and downwards ; *I WILL give thee a new heart* ; *a new spirit WILL I put within you* : *I WILL take away the heart of stone, I WILL give you a heart of flesh* : *I WILL put my Spirit within you*, &c. ten or twelve *I wills*. And this part of the covenant, delivered by Jacob in the text, is like a crowning promise put upon

upon the head of all: *I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.* And what better assurance would you have than this, that God says, *I will?* What he will do, must be.

V. The *fifth* general head proposed, was, To make *application* of the whole in some *inferences*. If it be so as I have been saying, hence see,

1. Whence it is that some may seem to be, of all men, the *most miserable*, who are yet of all men the *most happy*; I mean *believers* in Christ, that are acquainted with Bethel-meetings with God, and to whom God hath spoken favourably and graciously.—They may seem to be most miserable, in respect of the dark and dismal nights that may follow upon their sweet intercourse with God; and yet are the most happy persons in the world, in respect of their having God, binding and obliging himself *never to leave them*, till he hath performed all the gracious promises of the covenant to them: *This is the honour of all the saints*: God will not leave them, though they seem to be left by all the world. And God will do what he hath spoken to them of, though clouds and darkness, and mountains of difficulty stand in the way.

2. See whence it is that some may seem to be the most *happy persons* in the world, who are yet the *most miserable*; I mean, *unbelievers*, whether they be profane or professors, that have no acquaintance with God in Christ. They may seem to be most happy people for a while, in respect they know not what it is to have a dark day, a day of trouble and adversity; they have peace and prosperity in the world: *They are not troubled as other men, neither are they plagued like other men*, Psalm lxxiii. 5. They have no fear either from church or state. They have easy consciences that can comply with every thing, right or wrong, that is imposed upon them, whether by civil or ecclesiastical authority.—They can sell truth, to buy peace, and so they live at ease; and yet they are the most miserable, because they are left and forsaken of God, and are not the children of the promise, to whom God hath spoken

peace; but the heirs of the threatening, against whom God hath denounced judgment, to whom he hath spoken wrath; yea, and *sworn in wrath, that they shall not enter into his rest; for there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.* And whatever temptations the people of God may be under to fret or grieve at their prosperity; yet, whenever the believer goes to *the sanctuary, then will he see their end, and how they are set but in slippery places, and suddenly cast down into destruction.*

3. Hence see, that the ground of faith stands immutable amidst all changes. The most dark and dismal days cannot hinder the accomplishment of the divine promise; neither need any dark providence, or heavy dispensation, hinder the exercise of faith, and the life of faith in the divine promise. Nay, these cross providences may rather further the life of faith, than hinder it: for, faith is never properly exercised; but upon the supposition of dark providences, crossing and seeming to oppose the accomplishment of the promise: because, in such a case, the soul hath nothing to do but to believe; nothing to look to but the promise; nothing to confide in but a promising God, and this is downright and honest believing; like that which our Lord Jesus called the ruler of the synagogue unto, when news came that his child was dead, *Fear not, only believe,* Mark v. 36.; for then it is time for God to shew himself. Faith hath a *But* that can stand out against all the arrows of cross providence that are shot against it; *Thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction: bloody and deceitful men shall not live half their days; BUT I will trust in thee,* Psal. lv. 23. He had been speaking of many hard things in the way, such as his being pained, because of the voice of the enemy, and *the oppression of the wicked,* ver. 3. *How they cast iniquity upon him, and in wrath hated him; yea, but I will trust in thee.* As God will accomplish his promise notwithstanding all the *Buts* that are in the way; so there is ground for faith to trust confidently, because God hath spoken; therefore no matter, tho' men and devils really, and dark promises seemingly, speak to the contrary.

4. Hence

4. Hence see who are the *greatest blessings* to a church or nation. Surely these to whom God hath said, that *he will not leave them*. God hath not altogether left the church or the land where any such are in it : but if they were gone, then God is gone also ; and *Wo to them when I depart from them, saith the Lord*. Some are fond to have God's people persecuted, and his saints banished out of their coast : they cannot bear their faithfulness and honesty, they are a torment to them ; but yet what should become of a church or land if God's faithful remnant were gone : his presence would go with them, and none would remain behind to whom God hath said, *I will not leave them*. Then would that church be left of God, and wo would be to them. May we not say with the prophet, Isaiah i. 9. *Except the Lord had left us a very small remnant, we had been as Sodom, we had been like unto Gomorrah* ? Surely when a church begins to cast out the faithful from among them, then they begin to destroy themselves, and to bring down wo upon their own heads.

5. Hence see, where lies the *safety* of God's children, when they are cast out by their friends and brethren, as Jacob was in a manner cast out at all hands ; he was the object of his friend and Laban's envy, and his brother Esau's spite and rage, which occasioned his being cast out of his Father's family, and the country of his kindred for twenty years. Well, but where was his safety ? Why, when all other comforts left him, God said, *I will not leave thee till I have done what I have promised*. God's promise was his inheritance, and and God's presence was his guard, amidst all frowning providences : and so it is, and will be, with all the true spiritual seed of Jacob.—Whoever leaves them, God will not leave them ; whatever men speak reproachfully against them, yet God speaks comfortably to them ; yea, and whatever men do against them, God will do for them, and do all that he hath spoken to them of.

6. Hence see the *different state* of the church *visible* from the church *invisible* upon earth ; or the differ-

ence between the true and faithful children of God, and any particular visible church. Why, all true believers have this promise secured in their persons, that God will never leave them till he hath accomplished all his promises of grace and mercy to them. He hath said, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*; but it cannot be said of any particular visible church, that God will never leave them. God hath left many particular churches, and called them, LO-AMMI, saying, *Ye are not my people, and I will not be your God*, Hosea i. 9. And how far he may leave the church of Scotland, who can tell? The glory sometimes departs from the *threshold* to the *mountains*; and God seems to be making fearful removes from the present generation. I would not love to give any just offence, nay, nor to grate the ears of any hearers with reflections upon any that are but poor, mortal, sinful men, like ourselves, subject to the like passions, and clothed with the like infirmities: but I would desire to keep mine eyes on a higher hand than any sinful instruments of the church's misery and confusion. They could do nothing if God were not provoked by our sins to leave them to themselves, and to their violent measures. *Who gave Jacob to the spoil, and Israel to the robbers? Did not the Lord, he against whom we have sinned?* May we not say of the church of Scotland, *Her rowers have brought her into great waters?* Ezek. xxvii. 26. But it is our sins that have provoked God to leave the rowers and managers, who could do nothing either against the sacred office of ministers, or the Christian rights of the people, except it were given from heaven, as Christ said to Pilate, *Thou couldest have no power against me, except it were given*. As I love not to offend or grate any, as I said, so I would not be chargeable with sinful silence in such a time, when God seems to be saying, *Cry aloud, and spare not; tell the house of Israel their sins*. Wo would be to us, if we should be afraid of man, that shall die; or the son of man, that shall be as grass, Isaiah li. 12. May we not consider, as a matter of lamentation, how far God seems to have left the church

church of Scotland and her judicatories? I shall not assert, at this time, what I shall speak by way of supposition, and leave it to every one to judge whether it be matter of lamentation before God in case the supposition should be found a truth. And I shall speak in the first person of the *plural* number, that I may take in myself as having a hand, as well as others, in provoking the Lord to leave us.

If God hath left us and our judicatories to make *unscriptural* and *unwarrantable acts*, denuding the Lord's people of their just rights, and Christian privileges; would it not be lamentable?—If he hath left us so far as to make these acts *terms of communion*, so as none shall have communion with us that dare oppose these unwarranted proceedings.—Again, if he hath left us so far as to indulge *Arians* and *Blasphemers*, and deal gently with these that are guilty of fundamental errors, and yet to proceed volently and furiously against some of the friends of truth, and to shew hardly so much regard for the supreme authority and dignity of the Son of God, as we shew for the supreme authority and dignity of our erring assemblies; if this were so, would it not be lamentable?—If God hath left us so far as to destroy ourselves by sacrificing a *covenanted reformation* and *covenanted principles*, together with the *sacred office of ministers*, and the *spiritual rights of people*, that would adhere thereto, and all unto what we call church authority and good order, which yet is but another name for church tyranny, and dreadful confusion; would not this be very lamentable?—If God hath left us to cast out of our bosom some that are, perhaps, the *friends and favourites of heaven*, and that, because of their faithful testimony against the evils and defections of the day; would not this be lamentable, and evidence that God hath very far left us *?—These and many other things I might suppose,

* That these particulars, suggested here only by way of *supposition*, are but too just, nay, positive *facts*, may be seen evinced above, Vol. I. pag. 238. Vol. II. pag. 304, 305, 466. Vol. III. pag. 148.—See also Vol. V. Sermon. LXXXII, LXXXIII, LXXXIV.

What is the world saying, but that our *rowers have brought us into great waters*? Ezek. xxvii. 27. What is this they are saying of the judicatories of the church of Scotland in our days? Are people saying, that God hath left us and our judicatories, so far as to make unscriptural and unwarrantable acts, and impose sinful terms of communion? &c. Are they saying, that Bethel is turned to Bethaven? That Philadelphia is turned to Ladicea? It would be good news if there were no truth in what the world are now saying of us. But if there be any truth in it, then surely God hath left us very far; and who knows how far he may yet remove? Better sword, famine, and pestilence among us than that God should utterly leave us. But how far soever he may leave a visible church, yet he will never leave his invisible remnant: for to them he hath said, *I will not leave thee till I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.*

7. Hence see reason to try what *side* you are upon, whether you be: *Jacob* or an *Esau*. They were born of the same mother, and lay in the same womb, but the one was blessed and the other cursed. You may be of the same mother-church, yet *born after the flesh, and not after the Spirit*. If you be the true seed of Jacob, then you will know something of a Bethel-interview with God. Hath God ever brought you to a wilderness, and there met with you, and spoke comfortably to you? Have you ever seen the glory of God in Christ as a ladder to heaven, *The way, the truth, and the life*, so as you were made to close with him, and ascend up to God by this ladder? *For, by him we believe in God, who raised him from the dead, and gave him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God.* Have you heard God speaking to you, and communicating his mind, or discovering himself as a promising God in words of grace to your humiliation, sanctification, and consolation? O man, woman, if all places be alike to you, so as you never met with God in a place that might be called BETHEL; and if all words of scripture be alike to you, so as you know
no

no word on which *he hath caused you to hope*, you are yet a *stranger to Israel*: but if you can point at the place where the Lord God of the Hebrews met with you once a day, so as you can sometimes look back upon it with pleasure, saying, O! I thought it was a BETHEL, a *house of God*; and if you point at the word with which God opened your heart, as he did the heart of Lydia, and made it the porch both of loneliness and comfort, it is good. Did he make the word to you, as it was to Job, *Better and more precious than your necessary food*; and as it was to Jeremiah, *The joy and rejoicing of your heart*; and as it was to David, *Sweeter than the honey, or the honey comb*, and the very ground on which *he hath caused you to hope*? and are you from that time to this still *hoping in his word*, when the Lord restores your soul out of its sleepy fit? Why, then, it seems you are a child of promise, to whom God hath said, *I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of*.

8. Hence see the duty of all who hear me, both unbelievers and believers.

[1.] Ye that are *unbelievers*, and know not the God of Bethel, but are *strangers to the covenant of promise*, living without God and without hope in the world; living in the *lusts of the flesh*; poor, wretched, worldly creature, drunkard, whore-monger, Sabbath-breaker, or hypocrite, that may be comes to communions, but never had communion with God there, and never came out of Sodom to this day, that was never brought to a wilderness of fear and despair, and then to a Bethel of hope and comfort in God, as a promising God in Christ; I would tell you your duty in two words.

(1.) It is your duty to *consider the dangerous state you are into*. And I must tell you a terrible word for awakening your seared conscience, if God would bless it for that end. As you have been hearing that God is bound, by his own *promise*, never to leave his children, till he doth that which he hath spoken to them of in the gospel: so, on the other hand, that same God is bound and obliged, by his *threatening*, if you remain in that state, never to leave contending with you, until

until he hath done that which he hath spoken of in the law; that is, you are under the *curse of the law*, and God is obliged to curse you. He that is faithful to his promise, and will accomplish it to all that flee in to Christ, is as faithful to his threatening, and will accomplish it to all that remain out of Christ.——What a trembling heart would you have, man, woman, if you were but in Paul's case, when more than forty men bound themselves with an oath, that they would not eat or drink till they had killed him? If so many men were bound under oath to kill and destroy you, I suppose it would take sleep from your eyes, and make you restless how to escape their fury; and yet their oath could relate but to a temporal life. But tremble and fear to think, that the great God is bound, by solemn oath, to damn and destroy you to all eternity, if you remain in that Christless state; *He hath sworn in his wrath, that you shall not enter into his rest*, Heb. iii. 11.

(2.) It is your duty to *flee from this wrath to come*, by fleeing to Bethel, to the God of Bethel, to a promising God in Christ. You will never go to heaven, if you go not to Bethel by the way; I mean, if you remain strangers to Christ. Think not these are words of course that we are speaking to you; for, as *knowing the terrors of God, we persuade you to flee out of Sodom, and away from the divine wrath*: so, I hope, knowing the *comforts of God*, as the God of Bethel, we would persuade you to come and see what is to be seen at Bethel, and to come and hear the voice of a promising God that is to be heard there. *What we have heard and seen, may we not declare unto you*, that there is such a thing as Bethel-interviews with God? And wo to us who are ministers, if we be preaching to you an absolutely unknown God, an unknown Bethel, an unknown Jesus! If we know neither the terrors nor comforts of God at any time, I think we would have no commission to speak any of them to you, my dear friends, whom I never expect to see all again in our present circumstances, till we see Christ coming in the clouds

clouds of heaven. In the fear of God, and in the faith of our meeting together before his tribunal, I would tell you, that the great day's meeting we shall have, will be terrible to you ; if before you leave this world, you know nothing of a Bethel-meeting with God, as a promising God in Christ.

Therefore, let me *exhort* you, in the last of the feast, and in the prospect of the great day, to come to Christ, in whom *all the promises are Yea and Amen, to the glory of God*. Come to him, by owning that you cannot come of yourself. Come to him, by crying to him, that he would draw you. Come to him, by believing that you cannot believe as you should. Come to him, by believing that you are cursed, wretched, and undone without him, and that you shall be blessed and happy in him. Come to him, by believing that you have no righteousness but guilt, no strength but weakness ; and that *in the Lord only you have righteousness and strength*. Come to him, by believing that you have nothing, and that he hath all ; and that you can do nothing and he can do all for you. Come to him, by imploring him to be your *Prophet, Priest, and King ; your wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*. Come to him, not upon such and such terms and conditions, that you are ready to dream you must come up to : but come to him, by coming down to his terms ; that is, to be willing to be saved by free grace. *Come down, Zaccheus, for this day salvation is come to thy house* : so, say I, come down, sinner, from the tree of legal qualifications, and legal hopes, built upon your own naughty duties. Come down, for you cannot save yourself by all your climbing, nor bring salvation to yourself ; but *this day salvation is come to your house* : salvation is come to you, because you cannot come to it ; salvation is come to your hand : salvation is come to your heart. The Saviour is knocking at the door of your heart, and calling you to come down, and take the free salvation that is come to you ; *Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely*. It may be this shall be the last communion you shall see.

in time, and the last communion-offer that ever you shall hear ; or, if you be spared in time, it may be the last communion you shall have with peace in the church of Scotland ; it may be so, and it may be otherwise ; only we have had long forty years peace, and it is possible the present emergencies in this church may be the beginning of sorrows : but whatever be a-coming, as death and judgment is certainly coming upon you speedily, it is safest for you *to come to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant* ; let not the last offer be slighted : Oh ! let us not part with one another, till there be good ground to hope, we shall not part with Christ. Alas ! I fear before this day eight days, yea, perhaps, *before the cock crow twice*, this offer of Christ will be forgotten and out of your head. Some pitiful trifle in a world will take all out of your heart ; but I here take your conscience to witness, forget as you will, that this offer shall not be altogether in vain, though it should be slighted ; for, when the book of conscience shall be opened at the great day, this shall be called to remembrance, that such a day at Abbot's-hall, after a communion there, Christ and salvation, from sin and wrath, came to you to be freely received, and yet you rejected it ; and this will contribute to glorify the justice of God in condemning you, and make it evident to all the world, *that he is clear when he judges*.

Wo is me, if there be not so much as a desire kindled in your heart after our glorious Lord ! If you think eternal salvation worth your while, O sinner, and this offer of it no contemptible thing, then I may *advise* you to set some little time apart, after this occasion is over, and betake yourself to some place, whether in the house or the field, where you may have a little retirement from the world, and there cry to God, that he may follow this offer and this occasion, with power upon your heart for drawing you to the Lord and his way ; while you are thus employed, who knows, but before you come from your knees, the place may become a BETHEL, a *house of God*, where you will see and know him as a promising God in Christ Jesus ;
for,

for, in this way some have had a meeting with him that they will never forget. O! be restless in waiting on him in the use of all appointed means, till he manifest himself to you savingly; for, when once he doth so, you may be sure he will never leave you, till he hath perfected the good work according to his promise.

[2.] To you that are *believers* in Christ, and know what it is to have some Bethel-interviews with God, either at this occasion, or formerly. Are you in this happy state, and have God for your close companion, who having begun to do good, *will not leave you, till he hath done all that he hath said to you?* Your duty is both to be *joyful* in your *promising* God, and *fruitful* in the *work of faith*.

(1.) In the faith of this promise, you ought to be *joyful*. Is it nothing to you, that God himself is your everlasting companion, saying, *I will not leave you?* That he is a promising God to you, and hath condescended to speak to you? That he is your agent, to do what he hath spoken? And that he hath bound himself never to *leave you, until he hath done what he hath spoken?* O! whatever dark days may come, it is your duty to be joyful in him: *Though the earth should be removed, and the mountains cast into the midst of the sea; here is a river that makes glad the city of God; that makes glad the children of God: God is in the midst of them; and hath said, I will not leave you.*

OBJECT. *Alas! but may a child of God say, How can I take in this comfort, when I find the Lord hath left me? Though he said once, I will never leave you, yet it may be a delusion; for I feel the contrary in many sad effects of his absence.*

O unbelieving believer, will you, with Thomas, never believe, till you feel! The ground of your faith is God's promise, and not your feeling. But, for satisfying the soul, that may be under a dark cloud of desertion, saying, *The Lord hath forsaken, and my God hath forgotten;* sin prevails, and God is out of sight; I would have you to remark, That there are tokens of

God's presence with you, believer, even when you do not observe them, by reasons of the clouds that are upon you : For example, whence is it that you are not *swallowed up* like a ship in a whirlpool ; and that there is some secret grain of hope in the heart, even when your unbelief is ready to say, *My hope is perished* ? Why, the reason is, he hath not altogether left you.—Whence is it that you are like the *burning bush*, all in a flame many times, and yet not consumed ; burning, but not burnt ; flaming, but not consumed ? You do not observe this ; yet it is observable, that you are preserved to this day, to this hour, amidst the flames of temptation, and the floods of corruption : why ? the matter is, he hath not yet left you.—Whence is it that you can never give *over duties altogether* ; and, however the tempter prevail to slacken your hand, yet you cannot for your heart give up with religious people, and with all religious duties, wherein you think communion with God may be had ? Why, the reason of this is, he hath not altogether left you.—Whence is it that you do not *break God's prison*, through utter despondency, and go away, and take your pleasure with the rest of the wicked world ? Even when you are in the prison of desertion and unbelief, you dare not think of bidding farewell to God, or departing wickedly from him, or of bidding the Almighty depart from you ; nay, is there not something in your heart, even at your worst, that says, O ! if he would come ! O ! when will he come ? This says, he hath not altogether left you.—Whence is it that you cannot *agree with sin* ? The more it prevails upon you, the more you abhor it, and abhor yourself for it, and dare not give way to it. Doth not this evidence there is some secret power and presence of God with you, and that he hath not yet left you.—When is it that when you *stray from your true resting-place*, you cannot *rest any where else*, and can find no quiet in your mind, till you be back again ? Possibly you fall a seeking rest and peace in the creature, in the world, in recreations and diversions, and perhaps in your duties, and yet there was something in your heart, that said, Oh ! it is not here

here, it is not here; you find vanity written on all, till you return to your first Husband.—Again, Whence is it, that at your *worst* the least word of news from him concerning his *return*, makes your heart *leap within you for joy*, as the babe in Elisabeth's womb, at the salutation of Mary, while the news of his return, and the hope of his coming again gives you a glad heart? Surely he is not far off; and even when you are most secure and stupid, most dead and dull, there is a secret wish at the bottom of your heart; O for such a day again, wherein the candle of the Lord shined on me! *O that it were with me as in months past!* —Whence is it, that the *outward shell of ordinances* cannot content your heart, without the *kernel of communion and fellowship with God?* And that the dead letter of the word cannot please you, without the living Spirit accompanying it? Why, he hath not left you to be content with any thing without himself.—Whence is it, that the *interest of Christ*, is *your interest*, and that you cannot join with the defections of the day, nor side with the errors of the times, but still desire to be on Christ's side? Why cannot you turn with the tide of the times? Even because the Lord hath not altogether left you.—In a word, Whence is it, that the *least discovery* he makes of himself is *joyfully welcome to you*, when he, as it were, but softly knocks, silently tirls at the door of your heart; *My Beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him?* Song v. 4. When he seems to be on his way to you, you are ready to say as Laban to Abraham's servant, Gen. xxiv. 31. *Come in thou blessed of the Lord.*—Well, whence are all these things, but from this, that he is *still present*, though you see him not, and that he hath never altogether left you, but is still remembering his promise, *I will not leave thee?*

(2.) It is your duty to be *fruitful in the work of faith*. O believer! give glory to God, by believing that he *will not leave you, till he hath done that which he hath spoken to you of*. Dark and cloudy days, that may follow upon Bethel-interviews cannot hinder God's doing

ing what he hath spoken : and therefore, let it not hinder your believing that he *will do what he hath spoken to you of*. Hath he spoken to you of *pardoning your sins* ? Hath he spoken to you of *subduing your corruptions* ? Hath he spoken of *supplying all your wants* ? Hath he spoken to you of *bearing your burdens* ? Hath he spoken to you of *healing your diseases* ? Hath he spoken to you of your *provision and through-bearing in the world* ? Hath he spoken to you of your *protection in time of danger* ? Hath he spoken to you of *satisfying your desire* ? Hath he spoken to you of *guiding you by his counsel, and bringing you to his glory* ? Hath he spoken to you of your *trials, that he will support and uphold with the right-hand of his righteousness* ? Hath he spoken to you of your *seed, that he will be your God, and the God of your seed* ? Hath he spoken to you of your *death, that death shall be swallowed up in victory* ? Hath he spoken to you of *eternal life, that you shall be for ever with him* ? Hath he spoken to you of his *love, that he hath loved you with an everlasting love* ? Hath he spoken to you of his *Spirit, that his Spirit shall be in you as a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life* ? Hath he spoken to you of his *blessing, that he hath blessed you, and ye shall be blessed, and that in blessing he will bless you* ? Hath he spoken to you of his *presence, that he will never leave you nor forsake you, that he will be with you in trouble* ? Hath he spoken to you of his *care about you, that he will make all things work together for your good* ? Hath he spoken to you of his *absence, that he will return, that he will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice* ? Hath he spoken to you of his *anger, that it endureth but a moment, and that with everlasting kindness he will have mercy on you*.—Whatever he hath spoken, O give him the glory of his truth, by believing that whatever he seems to be doing by outward frowning providences, yet he *will never leave you, till he hath done what he hath spoken to you of*.—It is your duty to keep your eye shut upon dark providences, and to keep your eye open upon the clear promise ?

Has he said, *he will not leave you, till he hath done what he hath said?*—Then wait upon him in the due use and improvement of all means, till he do his work, and do not leave him. Return his promise by your practice, saying, Lord, hast thou said, *I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken?* Behold, through grace, I resolve I will not leave thee, until thou hast done what thou hast spoken: *He is a God of judgment, and blessed are all they that wait for him.* Hath he said, and promised to this effect? Then, O put a favourable construction upon all his frowning dispensations! According to your faith of his promise, and of his favour therein, such will be your faith of his favour amidst all afflicting providences.—Whatever distress and difficulty you meet with; yet let faith still say, for all this, I hope he will do as he hath spoken: for all this, I will not quit my hold of him, but hope in his word.

O believer! remember that whatever God hath said to thee, he hath said it with a *surely*, as he said to Jacob, Gen. xxxii. 12. *I will SURELY do thee good.* And when Jacob came to a strait, he put God in mind of it, *Thou didst say, I will surely do thee good;* and therefore let your faith be acted with a *surely*, grounded upon the truth and veracity of God, saying with David, Psal. xxiii. 6. *SURELY goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.* We live by faith, and not by sight; and therefore, though dark days should come, you ought to believe when you cannot see, *And blessed is she that believed, for there shall be a performance of these things which were told her from the Lord,* Luke i. 45. *The word of the Lord endureth for ever,* Psal. xix. 9.

Let the faith of the promise appear in your sanctification, holiness of heart, speech, and behaviour. *Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God,* 2 Cor. vii. 1. Let it be evident to all the world you converse with, that *now you are*

are clean, through the words that he hath spoken to you. He that hath this faith and hope, purifieth himself; for faith brings all its purity out of Christ; or, which is all one, out of the promise, which is *Yea and Amen in Christ*. The faith of God's love will work by love to a holy God, and his holy ways: therefore, O believer! let your life be a life of faith; and resolve, through grace, to live and die in the faith of his love, which he himself expresseth in this promise, *I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.*

S E R M O N

S E R M O N LXXXIX.

The COMBINATION and CONJUNCTION
of JOYS; or, the JOYFUL APPROACH of the
SAVIOUR, chearfully Welcomed by the CHURCH'S
ECHO of FAITH*.

PSALM xl. 7.—*Lo, I come!*—

SONG ii. 8. *The voice of my Beloved! behold he cometh!*

WE have a communion-solemnity in view: but if the question be proposed, *How shall we have communion with God at this occasion?* Two things are necessary to it. 1. His coming to us graciously: there is no communion with him to be expected, unless he come: so he saith in the first text here, *Lo, I come.* 2. Our apprehending his approach, and giving him welcome entertainment, upon his coming: then, and not till then, have we communion with God, when we hear his voice, and see him, as it were, on the tops of the mountains, and say, *The voice of my Beloved! behold, he cometh!*

In the words complexly viewed, we have two things more generally. 1. Here is intimation given to the church, by the Lord Jesus; *Lo, I come!* 2. Here is notice taken by the church; *Behold, he cometh!* Here is the joyful voice of the Son of God; *Lo, I come!* And here is the joyful echo of the church; *The voice of my Beloved! behold, he cometh!* Mark the frame HE is in when he speaks of his coming; it is a joyful frame;

* This Sermon was preached on Saturday the 27th of April, 1734. being the preparation-day before the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper at Abernethy, upon the 28th. The second impression.

Lo, I come! I delight to do thy will, O my God. And observe the *frame* SHE is in, upon the intimation of his coming; it is a *joyful frame*; *Behold, he cometh!* He speaks with a joyful *Lo*; *Lo, I come*: and she speaks with a joyful *Behold*; *Behold, he cometh!*

These two words being all the subject I proposed to speak of, at the time, I shall refer the further explication of them to the prosecution of this doctrinal observation.

DOCT. *That Christ's coming to his people graciously, in their time of need, is a joyful and delectable coming, both to him and them.*

The time wherein CHRIST said here; *Lo, I come!* was a time of great need, even when *sacrifice and offering would not*; when there was no hope of salvation from any other quarter, unless he himself had undertaken it: then said he, *Lo, I come!*—The time wherein the CHURCH here said, *Behold, he cometh!* was a time of great and felt need; for the Lord had withdrawn himself behind mountains of sin and guilt, till he paid a new visit, that made her cry out with joy, *Behold, he cometh!*

That Christ's gracious coming to his people, is joyful both to him and them, will appear in the sequel; only it is enough here to demonstrate it, that as HE is a *joyful* proclaimer of his own approach, saying, *Lo, I come!* So SHE is the joyful beholder thereof, saying, *Behold, he cometh!*

The method I would here endeavour to observe, as the Lord shall be pleased to assist, shall be the following.

- I. To observe what *comings* of Christ to his people are joyful to him and them.
- II. Show what makes his coming joyful to *him*.
- III. What makes his coming joyful to *them*.
- IV. What *expressions* of joy *in him* are imported in his, *Lo, I come!*

V. What

V. What *expressions* of joy in *them* are imported in their *behold* ; *BEHOLD, he cometh !*

VI. Show whence is this *combination* and *conjunction* of joys ; or, why it is that, like a resounding echo, his *Lo, I come*, is answered, with a *Behold, he cometh.*

VII. Deduce some *inferences* for the *application* of the whole.

I. The *first* thing proposed was, To observe what *comings* of Christ to his people are joyful to him and them. Here I shall mention only four comings of the Lord Jesus, namely, his coming in the flesh ; his coming in the clouds ; his coming in the word ; and his coming in the Spirit.

i. His coming in the *flesh* was a joyful coming both to him and his people. The first text here is particularly applied to his coming in the flesh, Heb. x. 5, 7. *Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, a body hast thou prepared me ; then said I, Lo, I come, (in the volume of thy book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God.* Which shows also, that this was a joyful and delightful coming, though it was upon that errand of being a sacrifice to divine justice for our sins, when no other sacrifice would do the business. And surely this coming of Christ is a joyful coming to his people, and brings ground of joy unto all people ; *Behold*, said the angels to the shepherds upon Christ's coming in the flesh, *I bring good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people ; for to you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord*, Luke ii. 10. And it is probable, as many divines shew, that these words of the spouse here, saying, *Behold, he cometh !* hath a particular reference to Christ's coming in the flesh. The Old-testament saints *saw his day afar off, and rejoiced* in the view they had of it by faith. They saw him coming skipping in the dark mountains of shadows, and ceremonies, and typical sacrifices, to be the substance of all the shadows. In a word, his coming in the flesh is the very root and foundation of the joys of all the redeemed : if he had not thus come,

according to the promise, they would never had any ground of joy ; but faith's view of this coming, or of God in our nature, God incarnate, *God made manifest in the flesh*, is a fountain-head of joy ; *God being in Christ reconciling the world to himself* ; being *bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh* : and we having access to God through him, who became like unto us in all things, except sin. O Sirs, do you believe that there is a man in heaven called IMMANUEL, *God-man* ? We read of *joy and peace in believing* : surely you never believed there was such a man, God in our flesh, if it never afforded any joyful thought to you.

2. His coming in the *clouds* is a joyful coming, both to him and his people : this is what is called *his second coming*, Heb. ix. 28. *To them that look for him, he will appear the second time, without sin unto salvation.* And, indeed, this will be a joyful coming to Christ ; for it is a coming to salvation : when he comes to save, he comes always joyfully. When he came first to save, by the price of his blood, he came leaping and skipping joyfully ; and much more when he will come to finish the work of salvation, and to perfect the salvation of all the redeemed. His coming to marry his people is joyful to him, much more when he comes to consummate the marriage. Christ had an eye to this in his coming to suffer : *He endured the cross, and despised the shame, for the joy that was set before him*, Heb. xii. 2. even to the joy of an exalted state : and, you know, that the last step of his exaltation is his coming to judge the world at the last day ; then he will *be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.*—And as it is a joyful coming to him, so it is to his people. It is true, it will be terrible to his enemies that slighted his coming to save, and neglected the great salvation ; for, *He will come in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel*, 2 Thessalonians. i. 8.——His second coming will be dreadful to them that do not welcome his first coming : and, *Behold he cometh in the clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him, and all nations shall wail because of him*, Rev.

Rev. i. 7. But to his people, to his followers and servants, to all that welcome him now, his coming is joyful; they will welcome him with joy, saying, *Even so, Come, Lord Jesus.* They long for his coming; and they are called to lift up their heads with joy, because *the day of their redemption draweth nigh.* They cry to him to hasten his coming, *Haste, my Beloved, and be thou like a roe or young hart on the mountains of Bether.* No wonder, for then they *enter into the joy of the Lord.* Christ, who here says, *Lo, I come!* will as certainly come the second time, as he came the first; and as he came the first time, in order to his coming the second; so he speaks of his second coming with a *behold; Behold! I come quickly,* Revel. xxii. 20. And the church's joyful echo follows, *Even so, Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.*

3. His coming in the word, to court a people for himself, is a joyful coming to him and to his people; for then, as it is, Rev. xxii. 17. *Both the Spirit and the Bride say, Come.* The Spirit of Christ, and the bride of Christ, joyfully invite sinners to come to Christ: hence a gospel day is called the *day of the Son of man.* And Christ, in the gospel-dispensation, says, *Lo, I come!* He comes riding in the gospel chariot; he comes with out-stretched arms, saying, *Behold me! behold me!*—And his coming thus is joyful to all his people, Romans x. 15. *How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace; that bring glad tidings of good things!* His coming in the word is joyful to them, in so much, that nothing in the world is so precious to them as the word; it is *sweeter than honey and the honey comb.* *Thy word was found of me, and I did eat it, and it was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart:* this is their food; *Man lives not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.* This is their comfort in their affliction.—His word quickens them; they hear his voice therein, and say, *It is the voice of my Beloved! behold, he cometh! leaping on the mountains, skipping on the hills.* But his coming in the word is joyful

joyful and beneficial, as it is attended with what follows, namely, his coming in the *Spirit*: for,

4. His coming in the *Spirit* is a joyful coming; and this is that which makes all the former ways of his coming to be joyful. We have no joyful view of his coming in the flesh, nor joyful hope of his coming in the clouds, nor joyful apprehension of his coming in the word, unless we have some share of his coming in the Spirit, as a Spirit of faith and consolation: his coming in the Spirit not only to court, but to win the heart; not only to deal, but to prevail with sinners, by his convincing and converting power.—This coming is joyful to him; for, it is a day of the gladness of his heart; Song iii. 11. *Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon, with the crown where-with his mother crowned him, in the day of his espousals, in the day of the gladness of his heart*: for then he sees the travel of his soul and is satisfied, Isa. liii. 11. And, O this should encourage us to pray for the Spirit, the promised Comforter, since nothing gladdens the heart of Christ more than the giving of the Spirit to *convince of sin, righteousness, and judgment*, and so to comfort his people.—And, on the other hand, this coming of Christ in the Spirit, cannot but be a joyful coming to his people; for then they are *anointed with the oil of gladness*, and get the oil of joy for mourning, and the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Then they get their bands loosed; their maladies healed; their doubts resolved; their fears dispelled, &c. When Christ says here, *Lo, I come!* let us view therein the promise of his coming in the Spirit: for, why did he come in the flesh, but that he might come in the Spirit? Having come in the flesh, and finished his work, according to his word; he promises the Spirit, and sends the Spirit; *He shall glorify me*, John xvi. 14. *When the Comforter is come, whom I will send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, he shall testify of me*, John xv. 26. His coming in the flesh was the great Old-Testament promise; and his coming in the Spirit the great New-Testament promise: and as the Old-Testament was but a porch to the New; so his coming

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in the flesh was to pave the way for his coming in the Spirit ; therefore, when you hear him say, *Lo, I come !* take up the meaning of it not only to be, *Lo, I come in the flesh ;* but also, *Lo, I come in the Spirit.* And, O Sirs, is this his voice ! What say you to it ? Is there any joyful echo in your heart welcoming him ; saying, *The voice of my Beloved ! behold, he cometh !* Surely if he comes in the Spirit to you, at this occasion, it will be a joyful coming.—I might here speak of his coming in his *providence ;* his coming at *death ;* his coming first to begin, and his after coming to advance his work ; but his joyful comings are only *so* by his coming in the Spirit. I go on,

II. To the next thing proposed, which was to show, what makes his coming *joyful* to HIM. And what makes him come with a joyful, *Lo, I come !* Why,

1. He *rejoiced from eternity in the thoughts* of his coming ; and therefore cannot but rejoice in the accomplishment of his word and design, Prov. viii. 23, 31. *Ere ever the earth was, he rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights were with the sons of men.* It was in the council of peace, he said to his Father, *Lo, I come ! I delight to do thy will ;* and in the fulness of time he says in our hearing, *Lo, I come !* O to give a joyful welcome to that joyful *Lo !*

2. His coming is joyful to *him ;* because he comes clothed with a commission from his Father ; and he rejoices to run his errands. It is his Father's will that he executes when he comes ; and therefore he says, *I delight to do thy will, O my God. This commandment have I received of my Father, to lay down my life for my sheep.* And therefore, with desire he desired this *passover*, even to be himself *our passover* sacrificed for us. He hath a commission to come ; for he is the sent and the sealed of God ; *God so loved the world, that he sent his only begotten Son : that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life. Him hath God the Father sealed.* He comes in his Father's name, and his Father's seal appended to his commission.

3. His coming is joyful to *him*, because it is on a *glorious design* of glorifying the Father ; and therefore, when he comes he says, *Now is my Father glorified ; now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him*, John xiii. 31. When he came, and was just ready to lay down his life, and having done his work he said, John xvii. 4. *I have glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work thou gavest me to do.* He brought in glory and honour to all the perfections of God, and full reparation to all his injured attributes.

4. His coming is joyful to *him*, because, as his coming was on a glorious design, with reference to his Father, God being glorified by his coming, whether in the flesh, or by the Spirit ; so it is on a *loving design* toward his people, to whom he comes. He comes to save them, and justify them, and sanctify them, and comfort them, and heal them, and help them ; and all for love, because he has *loved with an everlasting love*, therefore he comes to draw with loving-kindness.—Love makes him come joyfully : it was love made him come joyfully in the flesh, and love makes him come joyfully in the Spirit ; love made him come at first, and, notwithstanding many provocations, love makes him come again, according to his word, *I will see you again*, John xvi. 22. *Now you have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your hearts shall rejoice. O the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of his love !* He comes joyfully, because he lives cordially.—But I go on,

III. To the next thing proposed, namely, what makes his coming joyful to his people, what makes them welcome him with a joyful *behold*, **BEHOLD he cometh !** Why,

1. Because his coming is their *life* ; when he came in the flesh, *He came to give life, and to give it more abundantly*, John x. 10. And when he comes in the Spirit, he comes to give life, to give the *well of water springing up to everlasting life*, John iv. 14. Whenever he comes, life enters the dead and dry bones. We

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are like dead carcases, our spirits sinking within us ; but whenever the Spirit of life comes in the word, then we get up, as it were, to our feet ; then we have life ; *He that bath the Son, bath life* : whenever he comes, and that we have him with us, then the life of faith, the life of repentance, the life of love, the life of joy, the life of humility, the life of holiness, and the life of comfort come : we live or die as he comes or goes. If life be sweet, then his coming must be sweet ; and of all lives the life of God, a *spiritual life, hid with Christ in God*, is the most pleasant and glorious.

2. His coming must be joyful to them, because his *absence* is their *death* ; yea, his absence is a *hell* to them that know what a heaven his presence makes : hence their many *Obs* when he is away ; *Oh ! when wilt thou come unto me ? Oh ! that it were with me as in months past !* and hence their many *how longs*, when he is away ; *How LONG wilt thou forget me, O Lord ? How LONG wilt thou hide thy face from me ?* Psal. xiii. 1, 2. They cannot live without him ; or, if his absence be to such a degree, as that they are careless, stupid, and unconcerned, yet they that know what his joyful presence is, will grant, that their careless times are their sad and sighing times ; they are not their joyful times ; they are not their life, but their death, and they never expect to have a joyful life till he come again.

When he is away from the church, then all goes to confusion : *The servants of the house begin to smite their fellow servants*, Matth. xxiv. 46. Why, because the Lord delays his coming : they begin to smite them with sentences of *suspension*, or *seclusion*, as at this day * when he is away, then the shepherds begin to *rule his people with force and violence*, Ezek. xxxiv. 4. And what is the effect of that ? See ver. 6. *My sheep wandered over all the mountains ; my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search, or seek after them.* Why, might not this smite the hearts of rigid rulers, to see the flock scattered here and there,

* A short account of what is here alluded to, may be seen, Vol. V. Serm. LXXXIV. See likewise Serm. LXXXII, LXXXIII.

upon the violent obtrusions of hirelings upon them †? No none did search out, or seek after them. They even flight them as an ignorant mob, a rabble, that need not to be regarded, [and, indeed, if matters go on at this rate, if God do not stir up the ensuing Assembly, (*viz.* 1734.) to take course with these disorders, the ruin of the church of Scotland is but beginning.] But whence are all these confusions? May we not say, as it is, Deut. xxxi. 17. *Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not amongst us?* When he is away from a church, nothing but confusion and disorders take place; but when he comes back, then his work is revived, Zion is built up, reformation restored. When he goes away from a particular believer, Oh! what a hell of confusion till he returns! His presence gives rest, but his absence trouble; *Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.*

3. His coming is joyful to *them*, because the errand on which he came is *merciful*. What does he bring when he comes? Why, he even brings *God* with him, and all the *fulness* of God: and so he brings the chief good with him.—God is in Christ, and all the fulness of the God-head in him; and therefore, when he comes, all good comes: when he comes graciously, he comes in the capacity of a friend, to help; a physician, to heal; a shepherd, to feed; *He feedeth among the lilies.* When he comes, his presence is a reviving and refreshing presence; an enlightening, invivifying, and enlarging presence; sometimes a confirming and comforting presence; a humbling and a sweetly-debasing presence; yea, it is an exalting and dignifying presence. The effects of his coming are most joyful; for, when he comes to his people, then their sins are pardoned, their wants supplied, their enemies conquered, their crosses sanctified, their kingdom secured; and therefore his coming must be joyful to them.

4. His coming is joyful to *them*, because his coming is all their *heaven upon earth*; yea, his presence is the heaven of heavens. What is heaven, but a being *like*

† That the Lord's heritage was grievously oppressed at this time, may be seen laid open, Vol. V. Sermon. LXXXII, LXXXIII, LXXXV. In some foot notes,

him, by seeing him as he is. Now, this heaven is begun on earth when he comes ; for then they *behold his glory, and are changed into the same image*, 2 Cor. iii. 18. How can they be but joyful at his coming when they consider *who he is* : he is enough to make a heaven whatever way they look to him : if they look to him *absolutely*, *He is altogether lovely ; the brightness of his Father's glory*. When they look to him *comparatively*, *He is fairer than the sons of men ; more glorious than all the mountains of prey*. When they look to him *relatively*, he is their Head and Husband ; their God and Guide ; their righteousness and strength ; their light, life, joy, and all. O says the *strong* believer, *My beloved is mine, and I am his* : he is mine, and I will not part with him for the whole creation. O says the *weak* believer, the *doubting* believer, O if he were mine, I would not part with him for a thousand worlds. In a word, he is such a heaven to them that nothing can make up the loss of his presence : ministers cannot do it ; ordinances cannot do it ; angels cannot do it. Ordinances are but the shell, without the kernel, when Christ is not in them ; all creature-comforts cannot supply his room. Naturalists say, The loadstone cannot draw in presence of the diamond ; surely, when Christ is present with a soul, all the pomp and pride, all the gallantry of the world, will have no influence on the soul. Offer the believer mountains of gold and silver instead of Christ, *Get thee behind me, Satan*, will be his answer : *Thy money perish with thee*, that lays it in balance with the Son of God. Offer me something better than Christ, then you will see what I will do.—There are so many thousand excellencies in Christ, that might be so many thousand reasons why his coming is joyful, that they cannot but lay upon the notice of it, *Behold, he cometh !*

IV. The *fourth* thing proposed was, What *expressions* of joy in the Lord Jesus is imported in this, *Lo, I come !* What sort of joy does it express.

1. I think this, *Lo, I come !* expresses *present* joy ; *Lo, I come !* It is something like that of John xiii. 32.

Now is the Son of man glorified : there was a time when he said, *Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say ?* John xii. 27. But when he comes graciously, he says upon the matter, *Now is my soul satisfied, now is my heart glad ; the Lo, is in the present time, and I come,* is in the present tense ; *Lo, I come !* And if Christ be presently saying with reference to any company here, *Lo, I come to you !* O it is a present joy to him ; he comes rejoicing ; he comes leaping and skipping ; his *set time of coming* is the time of the *gladness of his heart*.

2. It expresses *active* joy ; *Lo, I come !* He rejoices to do good : it is his joy to do service to his Father and his friends. And if he rejoiced in his work when he came to save by the price of his blood ; how must he rejoice when he comes to save by the power of his Spirit ? The natural sun is said to *rejoice as a strong man to run his race*, Psal. xix. 5. It is a metaphorical speech, for the sun is not capable of joy ; but, without metaphor, it is true of the Sun of righteousness, the Lord Jesus Christ ; he is a *strong man*, the *man of God's right-hand*, whom he hath *made strong for himself* : and he rejoices to run his race ; he rejoices to arise with healing under his wings : *Lo, I come !*—It is an active joy.

3. It expresses *certain* joy. The *Lo*, is a note of certainty ; the thing is certain and true ; *Lo, I come !* And his joy is certain ; certain, true, solid joy. There is nothing more certain than that believers have sometimes *joy unspeakable* ; but these are only streams that flow from the joy that is in Christ's heart. His joy is the fountain of their joy ; *He is anointed with the oil of joy above his fellows* ; and the fellowship they have with him is by some drops of that oil of joy. Can they be certain of the streams and the drops when these are allowed ? How much more is it certain, that all true joy centres in him. Believers have sometimes a *fulness of joy* ; but their fulness is the fulness of the streams, or of the vessel ; but his fulness is the fulness of the ocean. If it be certain, there is a stream of joy in the believer sometimes, much more that there is the spring of joy in Christ,

4. It expresses *communicative* joy; designing his people should share of his joy, *Lo, I come!* The joy that Christ has, as Mediator, is a fulness of joy, designed for his peoples use, that *out of his fulness we may receive, and grace for grace, and joy for joy; grace answering grace in Jesus; and joy answering joy in him.* Yea, Christ, as Mediator, is anointed with the *oil of joy, the Spirit above measure*, that he may communicate this joy, and give to them the *oil of joy for mourning*, Isa. lxi. 3. *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, for he hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek; to comfort all that mourn; to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the Spirit of heaviness.* Christ has a commission from his Father to communicate his joy; and therefore it must be communicative.

5. It expresses *triumphant* joy, *conquering* joy; *Lo, I come!* And nothing shall hinder my coming, nor stop me in my course. Mountains nor hills cannot hinder the sun rising; this points out his coming as a conqueror, notwithstanding principalities and powers in his way, he can easily throw them down; *Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save,* Isa. lxiii. 1. Behold it is I: *Lo, I come!*

6. It expresses *solemn* joy. He comes with a solemnity, *Lo, I come!* according to the council of a glorious Trinity. Now when the purpose of heaven is come to the birth, and the decree breaks forth, and the fulness of time is come, he takes heaven and earth witness, as it were, to his solemn march on the errand: he says it with a loud *Lo*, that all the world of men and angels may notice, *Lo, I come!* And, indeed, all the elect angels break forth into joyful songs of praise at this solemnity: when he came in the flesh, they sang, *Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will towards men.* And when he comes in the Spirit to convert a soul, there is joy in heaven over the soul that repents.—It is solemn joy.

7. It expresses *infinite* joy. If we consider who the person is that speaks, namely, GOD, assuming our nature in the person of his eternal Son. The joy of an infinite God, must be infinite joy. Finite creatures cannot tell what infinite joy is ; nay, the joy of saints is *joy unspeakable and full of glory* ; what then must be the joy of the King of saints ? It is infinitely above speech and expression, infinitely glorious. The joy of saints is unspeakably great ; the joy of the man Christ, of the human nature, is unspeakably greater ; but the joy of God, of God in our nature, is infinitely great above all finite apprehension.—Finite thoughts are lost in this infinite depth.

8. It expresses *everlasting* joy, and *eternal* joy ; joy from everlasting, before time ; and to everlasting, after time. It is true, the *Lo, I come !* as I said first, imports *present* joy, with respect to our view of it, but with respect to God, nothing being past or future, but all things eternally present to him, this *Lo* expresses the *everlasting* joy he had, and will have for ever in this work now transacted in time. It is said, Psal. civ. 31. *The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever. The Lord shall rejoice in his work ; the Lord Jehovah shall rejoice in all his works together*, (as we have it in the metre.) Why ? his glory is everlasting glory, his joy everlasting joy in all his works ; especially in that work wherein all his glory shines most brightly, his saving work, of which he is here speaking, when he says, *Lo, I come !*—Thus you see what sort of joy is expressed in this, *Lo, I come !*

V. The *fifth* thing proposed, What expressions of joy is imported in the *echo* from the church, *The voice of my Beloved ! behold he cometh !* What sort of joy does this express ?

1. It expresses joy with *surprise*. O but his coming fills the believer with a sweet surprise, like that, *Or ever I was aware*, Song vi. 12. How abruptly does the church here speak, like one suddenly ravished ! *The voice of my Beloved ! behold, he cometh !*

2. It expresses joy with *wonder* and *admiration*: *Behold, he cometh!* Wonder, O heavens and earth, that he should come to the like of me! And wonder that he should come back again, after I have heaped up mountains and hills of provocation in his way. *Is this the manner of man, O Lord? and what can David say more?* What can I say, but sit down and wonder!

3. It expresses joy with *faith*; *Behold he cometh!* The eye of faith first sees him coming, and then the tongue of joy, sings, *Behold, he cometh!* Faith cometh by hearing; what? even the voice of Christ, the joyful sound of the gospel. Christ rides in that chariot; and the believer, by faith, hearing the noise of his chariot wheels; yea, the sweet voice of him that rides in the chariot, who has grace poured into his lips then he cries out, *The voice of my Beloved! behold, he cometh!*

4. It expresses joy with *love*. And, indeed, as faith is the head, so love is the heart of the new creature: and the joy here is a loving joy; for it is in the view of Christ as her Beloved, *The voice of my Beloved! behold, he cometh!* He is the beloved of the Father, who says, *This is my beloved Son*; and the true believer is of the Father's mind, saying, *This is my Beloved, this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.* And what but joyful love, makes her here speak, with her heart at her mouth, *The voice of my Beloved!*

5. It expresses joy with *praise* and *adoration* (as well as wonder and admiration;) *The voice of my Beloved! behold, he cometh!* O blessed be the comer, as it is, Psalm cxviii. 26. *Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord.* It is a *behold* of adoration, as well as admiration; and, indeed, they both go together, an admiring heart, is an adoring heart: as the presence of Christ, makes a heaven in the heart; so it stirs up the heart instantly to the work of heaven, which is to sing his praise, and to glorify his name, saying, O glory, glory, glory, to him for coming to the like of me, that was afraid he would never give me a visit. O! let all the world praise him with me; *Behold he cometh!*

6. It expresses joy with *humility* ; *Behold, he cometh !* and cometh even *to me* : *What am I, and what is my father's house ?* Behold he cometh to me ! I had no power to come to him, no heart to come, and I would have remained for ever at a distance from him, if he had not graciously condescended to come unto me : I could do nothing but depart from him by an evil heart of unbelief ; but he comes ; *His own arm bringeth salvation* : and he comes with all the salvation I need. Self is sunk to nothing at the appearance of this glorious HE ; *Behold, HE cometh !*

7. It expresses joy with *contempt of the world* : *Behold, he cometh !* and his appearing darkens all the glory of the world, and makes it disappear, as the stars at the rising of the sun. *I count all but loss and dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of him.* O how little does the believer think of the world, when Christ comes ! (*πάντα ἡμῶν πάντα σκύβαλα,*) all is *dung and dog's meat*, as the apostle phrases it, Phillippians iii. 8. ; earthly crowns, kingdoms, thrones, and sceptres are but little despicable toys. Here, here, is an object worth the beholding ; let mine eyes be for ever turned away from beholding vanities : *Behold, he cometh !*

8. It expresses joy with *desire* that others may see and behold him ; *Behold, he cometh !* O that all the world would come and see what I see, come and enjoy what I enjoy ! They that see the glory of Christ, though they flight a world of vanities, yet they pity a world of perishing sinners, and would gladly be instrumental in bringing others to Christ ; *Come, SEE A MAN that told me all things that ever I did ; is not this the Christ ?* said the woman of Samaria. Thus David, *Restore to me the joy of thy salvation ; then will I teach transgressors thy way, and sinners shall be converted unto thee.*

In a word, this *Behold, he cometh !* expresses joy with all the *qualities of heavenly and spiritual joy*.—It expresses *unspeakable* joy, as appears by her broken speech, *The voice of my Beloved !*—It expresses *glorious* joy ; for it flows, from a view of his glory, *Behold, he cometh !*—It expresses *holy* joy ; for she rejoices to see him
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come skipping and leaping upon the mountains and hills of sin and guilt, and levelling all the high towers of strong corruption in his way. O how glad to see him coming down, and making the mountains to melt before him ! So it is a holy joy : the very opposite of all carnal and sensual joys.—It expresses a *quickening* and *strengthening* joy ; for now her heart is open, her lips are open, whatever indisposition for duty took place before ; now *the joy of the Lord is her strength*.—Again, it expresses a *solid* and *well-grounded* joy ; it is no fancy, no delusion, nor enthusiasm ; no : the word and Spirit both concur to this joy. *The voice of my Beloved !* there is the word : *Behold, he cometh !* there is the Spirit. Words cannot give the believer joy without the Spirit ; and the Spirit will not without the word ; the joy of the Holy Ghost is still grounded upon, or agreeable to the word.—Finally, it expresses a *welcoming* joy ; *Behold, he cometh ! Lo, I come*, says Christ ; *Behold, he cometh !* says the church : *Even so, come Lord Jesus, come quickly* : come and welcome with a thousand good-wills. O may he be a welcome guest here !

VI. The *sixth* thing proposed was, To show *whence* is this *combination* and *conjunction* of joys : Or, why is it, that like a resounding echo, his *Lo, I come !* is answered with a *behold, he cometh !* Whence is this ? Why,

1. It proceeds from the *mutual* RELATION *between him and his people*, between him and his church : he is the Bridegroom, and she is the bride ; he is the Husband, and she is the spouse. He has commanded other husbands to *leave father and mother, and to cleave to his wife* ; and he has done something like that himself : he that said, *Thy Maker is thy Husband*, left his Father's bosom for the sake of his bride, saying, *Lo, I come !* and the conjugal tie being mutual, the believer having the Spirit of his glorious Husband, whenever he hears the voice of an approaching Jesus, is obliged to say, *The voice of my Beloved ! behold he cometh !*

2. It proceeds from the *mutual SYMPATHY between him and them*: hence, what affects him, does affect them; what touches them, touches him; *He that touches you, touches the apple of mine eye*, says Christ: they stand kindly affected also to him. This mutual sympathy and love, flows from the *union* between Christ and them. He is the Head and they are the members of his body; and both Head and members being animated by one and the same Spirit, his joy must be their joy. When they come to have his glorious presence in heaven, they are said to *enter into the joy of their Lord*: and when they have his gracious presence on earth signified to them with a joyful *Lo, I come!* they have some begun entrance into his joy; that makes them say with joy, *Behold, he cometh!*

3. His gracious coming is joyful both to him and them, because of the *mutual ONENESS of NATURE between him and them*. As he is a partaker of their human nature; so they are *partakers of his divine nature*, 2 Peter i. 4. Hence, as he knows their frame, and what sort of a voice is most suited to their capacity, and accordingly speaks to them by the whispering of his Spirit in the word; so they *know his voice from the voice of a stranger*, John x. 5. They know the sound of his feet upon the mountains.

4. His gracious coming is joyful both to him and them, because of the *mutual AGREEMENT in DESIGN between him and them*. His ultimate end and design is the glory of God in their salvation; their ultimate end is the same, even that God may be glorified in their salvation. Now, when he comes to pursue this design so joyfully, they cannot but welcome him joyfully: *Sing, O heavens; and shout ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains; for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel*, Isaiah xlv. 25.

5. His gracious coming is joyful both to him and them, because of the *mutual INTERCOURSE between him and them at meeting*: he hath always some good news to bring them from the Father, which he is glad to
tell

tell them, and they are glad to hear ; and they, on the other hand, have something to tell him which they cannot tell the world. And as they are glad of his coming to have an opportunity to tell him their mind ; so he is glad to hear them ; *O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me hear thy voice, and thy countenance ; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely*, Song ii. 14. He has something to do with them, and they have something ado with him ; and therefore, when he joyfully draws near to them, they joyfully draw near to him ; and visit each other with endearing embraces. Truly, indeed, his visits are always visits of kindness, and theirs are ordinarily of business ; his business is to give, and their business is to get ; but then the visits are most sweet, when they are visits of love on both sides.

6. His gracious coming is joyful both to him and them, because of the *mutual* INTEREST and CONCERN *they have both in the covenant of promise*, which is a fountain of joy, and belongs primarily to Christ, in whom the covenant stands fast, and in whom all the promises are, *Yea, and Amen* ; and secondarily to believers in him, who are all *the children of the promise*. It is promised to Christ, that *he shall see of the travel of his soul, and shall be satisfied*, Isaiah liii. 11. And it is promised to the believer, clothed with the character of a meek person, that *he shall eat, and shall be satisfied*, Psalm xxii. 26. Now, when Christ comes graciously to his people, both he and they must be satisfied ; for he comes to accomplish the promise made to himself and to them. Hence mutual satisfaction cannot but take place.

In a word, his joy is the fountain of theirs ; their joy arises from the powerful influence of his joyful approach, upon their joyful reception of him ; his joyful, *Lo, I come !* does instantly create their joyful, *Lo, he cometh !* he having put an echoing principle within them.—The joyful sound of his, *Lo, I come !* cannot but meet with a joyful resounding and rebounding of their, *Lo, he cometh !*

VII. The *seventh* thing proposed, was, To make some *application* of the subject, by deducing some *inferences*.

1. Is it so as it has been said, *That Christ's coming to his people graciously, in their time of need, is a joyful and delectable coming, both to him and them*, then we may see, what it is would make a *sweet communion-day* among us, amidst these *sad and lowering days* wherein we live. We live in sinful and sorrowful days; but Christ's joyful approach, with a *Lo, I come!* would make a joyful day among us at this occasion: and, O that he would speak powerfully, that many here may be made to say, *The voice of my Beloved! behold, he cometh!* He can make the gospel-trumpet to convey his voice. Indeed, if the devil, and his instruments, could get their will, you would not enjoy a gospel-ministry; and if our rowers, that have brought the church of Scotland into deep waters, had got their will, this and some others would have been vacant congregations*; there would have been no communion solemnities here; when men would have shut the gospel-door, O may God himself come and open the door, and open the mouth of ministers, and make his voice to be heard; his joyful, *Lo, I come!* I come to give you a little reviving in your bondage; when men are most unkind, I come to show my kindness; as it is said, Dan. ix. 25. *The wall shall be built in perilous times.* The times we live in are perilous times, in respect of sin, error, apostasy, and defection from Reformation-purity and principles; a time wherein the rights and privileges of poor people are injured, the office of the ministry retrenched, faithful ministers ejected, and the power of presbytery invaded; a time of confusion in church and state, at home and abroad†; a time wherein God's

* Alluding to the sentences passed upon the four brethren, formerly narrated, Vol. V. Sermon. LXXXII, LXXXIII, LXXXIV. in some foot notes.

† The justness of the charge here exhibited, and a short account of the facts here alluded to, may be attained, by consulting what has been formerly narrated, Vol. II. pag. 304, 305, 466. Vol. IV. page 148. Vol. V. Sermon. LXXXII, LXXXIII, LXXXIV, LXXXV. in the notes at the foot.

wrath is threatened to be poured out : these are indeed perilous times ; but hath the Lord said, *The wall shall be built up in perilous times ?* O may this perilous time be a building time ; according to the word, *When the Lord shall build up Zion, he will appear in his glory.* Let us seek a glorious appearance of the Lord at this occasion : and what do we know but he is saying, even with reference to this very time, *Lo, I come !*—O may we hear his voice, and say with joy, *Behold, he cometh !*

2. Hence see the *sweetness of fellowship with God in Christ* : why, it is a partaking of his joy and happiness, his glory and triumph ; it is a meeting his joyful, *Lo, I come !* with our joyful, *Behold, he cometh !* Happy are the sheep of Christ, who know his voice ! And, Oh ! how miserable are you who hear, and yet do not know the joyful sound ! What makes the word and ordinances sweet to the believer ? Why, it is their hearing his voice therein ; his joyful voice, therein ; his joyful voice, that gives them a joyful heart.—But, what makes these same ordinances such a burden and weariness to you, poor graceless man ? Why, you have never heard the voice of Christ, his loving voice, his majestic voice, his powerful voice, that goes out through, and in through the heart, and penetrates and ransacks the secret recesses of the soul. What makes believers lament the absence of Christ ? Why, then their joy is removed ; they are always either rejoicing in his presence, or lamenting his absence, except when they fall into a nap of security, till his joyful voice awake them again. But, alas ! what makes you, poor Christless sinners, live an unconcerned life, though Christ should be never so long away ? Why, you are not acquainted with his coming and going, nor with the sweetness of communion with him. But, O poor soul, may it not stir you up to seek after acquaintance with him ; to hear that the believer's joyful communion is no less than a partaking of the *joy of his Lord*. Christ's joy is their joy, though not of the same *measure* : for Christ is *anointed with the oil of joy and gladness above his fellows* ; yet it is of the same *quality* ; for they have

have fellowship with him in his joy, whenever he comes to them.

3. Hence see the difference between the *law* and the *gospel*; or between the voice of God in the law, and the voice of God in the gospel: his voice in the law is a terrible and dreadful voice; for therein he comes in wrath, with threatenings and curses in his mouth: but the voice of Christ in the gospel is a charming voice, a joyful sound of salvation to sinners, and a door of hope. Whatever word tends to work despair, and to leave a man hopeless, is the voice of the law; but the gospel shows the door of hope in the valley of Achor, and that with a pleasant sound of grace, mercy, pardon, and pity: *Lo, I come!* Hence, as the law is never preached to good purpose, except in a subserviency to the gospel; so gospel-believers are these who first have believed the law, or heard God's voice in the law, which hath made them despair of all help in themselves, and their own righteousness and duty: and next, they have believed the gospel, or heard Christ's voice therein, which has brought them to a lively hope, yea, to *joy and peace in believing.*

4. Hence see both the *nature* of *faith* and of *unbelief*.—On the one hand, we may, from this doctrine, see the nature of *faith*, in its correspondency with its objects; both its immediate object, the word; and its principal object, Christ, the speaker, whose voice sounds in our ears by this gospel. The word says, *Behold, he cometh!* and faith says, *Behold, he cometh!* Christ says, *Behold!* *Lo, I come!* and faith says, *The voice of my Beloved! behold, he cometh!* The gospel is nothing else but a proclamation of Christ's coming; his coming to give life, his coming to save sinners by the price of his blood, and the power of his Spirit; and faith is a setting the seal to a present *lo*, with a present *behold*. The first act of faith looks neither *backward* to what is anterior or past, such as the decree of God, or the design of Christ, his intention in dying; nor does it look *forward* to posterior things, as if it believed a state of salvation that is to come; but it looks to a *present* truth, a present saying, as the gospel is called,
a faith-

a *faithful saying*, and so a present *lo* ; *Lo, I come !* and offer myself to you, man, to you, woman ; *Lo, I come !* and bring salvation with me. Faith, under the influence of the Spirit, says, *The voice of my Beloved ! behold, he cometh !* I hear the voice of God speaking to me through such a minister, and inviting me the chief of sinners. And I joyfully welcome a coming with salvation unto me : there is a persuasion and appropriation in it to the man's self ; and according to the measure of this particular application to itself, such is the measure of joy. There would be no joy at all, if the soul should put away the message from himself ; but receiving it to himself, he rejoices in the voice of Christ as his Beloved.—But next, it shows us also the nature of *unbelief*, on the other hand ; the evil heart of unbelief contradicts the word of Christ ; Christ says, *Lo, I come !* Unbelief says, O he will not come ; no, no : he will never come to the like of me. Indeed a believer may say, and hath good reason to say, I fear my sins provoke him to stay away ; and it will be a wonder if he come to the like of me. But it is gross unbelief to say he will not come ; I do not expect so much good at his hand : and hence unbelief is said to make *God a liar* : it contradicts and blasphemes. O to get faith this day, to welcome Jesus saying, *Lo, I come !* and to expect good at his hand.

I might next apply it for *trial* and *examination*.—What know you of this joyful coming of the Son of God ? It is this coming of the Lord Jesus that only can make your coming to a communion-table profitable and warrantable : if you know nothing of his joyful approach graciously to you, you cannot approach with his allowance to his table ; for, if he never came to you, by his Spirit, you never came to him by faith ; and so you are an unbeliever : and if you remain in this case, you never had a right to his table here, nor shall have a share of his table above.

QUEST. *How shall I know, if ever he came thus to me ?* For helping you in this important inquiry, I would ask you these few things following.

1. Have

1. Have you ever apprehended the *distance* between Christ and you? Was you ever made sensible of the dreadful distance between him and you; a dismal distance; a damnable distance; and invincible and insuperable distance? Have you seen an utter impossibility of saving yourself from it, unless the Lord had come to you? This is the Lord's ordinary way: when he brings to light, he makes sensible of darkness; when he brings to life, he makes sensible of deadness and lifelessness; when he brings to faith, he makes sensible of unbelief; when he brings to love, he makes sensible of enmity; when he brings to holiness, he makes sensible of wickedness; and when he brings to acquaintance, he makes sensible of estrangement: and before he comes near, he makes sensible of distance.

2. Have you heard his voice saying, *Lo, I come!* Have you heard, not the voice of ministers only, but the voice of the chief Shepherd? and know it to be his voice, by the majesty of it, by the power that attended it, by the sweetness that was in it? Has the gospel come to you not in *word only, but in power?* 1 Thess. i. 5. Was there such light, life, liberty, and joy accompanying the voice, as made you sure, at the time, that it was not the voice of man, but of God, who spake like himself?

3. Have you seen him coming, and apprehended him by the *light of the Spirit*, revealing the *Son in you?* Have you seen the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ? Have you seen his fulness, suitableness, and sweetness; his glory, worth, and excellency, by a light shining not in to the head only, but the heart?—It is a spiritual light, *flesh and blood cannot reveal it*; education, and external revelation, however subservient it may be, yet cannot contribute unto it, without supernatural revelation.

4. Have you joyfully welcomed a coming *Jesus?* saying, in effect, *The voice of my Beloved! behold, he cometh!* Have you apprehended the mountains that were in the way between him and you; particularly the mountains of sin and guilt? Has this accented
your

your joy, that he came over all the mountains, and melted down the mountains, and made your heart to melt down before him also, because of your heaping up such mountains between him and you.

5. What *intercourse* have you had with him? what *mutual embracement*? Did you get him in your arms, and wrestle with him for the blessing? Did you get grace to call him your *Beloved*; and to ly in his bosom, and melt in tears of joy? I know there may be intercourse and fellowship with him, even where this is not the attainment; but something like this ordinarily takes place, when he and his people meet together, after some black interveening clouds have kept them long asunder; when his joyful *Lo*, meets with that joyful salutation, *Behold, he cometh! it is the voice of my Beloved!*

6. What are the *fruits* and *effects* of his coming? *Beholding his glory*, was you *changed*? Surely, if there was never a change wrought upon you, but that you remain as vain, frothy, and carnal in your conversation and deportment as ever, he has not come to you. But has his coming imbittered sin, and made you differ with yourself, and submit to his righteousness for your justification, and to his holiness for your sanctification? His great errand is like his name, *JESUS*, to *save his people from their sins*; from the *guilt of sin*, by his merit and righteousness; and from the *power of sin*, by his spirit and grace. What joy has his coming raised in you? Surely, the joy of his salvation, as it is a sin-killing joy, so it is a soul-strengthening joy; *The joy of the Lord is their strength*, Neh. viii. 10. Did this joy strengthen you to believe? and strengthen you to pray? and strengthen you to hope? and strengthen you to wait upon him? and strengthen you to serve him? and to run the way of his commandments with enlargement of heart?

QUEST. *Are there any signs of his coming? What are the prognosticates of his coming?*

ANSW. (1.) It would be a token of his coming, if we were sensible of, and afflicted for his *absence*, saying, *O that I knew where I might find him!* a longing desire

after him, saying, *O! when wilt thou come? He will satisfy the longing desire.*

(2.) Another sign of his coming is, if we were *seeking* after him, and *wrestling* with him for the blessing; he is near to them that call upon him; and these who seek him shall find him.

(3.) If we were *waiting* for him in his appointed way; for, they who wait upon him, shall have to say, *This is our God,* Isaiah xxv. 9.

(4.) If we were finding ourselves to have a *name* to which the promise opens a door of hope. Is there any hope of his coming for a poor *insolvent bankrupt*, who fears that the word of the Lord is against him? Why, that man is in the promise; *To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit,* Isaiah lxvi. 2.—Is there any hope of his coming to a poor *needy creature*, who can find no relief to its soul? Yes, that case is in the promise; *When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, I the Lord will hear, I the God of Jacob will regard.*

We shall now shut up the whole discourse with a word by way of *exhortation*. Is Christ saying, *Lo, I come?* O Sirs, hear and believe, so as you may cry out joyfully, *The voice of my Beloved! Behold, he cometh!* For motives,

1. Consider who it is that *speaketh*; it is God in our nature, IMMANUEL, *God with us*. The word of *salvation* is to you sinners, as well as to you saints; his voice is *Lo, I come* to save sinners; *I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*: yea, *To you, O men, do I call*; and my voice is to the sons of men, Prov. viii. 4.

2. He says it with a *Lo!* that all the world may give attention to it; *Listen, O isles, unto me; and hearken ye people from a far,* Isa. lxix. 1. He is speaking to the isles, particularly to the isle Britain, that has long refused to hear his voice. The gospel is to be preached to *every creature*.

3. The reason why he is saying to you in this gospel, *Lo, I come*, to save sinners, is, that sinners may welcome

welcome him and say, *The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh!* Even the first welcome of faith may be in these terms, and should be so; for, his manifesting himself thus, in the *word*, is the *ground* of faith, tho' his manifesting himself by the *Spirit*, is the *cause* of faith, and absolutely necessary to create that faith.— But, as *faith comes by hearing*; so, hear, O sinner; hear this word as the voice of the Spirit of Christ: *hear what the Spirit says to the churches.* Listen to the word, till you hear and understand that it is the Spirit of Christ; or Christ, by his Spirit, speaking to you, and saying, *Lo, I come* to you.

OBJECT. “Christ speaks not here to me, but to
“his Father, saying, *Lo, I come! I delight to do thy*
“*will, O my God.*”

ANSW. It is the better for you and me, and the surer ground of faith and hope; for, it is a word to his Father concerning us, and about his coming to save us. It were sure enough, if it were spoken immediately to us; but it is still the surer, that it is said to the Father concerning us: and he will not retract what he hath said to his Father. Therefore,

4. Consider, that his coming in the *Spirit*, to accomplish salvation by power, is as *surely* to take place, as his coming in the *flesh* has already taken place; therefore, when he says, *Lo, I come*, to save by the power of my Spirit! Let faith say, *Behold, he cometh, to save me!*

OBJECT. “But has he purposed to save us *all*?
“If not, how can there be ground for us *all* to be-
“lieve?”

ANSW. Whom he has purposed to save, is a secret; but whom he calls to believe, and look to him for salvation, is no secret; *Look unto me, and be saved, ALL the ends of the earth*, Isa. xlv. 22. And faith, as I said before, is not to look to any secret, either past or to come, but to the word of salvation, to a present *Lo; Lo, I come!* And if you venture on his word, without more questions, we can assure you, from his word, you are safe: take him at his word, when he says, *Lo, I come!*

5. Consider, that *mountains* are no *hinderances*; he comes *skipping on the mountains and leaping on the hills*. There is a mountain of darkness in your mind; a mountain of obstinacy in your wills; a mountain of carnality and earthliness in your affections; mountains of guilt lying on our consciences; and mountains of objections, doubts, and fears, in your hearts; but all these are nothing to him. Therefore, O take his word for it, *Lo, I come!* and say, *Behold, he cometh! skipping on the mountains*. He can come over them all with one leap, with one skip.

6. Consider, that it is his *joyful voice*, both in the Old and New Testament, *Lo, I come!* He was glad to come in the flesh of old, and he is as glad to come in the Spirit now, according to his promise: and, O Sirs, will you not gladly welcome him? O! is he saying so gladly, *Lo, I come?* What are you saying, poor soul? If you cannot say, *The voice of my Beloved!* then, O will you say, *It is the voice of the Father's Beloved*, who has said, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased?* And if you welcome him, as the Father's Beloved, you are quite safe. If you cannot say, *Behold he cometh* just now; yet, will you say, *He that shall come will come*; and wait upon him in his own way? He waits to be gracious; and *he is a God of judgment; blessed are all they that wait for him*.—Again, if you cannot say, *Behold he cometh* to my observation; yet will you say, *Even so, come Lord Jesus, come quickly?* And thus pray for his coming graciously and mercifully; *Come, Lord Jesus*; come to merciful judgment against all my lusts, and prepare me for thy general judgment. Come in the Spirit. Come in power and great glory at this occasion. O he comes skipping and leaping! Let your heart leap within you at the thoughts of it.

OBJECT. “But I do not feel; I do not see his coming.”

ANSW. *Blessed are they that believe, and have not seen*. If you do not see and feel, yet do you not hear him say, *Lo, I come?* Faith comes by *hearing*, and not by

by seeing : while you hear his word, you hear his feet upon the mountains : therefore, against hope believe in hope, saying, *Lord, I believe ; help mine unbelief : It is the voice of my Beloved ! behold, he cometh !*

Well, Sirs, *What think you, will he not come to the feast ?* Have we no reason to think that he will come ? Yea, I think we have.—Why, it is a time of need among his poor people ; and his throne of grace is erected for a time of need : therefore we are called to *come boldly to it, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*—It is a time of trouble and distress, and he is a *present help in time of trouble ;* and a *refuge for the oppressed.*—It is a time wherein many of his people are in a *wilderness of darkness and despondency ;* and he has said, *I will bring her to the wilderness, and there will I speak comfortably to her ;* or, *IN TO HER HEART.*—It is a time wherein many of his people, from all corners, and, I hope, many praying people, are met about his hand ; and he has said, *Where TWO or THREE are met together, in my name, there will I be in the midst of them.*—It is a time wherein some of his servants, and many of his people are like outcasts in the church, despised and cast out by the judicatories ; and he hath spoken in his word of *gathering the outcasts of Israel,* Zeph. iii. 18. Isa. lvi. 8. Psal. cxlvii. 2. *The Lord doth build up Jerusalem : he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.*—Why then, shall we not expect his coming, when, at the same time, he is saying, *Lo, I come ?*—May faith's joyful echo in our hearts say, *The voice of my Beloved ! Behold, he cometh !*

S E R M O N X C*.

The *Time* of NEED, a *Time* of LOVE.

EZEKIEL xvi. 8.

Now, when I passed by thee and looked upon thee ; behold, thy time was a time of love.—

MY friends, if you have been believing communicants this day, your Lord has been giving you a *love feast*. But now, since the table is drawn, and the feast seems to be over, lest you reckon his love withdrawn also, I am come upon the back of the feast, to give you a love-letter, written with his own hand, and directed to you, that you may lay it up in the cabinet of your hearts, and never either forget nor jealous his love at any time, which he hath shown to you at this, or some other time of your need. The words of the letter are, *Now, when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee ; behold, thy time was a time of love.*

The most remarkable event that befel the Jewish church of old, as to its outward condition, was the shadow of the spiritual mercies, designed for the true Zion of God ; and therefore, I am to speak of the blessings whereof this is an emblem : it is a New-testament mercy in Old-testament dress. Under this shadow is hid the most substantial spiritual blessings.

* This Subject was handled in Five Sermons. The first was preached on the Sabbath-evening immediately after the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper at Dunfermline, July 14. 1734. The other four were delivered after the solemnity.—The second impression.

In the words we may observe the four following particulars.

1. A *miserable* time ascribed to the sinner, called, *Thy time*.

2. A *merciful* time ascribed to the Saviour, called, *The time of love*.

3. The *happy conjunction* or *meeting*, between that miserable time, and this merciful time, *Thy time was a time of love*, and wherein I shewed my love.

4. The *strangeness* and *wonderfulness* of this conjunction, BEHOLD! *thy time was a time of love*. It is matter of astonishment, and worthy of a note of admiration.

I reserve the explication of these particulars to the prosecution of the following doctrine.

OBSERV. *That it is matter of wonder and admiration, that God should show his love to sinners, at such a remarkable juncture, that their time of need and misery, appears to be his time of love and mercy. BEHOLD, THY TIME WAS A TIME OF LOVE.*

The method I would incline to handle this subject in, under the divine favour, shall be the following.

I. We shall speak a little of the *SINNER's time of need and misery*, as it is described in the context.

II. Of *GOD's time of love*, as it is here also represented and shadowed forth.

III. Make it evident, that he shows his love at such a *remarkable juncture*, as makes it appear, their *time of need* is his *time of love*.

IV. Show that this is matter of *wonder and admiration*.

V. Deduce some *inferences* for application of the whole.

I. We are to speak a little of the *time of need and misery*, as here pointed out in the context.

1. The

1. The *time of need* here pointed out is, when we are in a *polluted state* ; represented by the infant cast out of the womb ; *I saw thee polluted in thine own blood, neither washed with water, nor salted, nor swaddled,* ver. 4. When grace and mercy take hold of a sinner, it is even when living in the puddle and filthy mire of original and actual pollution : the understanding polluted with darkness, the will with enmity, and the affections with carnality and sensuality.

2. The *time of need* is when we are in an *helpless, naked, and destitute* state, having no eye to pity, or have compassion upon us ; *No eye pitied thee to do any of these things unto thee, to have compassion upon thee,* ver. 5. Grace and mercy step in with help when we can contribute no help to ourselves : when all refuge fails, and all help is gone, surely it is a time of need.

3. The *time of need*, here mentioned, is when we are in a *loathsome state* ; in an unpleasant state, as new born children wallowing in their blood ; *Thou wast cast out to the loathing of thy person,* ver. 5. Grace then beheld with an eye of love and pity, even when we are loathsome to beholders.

4. The *time of need* is when we are in *extreme hazard*, upon the very brink and precipice of utter ruin, just choked with our own blood, ready to die and expire, being exposed, and *cast out to the open fields,* ver. 5. And what was it but a field of blood, a field of danger, a field of death ? And what is this time of need, but the time of death, wherein we are dead in sin, and dead in law : which is plainly supposed, ver. 6. *I said to thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live ;* intimating, that the time of need was a time of spiritual death, and obnoxious to eternal death, upon the brink of hell and damnation.—This is the time of need here represented.

II. The next thing I would touch at also, is God's *time of love*, as here shadowed forth ; that extremity is his opportunity ; that time of need is the time of his showing his love. And what this time of love is, may

may appear particularly from these four things in the context.

1. His *time of love* is a time of *love-calls*, wherein he calls to us, *Live* ; ver. 6. *I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, LIVE ; yea, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live.* These love-calls are doubled, that they may be effectual ; he says it, and repeats it again : and we are never called effectually, till we hear him twice. In the time of love, therefore he says unto us, *Live* : yea, he says to us, *in our blood, Live* : he says it outwardly, in the word, and then he says it inwardly, by the Spirit ; he says it into the ear, and then says it again into the heart ; then the heart that was a dead grave opens, and takes in the living Jesus, the Spirit of life enters, and the dead soul begins to live and breath spiritually. The quickening word creates in the soul a life of care and concern about salvation, *What shall I do to be saved ?* A life of desire, after Christ the Saviour ; O says the poor soul, I would give a thousand worlds for him ? And afterwards, in various degrees, a life of faith, love, hope, and joy.

2. His *time of love* is a time of *love-visits* ; *When I passed by thee*, says the words here : it is an allusion to passengers, that, on their way, meet with miserable objects in a deplorable condition, and extend pity toward them : *I passed by thee.* It is spoken after the manner of man, but done after the manner of God, who is pleased to give gracious visits to the soul, whom he once quickens by his word of power. It is true all his visits in this world are but like a *passing by* : they are but passing visits, as it is said to Moses, *Exod. xxxii. 23. While my glory passes by, I will show thee my back parts ; for my face shall not be seen.* It is in heaven we see him *face to face*, without interruption : but here we are to be content if we get some view of his glory as it passes by.

3. His *time of love* is a time of *love-glances*, or of *loving looks* ; *When I passed by thee, and looked upon thee.* It is not a look of *observation* only, for he beholds all things ; they are *naked and open before him*, but a look of *commiseration*. It is a look wherein his heart

follows his eye.—In the time of love, the Lord gives his people sometimes an *appropriating* look, an *affectionate* look ; *His countenance beholdeth the upright*, Psal. xi. 7.—Sometimes a *directing* look, *I will guide thee with mine eye*, Psal. xxxiii. 8. If he takes his directing eye off us, we never make a right step.—Sometimes a *convincing* look, a *penetrating* look, such as he gave to Peter, that pierced, melted, and dissolved his heart ; *Jesus looked on him, and he went out and wept bitterly*.—Sometimes a *comforting* look, Isa. lxvi. 2. *To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word*. With a look he breaks the hard heart ; and with a look he heals the broken heart.—These are his love-glances.

4. His *time of love* is a time of *love-tokens* : and here are many tokens of conjugal love in the context ; some antecedent, some concomitant, and some consequent to the marriage.

(1.) Some love-tokens *antecedent*, to the marriage ; betwixt Christ and them. Such as, besides what I have already named, these immediately following the text, *Thy time was a time of love, and I spread my skirt over them, and covered their nakedness* : there is the marriage *robe* wherewith he covers his naked bride, the garment of his righteousness. *Yea, I swear unto thee* ; there is the marriage *oath* by which his word is confirmed, *That by two immutable things, by which it is impossible for God to lie, they might have strong consolation, &c.* And *I entered into a covenant with thee* ; there is the marriage *bond* ; the covenant that standeth fast in Christ : here all is done to her hand, when she could do nothing. *I entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, And thou becamest mine !* there is the marriage *relation* constitute, and the union betwixt Christ and his bride made up. I became thine, and thou became mine : I became thy Head and Husband, and thou became my bride and spouse ; I manifested my good-will toward thee ; and I made thee *willing in the day of my power*.

(2.) Some love-tokens *concomitant* are here mentioned, from ver. 9.—14. *Then washed I thee with water,*
ver. 9 ;

ver. 9. ; yea, *I thoroughly washed away thy blood from thee.* This points out both pardoning grace, washing the conscience from the guilt of sin ; and purifying grace, washing the heart from the filth of sin ; *Whom he loves, he washes ;* hence the song of the redeemed is, *To him that loved us, and washed us in his blood.*—And he washed us from our blood ; it is *bloods* in the original ; and he washes us from blood-guiltiness ; both from the guilt of our own blood, and the guilt of the blood of Christ ; in his blood he washed us from our blood.—Again, *I anointed thee with oil*, ver. 9. Here is another notable love-token concomitant with the marriage, *His giving the Spirit*, the oil of gladness, wherewith he is anointed above measure ; this he doth according to his promise, *I will put my Spirit within you*, and that not only to begin the good work, to quicken and renew, but to abide in us, and subdue sin more and more, to *help our infirmities*, to be a pledge and earnest of the glorious inheritance, to guide us to the land of uprightness, and to comfort us under all our troubles in the wilderness, till we come to enter into the joy of our Lord.—Again, *clothing* necessary for benefit and comfort, mentioned ver. 10. and an inventory of more that served for state and magnificence, mentioned ver. 11, 12, 13. Whatever literally these things import to the Jewish nation, yet spiritually they refer to the precious graces and blessings wherewith Christ adorns his bride.—Yea, here is not only raiment, but *food*, ver. 13. *Thou didst EAT fine flour, honey, and oil ;* pointing out the best cheer, *The feast of fat things, and wines on the lees ;* heavenly manna ; the flesh and blood of the Son of God. Whom he loves with a conjugal love, he gives them food and raiment, and all provisions necessary.—Yea, not only so, but *beauty and renown*, ver. 14. *Thy renown went forth among the heathen, for thy beauty ; for it was perfect through my comeliness which I put upon thee.* What comeliness, what glory does he put upon his bride ? Even his own glory, according to that wonderful word, John xvii. 22. *The glory which thou gave me, I have given them.* What glory the Fa-

ther gives the Son, the Son gives the bride ; and so they are beautiful through his beauty, and glorious within, through his glory ; righteous through his righteousness. O what love-tokens are here !

(3.) Some love-tokens *consequential* are here also mentioned ; not only consequential to the marriage, but consequential to our adulterous carriage after marriage ; the love-tokens posterior to this is his *marvellous recovering* of his backsliding bride, after her whorish departure from him : see the sum of the charge, ver. 15. *But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and played the harlot because of thy renown, and pouredst out thy fornication on every one that passed by.* This charge of the bride's whoredom is enlarged to the 60th verse of the chapter in many particulars. And her departure from her Lord is ushered in with distrusting of him, and trusting in her own borrowed robes, and created graces ; and indeed, an *evil heart of unbelief* is the spring of departure from the living God : all our whorish departures from our glorious Lord and Husband, arise from that source. But behold the love-tokens of restoring grace and recovering mercy ushered in with a *nevertheless*, ver. 60. *NEVERTHELESS I will remember my covenant with thee, and will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant :* though thou hast broken covenant with me, I will remember my covenant with thee ; thou hast been so provoking, and I have been so provoked by thee, that one would think there was no reconciliation to be expected, but that the bargain was wholly broke, yet he was ever *mindful of his covenant*, that stands fast in Christ ; and his remembrance will create a remembrance in us ; *Then thou shalt remember thy ways and be ashamed*, ver. 61. O here is great love in putting us in remembrance, and putting us to shame ! This is more fully expressed in the last verse ; *That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee, for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God.* Behold ! what rays of love shine out after that dark night of distance and sinful departure ! God is in Jesus Christ pacified towards us for all that we have done

done amiss against him ; and when God deals thus graciously, what effect doth it produce ? Why, whenever the father of the prodigal ran to him and kissed and embraced him, then the prodigal son was ashamed, and confounded, saying, *Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee.* The more sense we have of pardoning mercy, and of God's being pacified, the more will grief and shame for sin have room in our hearts, that ever we should have offended such a gracious Lord. The soul is confounded with the sense of God's astonishing mercy, in returning to such a desperate backslider, that played the harlot with so many lovers ; and confounded in the view of its own madness and ingratitude ; in so much, that these love-tokens of recovering and restoring mercy, consequential to the bride's whorish breaking of the marriage-bond ; these love-tokens that are like new conversions, may be even more remarkable than the first conversion, or the first love-tokens ever were.

Now, here is *God's time of love* ; it is his time of love-calls, love-visits, love-looks and love-tokens ; love-tokens antecedent, concomitant, and consequential to the marriage. The *antecedent* tokens point out divine commiseration, and his love of pity and compassion in our base and black estate. The *concomitant* tokens point out divine delectation, and his love of delight and complacency in our beautified state by his grace. The *consequential* tokens point out divine restoration, or his restoring and receiving love, after our apostasy.—This subject of divine love, and of his time of love, is of vast extent, therefore I have confined myself to a glance at it, from the context only.

III. The next thing proposed was, To make it *evident*, that he shows his love at such a *remarkable juncture*, as to make it appear our time of need is his time of love ; our time of misery is his time of mercy ; our worst time, the time of manifesting most kindness.—This is plain from what I have already said ; yet it may be necessary further to evince it, both from the beginning of the good work, and from the progress thereof

thereof in the Lord's people, both when they are sinners, and when they are saints; their worst time is still his time of love.

1st, When they are SINNERS, and when he begins the good work, it were enough to say that he comes to convince and convert them in mercy, when they are in a state of nature and alienation from God, and rebellion against him; but I shall advance a few instances, to put the matter beyond question.

1. We find God has shewed love and mercy to sinners when they have arrived at a *monstrous perfection of sinning against him*; as we see in Manasseh, 2 Chron. xxxiii. 10,—15. *And the Lord spoke to Manasseh and to his people, but they would not hearken; wherefore the Lord brought upon him the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon. And when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. And prayed unto him, and he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God.* God shewed mercy to him when he was at his worst, using all magical arts, making the streets of Jerusalem run with blood; then God said to him when he was in his blood, *Live*. He cast the skirt of love over him, and his time was a time of love.

2. We find God had shewed mercy and love to sinners when they have been *embruuing their hands in the blood of the saints*, madly persecuting the church and people of God. Thus, you know, he shewed mercy to Paul, as he himself declares, Acts xxiv.—When he rode to Damascus, God snatched him as a brand out of the burning, and shot a beam of love into his heart, when he might have destroyed him with a thunderbolt of wrath.

3. We find God has shewed mercy when sin has, to appearance, been *beyond mercy*, by sinners their embruuing their hands in the *blood of the Son of God*, the Saviour of the world; yet he said to them when they were in their blood, *Live*. For many of the Christ-

crucifying Jews are convinced and converted, Acts ii. and made so many trophies of the riches and freedom of his grace. Their time of sin and misery was his time of love and mercy.

1. We find he has shewed mercy to sinners that have spent *all their time in sinning against him*; witness the thief on the cross, and these called at the eleventh and last hour: mercy has stepped in between them and the pit, when they were just ready to fall into hell. What astonishing mercy is this! that the Son of God should say to a man that had spent all his days in sin, to the very last day of his life, and then to tell him, *This day shalt thou be with me in paradise*. But whether sooner or later there is none to whom he effectually says, *Live*, but he says it *when they are in their blood*; their very worst time is his time of love.—But I pass many other instances.

2dly, When they are SAINTS, or in the progress of his loving-kindness towards them, still their time of need is his time of love; their worst time his loving time. Hence,

1. These and the like *declarations*, Psalm iv. 1. *O God, thou hast enlarged me, when I was in distress*. Psalm cxvi. 6. *I was brought low, and he helped me*. Psalm cxxxvi. 23. *He remembered us in our low estate; for his mercy endureth for ever*. Deut. xxxii. 36. *The Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and that there is none shut up or left*. Nothing left but black clouds of despair, and black signs of wrath, and black fears of ruin, then shine forth the fair beams of love.

2. For this cause is the *throne of grace* erected, that there we may find grace to help in time of our need, Heb. iv. 16. For this cause God takes names to himself, importing our time of need to be his time of love. Psalm ix. 9. he is called a *refuge in time of trouble*. Isa. xxv. 4. *A strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in their distress. A refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible one is as a storm against the wall*. Isa. xxxii. 2. He is called a *hiding place*

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 a weary land. He is our hope in an evil day.

3. Consider, for further clearing this, the *harmony* between our time of need and his time of love : hence ordinarily your time of *darkness* is his time of *inlightening* love, according to that word, *To the upright there ariseth light in darkness. Though I walk in darkness, the Lord will be a light unto me.*—Your time of *deadness* is his time of *quickenning* love ; hence that prayer, frequently in the Psalms, *Quicken me, according to thy word.*—Your time of *fear* is his time of *favour*, according to that word, *Fear not, for I am with thee.*—Your time of *difficulty* is his time of *direction*, according to that word, *I will lead the blind in ways they know not ; and in paths which they have not known.*

4. His time of love to his people, or of manifesting his love, is ordinarily when their time of need is *most notable*. He does not always show his love at the time that we think the time of need, but that he knows to be the time of need, which is when the time of need is most extreme. Hence his time of love is sometimes, in their extremity of *guiltiness*, when they have made him *serve with their sins, and wearied him with their iniquities*, then he hath said, *I, even I, am he that blot-teth out thy transgressions, for my name's sake*, Isa. xliii. 25.—Sometimes in their extremity of *rebellion* and *incorrigibleness* ; when, tho' he hides himself and smites, yet they have gone on *forwardly in the way of their hearts*, even then he has said, *I have seen his ways, and will heal him*, Isaiah lvii. 18.—Sometimes in their extremity of *remissness*, when they had neither heart nor hand for prayer and pleading with himself for his pity ; *When he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor ; therefore his own arm brought salvation*, Isaiah lix. 16.—Sometimes in the extremity of *want* and *necessity*, Isaiah xli. 17. *When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear, I the God of Jacob will not forsake.*—Sometimes in the extremity of *affliction*, when *deep calleth unto deep, and all his waves*
and

and billows pass over them, then he commands his loving-kindness in the day-time, and in the night his song is with them, Psalm xlii. 7, 8.—Sometimes in their extremity of desertion, when they are saying, *The Lord hath forsaken, and my God hath forgotten me*; then he appears saying, *Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget; yet will I not forget thee*, Isaiah xlix. 14, 15.—Sometimes in the extremity of temptation, when burnt with fiery darts, and buffeted by Satan, he readily relieves with loving words; *My grace shall be sufficient for thee, my strength shall be made perfect in thy weakness*, 2 Cor. xii. 9.—Sometimes in the very last extremity, in the extremity of death, and the extremity of their extremity; when, like Lazarus, they are stinking in their graves of sin and security, then he speaks the quickening word, and says to the dead and dry bones, *Come from the four winds, O breath. and breathe upon these slain, that they may live*.

QUEST. May not God leave his own in their most extreme need, and in their last battle?

ANSW. We cannot tell what God may do when he goes out of his ordinary road; *judgment is his strange work*, especially when it seems to be execute toward a saint; but God may suffer strange and extraordinary things to fall out toward saints themselves, as presages of strange and extraordinary wrath and vengeance coming upon a secure generation; but certainly it is God's ordinary way to help his people in their last extremities, and make their time of greatest need his time of love, wherein he steps in for their salvation. Nay, what am I saying, that it is his *ordinary* way? Let me correct the word, in spite of the devil, and unbelief, and all dark and dismal-like providences; I will take back the word and say it is his *constant* way. Though a saint in the last battle should die distracted, and seem to be a sacrifice to the devil and his instruments; yet that last extremity is the time of love, wherein he leads them through the darkest trance to the fairest field of everlasting joy and triumph. When we consider what power the devil got over the body of Christ, to carry

it hither and thither, what do we know how far he may get power over the body of a member of Christ? We find, upon Satan's application against Job, there was a twofold power given him; the first was, *all that he hath* is in thy power; the second was, *he himself*; that is, his body; *Behold he is in thine hand, only spare his life*. If God had but allowed a third application, and had let out another link of the enemy's chain, the utmost would have been even take his life, and I will take him home. But this, by way of digression, though yet, I hope, not far out of the way.

I have shown you, that all our time of need, both from first to last, is his time of love; *Thy time was a time of love*.

If any further enquire, *Why God chuses to make such a time of need and extremity to be his time of love?* I shall only answer in a word. God, in his sovereignty, having fixed a time for the *decree's breaking forth*, wherein these with whom he travelled so long in the womb of his electing and redeeming love should be brought forth, he keeps the time to the moment that he fixed upon; and he *waits to be gracious*; that is, he waits the time of love, and he makes it jump with our time of need and extremity, for magnifying the riches and freedom of his grace, and for engaging the sinner more to himself, and to his service; and he makes his time of showing love at first, and always afterwards, to the end of the believer's life, to jump and agree with their extreme necessity, for accenting the song of the redeemed in heaven, *To him that loved them, and washed them in his blood*, and pulled them out of the fire, and plucked them out of the devil's hands, and raised them from the bottom of hell, to the battlements of heaven; from the depths of misery, to the heights of glory; he makes the depths of his love to answer the depths of their extremity. As by this means he shews his glory, so he stains the pride of man, makes his visits more precious, kills our enmity with his kindness, quickens love to him, and learns us to trust in him even at the worst; and shows the height of his thoughts above our thoughts, as the heaven is higher than the earth,

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he having thoughts of peace towards us, when we reckoned he had thoughts of wrath, and designs to ruin us.—Thus he shows his wonders.

IV. The next thing was, To show that this is matter of *wonder* and *admiration*, which is the fourth thing in the text, BEHOLD! *Behold, thy time was a time of love.*

1. It is wonderful, if we consider the *nature of GOD, the Lover*. If we look to his spotless holiness, and that he is of *purser eyes than that he can behold iniquity*, O how mysterious and wonderful is it! that he should show his love to any of Adam's black posterity, so spotted with iniquity?—If we look to his infinite *justice*, that he can no more cease to punish sin, than he can cease to be God; justice being as essential to his name as mercy. How wonderful is his love! if he had not found a ransom, there would have been no vent for his love; but grace reigns through Christ's righteousness.—Again, if we look to his infinite *highness*, it makes his love wonderful: his majesty is infinite; he is *the high and lofty one that inhabits eternity*. Surely may we cry, when he comes to show his love, *Lord, I am not worthy that thou should come under my roof.*

2. It is wonderful, if we consider the *nature of MAN, the loved object*, to whom he shows mercy. What are we by nature? enemies to God, rebels to the crown of heaven, children of the devil; who but a God could answer his own question? *How shall I put you among the children, and give thee the pleasant land?* How shall I give thee a title to heaven, that art so justly intitled to hell? If we look upon our baseness, O the wonders of his kindness! May we not say with wonder, *Will God in very deed dwell with men on earth, on the earth his footstool!* May we not sing, as Psal. cxiii. 6. *Who is like unto the Lord our God, that dwelleth on high, who humbleth himself to behold things that are in heaven?* And much more may we say, Who is like unto him, and that humbleth himself to show his love to worms on the earth? Whence is this that the King of glory should look upon vile dust? If we view the

opposition we make to his love, the resistance he meets with from the devils of hell without us, and, the devils of lusts, sin, and corruption within us, and how we fight against his love and kindness, is this the manner of man to show love in this case? O wonderful! O condescending Jesus! O patient Christ! whom we have kept so long at the back of the door, that yet he should both forgive and forget all the wrongs we have done him, saying, *Thy sins and iniquities will I remember no more!* We commit the fault, and he makes satisfaction. And if we view not only the bad entertainment he gets from us, at the first discoveries of his love; but the affronts he meets with afterwards, from time to time, the abuses of his goodness, *turning his grace to wantonness, grieving his Spirit,* and madly following other lovers, till *he hedge up our way with thorns,* that we may not overtake them: O wonderful! that after this, love should reclaim us, and make us say, *We will go and return to our first husband, for then it was better with us than now,* Hosea ii. 7.

3. It is wonderful, if we consider that a *time of love* is denied to *millions of better creatures than us*. It was never allowed to fallen angels; there was never such a word as that, *Behold, the tabernacle of God is with angels* that fell; but, *Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men,* and among men. Has he not passed many nations, and come to us, proclaiming the joyful sound of everlasting love in Christ Jesus? in so much, that nothing hinders our enjoyment of it, but unbelief, and hardness of heart; and amongst us, are there not some more highly privileged than others? O believer, wonder that he hath passed by a thousand, and shewed his love to you the worst of them all, and even when you was at your worst. O wonderful distinguishing love! that passes by twenty houses, and falls upon one! that passes by twenty souls, and comes upon yours! Many a heart here this day never yet was touched or fired with this love, and your heart may be set a burning within you.

4. It is wonderful, if we consider, the *long train* of the time of love; both the train of blessing it infers,
and

and the train of times it includes. What a train of blessings does the time of love infer? or, what good is done to the soul? It brings life, and light, and pardon, and peace; justification, adoption, and sanctification; grace, glory, and every good thing; it brings God, and Christ, and the Spirit, and with them all things. The time of love is the time of gifts, when God gives Christ and all things with him. What a long train and tract of times it includes? The time of love has a beginning only in our view, but to God it has neither a beginning nor an end: the time of love began before time, in the heart of God from all eternity purposing, and in the heart of Christ from all eternity transacting with the Father in our room; therefore, he has said, Jer. xxxi. 3. *I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.* The time of love to us is when he lets down the cords of his love, like a heart-string, to draw up our hearts to his heart: and as the time of love runs through every period of the believer's life, while he is here, in so many fruits and effects of divine love, let out from time to time; so it is never at an end, so long as his love to Christ endures; though he *visit their transgressions with rods, yet his loving-kindness will be not take away from him, nor consequently from them*; for, *his seed shall endure for ever*, Psalm lxxxix. 32, 33, 36. The love that he shows in the time of love, includes love before time, from all eternity; and love after time, even to all eternity; therefore it is justly wonderful, and expressed with a *Behold! Behold, thy time was the time of love!*

V. I come to the *fifth* thing, which was the *application*. Is it so, as has been said, *That God shows his love to sinners at such a remarkable juncture, that their time of need and misery appears to be his time of love and mercy*; then,

1. Let us apply it for *admiration*. O let us admire and adore the wonders of redeeming love! It deserves our highest admiration; when we have spent our
thoughts

thoughts upon it, it is fit we should supply the defect of our thought with admiration. Let us admire the *height, and depth, and length, and breadth of this love of God in Christ*; that the guilt of criminals should be transferred upon the innocent, and he exposed to the stroke of justice: that the immortal God should be clothed with mortality; the wonder of angels exposed to the reproach of men; that he who was in the *form of God* should appear in the *form of a servant*; and the Lord of life become obnoxious to the pains of death, and all that the love of God might vent toward sinners, and that he should take occasion to show his love to sinners when they are at their worst.—Herein let us see and admire the *freedom* of the grace and love of God; that he should take hold of such profane persons, such polluted persons, such loathsome persons! O that the time of loathing should be the time of love!—Herein see and admire the *power* of the grace of God, that can conquer sinners at the height of their rebellion, and overcome their enmity, and supply all their needs.—See and admire the *wisdom* of the grace and love of God, that he should consult the concerns of his own glory and our good so wonderfully. He consults the glory of his justice while mercy vents through a ransom, and grace through righteousness, that magnifies the law, and satisfies the justice of God: he consults our good wonderfully by showing his love at a time wherein his love may do us most good; see and wonder at the wonderfulness of his mercy, love, and grace.

2. Let us apply it for *examination*. Try what share you have had of this wonderful love of God in Christ; and whether *your time of need* has been *his time of love*, either now, at this occasion, or formerly. For gaining time, I forbear offering marks and evidences of this, and only propose, that you reflect upon what has been said concerning the *time of need* and the *time of love*.

(1.) What sense have you ever had of the *time of need*? Have you ever seen yourself in your *polluted* state, lying

lying in your blood? Your helpless state, no eye to pity you? Your loathsome state, cast out to the loathing of your persons? Your dangerous state, in the open field, lying open to the wrath and vengeance of God? Have you ever got a sense and conviction of your dead state, as being under the power of sin, and under the sentence of the law? The time of love is usually ushered in with a sense of sin, and fear of wrath. Was you ever pricked in your hearts, and made to cry, *What shall I do to be saved?* If you never felt a time of extreme need, it seems you never have known a time of love. But,

(2.) What experience have you of the *time of love*, upon the back of your extreme need? Got you ever a loving call with power? A quickening word, when you was in your blood? A word that put life into your dead soul? Got you ever a *love-visit*, and a view of the glory of the Lord Jesus, and of God in him? Though it was but a passing visit; yet has he passed by you, so as to give you a sight of his *back parts*, by the bye; for, *Now we see through a glass darkly*.—Got you ever a *love-look*, that made you look again unto him? a look that pierced and pained your heart, and made you sick of love to him, and desire after him?—Got you ever any *love-tokens*; whether got you these I mentioned, that may be called *antecedent* to the marriage? Did he ever cast *his skirt over you*, and make you flee under the covert of his blood and righteousness? Did he ever swear to you, and enter into covenant with you, by making you to take *hold of his covenant*, and word of grace and promise?—What know you of the *love-tokens concomitant* to the marriage? Did he never *wash your heart and conscience* in his blood, by giving you *joy and peace in believing*? Did he never *anoint you* with the oil of his Spirit, so as the chariot-wheels of your souls have been made to run sweetly and swiftly, by reason of this anointing, in the duties of religion? Has he never *satisfied your longing soul*? Though you have not got what you would be at, yet by giving you so much as made all the world tasteless to you, and Christ above all things precious? (If he has not fed you with joy, has he fed you with godly sorrow and mourn-

mourning for sin ?) Has he never *beautified your deformed soul*, by letting you see your own vileness and deformity, and that all your beauty, strength, righteousness, and store was only in himself ; and made you to see that all your excellency lay only in him, in whom *all the seed of Israel are justified, and shall glory* ?—What know you of the love-tokens *consequent* to the marriage and, perhaps, to your whorish departure from him ? Did he ever *shame* you for your unkindness by his surprising returns, so as you was confounded and ashamed when he was pacified toward you ? Did ever the *renewed sense* of his love and grace, manifested to a rebel and runaway like you, melt your heart, and lay you in the dust before him ?—Try what love-tokens he has given you in the time of your extreme need, *Behold, thy time was a time of love*.

I shall now close with a short *advice*, to you who *never met with a time of love*, in point of power, engaging your heart to the love of Christ. Though you have enjoyed a time of love, in gospel-offers, and loving-courtships, yet you have despised his loving-offers to this day. O what art thou doing, sinner, while despising the riches of divine love, goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering ? The scripture tells you what you are doing, Rom. vii. 5. *thou art treasuring up wrath to thyself against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God*. Oh ! you that were never convinced of a time of need, nor affected with your dismal state, as lying in your blood, nor concerned about a time of love, or a day of power, remember, that there is a time of wrath, and a day of death, and judgment a coming ; and if you remain despisers of the grace and love of God, the wrath coming upon you is both the wrath of God and of the Lamb ; not only the wrath of an *angry God*, which is terrible vengeance, but the wrath of the *slighted Lamb of God*, which is double vengeance : *How shall you escape if ye neglect so great a salvation* ? Terrible wrath is coming upon gospel-flighters in Scotland ; upon gospel-despisers in Dunfermline ; do you
hear

hear of this wonderful love and yet slight it ? Then, *Behold, ye despisers, wonder, and perish ! He that believeth not shall be damned ; the wrath of God abideth upon him.* Gave you never any entertainment to the news of grace and love, but to abuse it to *lasciviousness*, and turn the *grace of God into wantonness*, and to encourage yourselves in sin and wickedness ? As sure as you have now a day of grace, the day of wrath is a-coming ; and perhaps this is the last hour of the day of grace, and of the time of love, and what will you do with it ? Will you let it pass away, and be for ever lost ? O sinner ! since the time of wrath is not yet come, though it is at hand ; since the time of love is yet lasting, will you take and accept of divine grace and love, when he comes to give you now, perhaps, the last offer ? And he has spared you out of hell till you get it ; that either upon refusal, you may be for ever inexcusable or upon acceptance, you may be for ever happy.

Well then, you that have mispent all the time of life, and the time of love till now ; he that yet continues the time of love with you, the time of love-offers is saying to you, *Behold me, behold me*, in order to marriage with me. Come and take me, for a match to your souls, to make it up for ever. O Sirs, will you match with him that can pardon all yours sins, and pay all your debt, supply all your wants, and heal all your wounds ? Can cover all your spots, and cleanse all your filthiness, and loose all your bands, these bands of sin, hell, and death wherewith you have been bound all your days ? Will you, that can do nothing, leave him that can do all things for you ? Will you, to whom death and judgment seem to be terrible, in a little, will you have him that can make death safe, and judgment sweet, and all trials by the way easy to you, by giving either a merciful support under them, or merciful issue to them ? O will you, that are liable to an eternity of torments, have him that can give you an eternity of joy and happiness, in the vision and fruition of himself ? Will you have him to make you holy and happy ? If you have no will to this bargain, then surely, tho' you perish eternally, God does you no wrong,

while he gives you your will, and lets you alone, saying, *Ye will not come to me that you might have life.* Nothing but his omnipotent power can make you willing ; but since this gospel is the organ of his power, and that if his drawing power be let down effectually by any means in the world, it will be by these cords of love and grace that are hanging down among your hands ; therefore, Come, sinners.

To let down the cords as far as I can, by his warrant, be what thou wilt, *To you is the word of this salvation sent ;* the grace and mercy of God is laid in your lap ; if you shake it not away from you, by unbelief and enmity, you shall have it, be what you will : why ? what are you, or what have you been ? Are you a drunkard, swearer, Sabbath-breaker, whoremonger, adulterer, a filthy Magdalen, or bloody Manasseh, that have hitherto contemned the grace of God, and the Son of God ? Are you the worst that ever breathed on the face of the earth ; no matter ; while this time of love lasts, grace is content to take you at your worst, and to make the worst time that ever you had, to be the best time that ever you saw. What are you, sinner ? Are you a monster of sin ? Are you a devil for sin ? Be it so, since you are not yet a devil in hell, but a devil on earth, and a devil in flesh, that is not such a wonder as a God in flesh ; and behold here is an incarnate God come to save incarnate devils. To you that are yet out of hell, he is saying, *Look to me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth ; for I am God, and there is none else.* To you that are in the flesh, and not yet damned spirits, the word of God says of this God in Christ, *O thou that hearest prayer, to thee shall all flesh come,* Psalm lxxv. 2. All that are yet human flesh, are welcome to come to him ; whatever sort of flesh you be, be you never such filthy flesh, or devilish flesh ; God has sent his own Son *in the likeness of sinful flesh*, that all sinful flesh may come to him, that he may form them into the likeness of an holy God.

If any trembling heart here be thinking, O is it possible that this call is to me, that this offer is to me ? Yes, to thee, man, woman ; to thee, lass, lad ; to
you

you that are farthest off and nearest hand me ; to every one of you within these walls, this offer of love and mercy comes in his name, that has said, *Go, preach the gospel to every creature*, to every rational creature under heaven. What say you ? I was never so unfit to come or so unable ; I am at the very worst in sin and misery, at the very height of wickedness and wo.—What ? is it the time of the greatest need of grace, power, and pity ? Well, God who *waits to be gracious*, perhaps has been waiting till this moment, and waiting for this moment that your time of need may be his time of love, and your time of misery his time of mercy : are you content it should be so ? Has this word taken hold of your heart, saying, Oh ! *What shall I do to be saved ?* O ! a thousand worlds for Christ. Indeed, an offer of him is worth a thousand worlds, much more himself : do you see it to be so ? and are you made willing to have him that he may save you from sin, as well as from hell ? And to save you presently, that you may never be a slave to your sins any more, but a servant to Jesus ? Then we may say, *Behold his time is a time of love*, not only in point of offer, but a time of love in point of power.

I intended to have addressed myself to you whose time, either now or formerly, has been a time of love : but time does not permit ; and this will fall in as naturally afterwards.

S E R M O N XCI.

EZEK. xvi. 8.

Now, when I passed by thee and looked upon thee ; behold, thy time was a time of love.

[The second Sermon on this Text.]

THE time of life is short and uncertain ; and we cannot improve it aright, if we be not acquainted with a time of love. The time of trouble is what

we may all lay our account with ; for, *Man is born to trouble* ; and we cannot have true peace or rest therein if we know not a time of love. The time of death is approaching ; and what have we to sweeten the thoughts of death, if we know nothing of a time of love ? It is therefore most necessary we know it.

Having formerly improved this subject in an use of *admiration* and *examination*, we shall now, at this time, improve it in an use of *information*, by deducing two inferences.

1st, Hence see, that God, in *sovereignty*, may *disappoint his people*, and make the time of *seeming anger* and of *wrath-like dispensations* to be a time of love. As *his thoughts are not our thoughts, nor his ways our ways* ; so, his time is not our time : we may hope he will manifest his love at such a time, and he may disappoint our hopes ; and we may fear he will display his anger at such a time, and he may disappoint our fears, by manifesting his love. *He makes his time of seeming wrath toward his people to be his time of love.*

As this inference is suitable to the text, context, and doctrine ; so being suitable to the circumstances of many here under visible evidences of God's anger in their families * : I shall insist a little upon this by answering these four questions. 1. What *seeming anger* may be showing toward his people whose time is notwithstanding a time of love ? 2. What *love-designs* may be carrying on by these *wrath-like dispensations* ? 3. What *love* is there in these *angry-like dispensations* ? 4. What *lessons* may we learn from this inference ?

QUEST. 1. *In what respect may he seem ANGRY with these whose time, notwithstanding, is a time of LOVE ?*

ANSW. 1. It is most angry-like when they *fall into sin*, when he *suffers them to sin*, and *leaves them to themselves*, as he did David, Peter, Hezekiah, 2 Chron. xxxii. 25, 31. ; and leave them to *heart-hardness* ; *Wherefore hast thou hardened our hearts from thy fear ?* Isaiah lxiii. 17.

* At the time when this sermon was preached, most of the children in Dunfermline were seized with the *small pox*, and vast numbers of them dying.

2. When they are under many *grievous temptations*, and *buffetings of Satan*, as Paul, 2 Cor. xii. 7.; and Job, as you read, chap. i.

3. When they are under sad *desertion*, saying, as Psal. xxii. 1. *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? How long wilt thou hide thyself?* Psal. xlii. 1, 2.

4. When they are under great *outward affliction* on their persons, families, friends, names, estates, or otherwise, Psal. xxxiv. 19. *Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth them out of them all.* 2 Tim. iii. 12. *If any man will live godly in Christ Jesus, he must suffer persecution.*

You will, perhaps, say, Is there no difference between the afflictions of the godly and of the wicked? To this we reply, No difference as to the *matter* of them, and in their own *nature*; but vastly different in their *use*; even as water in baptism taken out of a well, so much of the water of that well may be taken for washing the hands, so much for baptizing; it is the same water, but the latter is made use of as a *seal of God's covenant*. Thus, when a fever comes, the godly man's person, or child, may be as sorely handled as the wicked; but the one is blessed, and not the other, the use of affliction to the one, and to the other, is vastly different, Jer. xxiv. The prophet here sees a vision of two sorts of figs, the one was good figs, and the other bad, and naughty. And what are these but two sorts of people, that were carried captive to Babylon? Some of them, as good figs, whom God took a care of when carried away, to whom he says, that he *will have his eyes upon them for good, and not for evil*; and that he will *bring them again*: but as for the other, he says, that his eyes were upon them *for evil and not for good*; and that he would *pull them down*. Thus, all the people go to captivity together; but yet never think he had no more respect to his own among them, than to others. Afflictions come upon the wicked, seeking satisfaction; but upon the godly, for correction: God out of love chastises them for their faults. There is a great difference when God, with a rod, strikes his enemies out of anger; and when, with
that

that same rod, he strikes his children in love. Therefore, when judgments come upon a land, or a place, let not the godly themselves think they shall be free; but as when a besom comes to sweep a house, if there be dross and dirt in it, and also diamonds and some gold among it, both of them may be swept to the door together; but this is the difference, the dirt rots away, but the diamonds or gold remains of as great worth as it was at first, till it be sought and got again.

The godly may lay their account with such troubles, and afflictions as the wicked meet with. Why?

(1.) These who are partakers in *sin*, must be partakers in *punishment*; for, though the godly were guiltless in men's eyes, yet before God, and in their own eyes, they are guilty, and sinful as others are: for, it is hard to live with the wicked, and not be infected with their plagues, and so they must have part of their judgment.

(2.) There is no promise made to any of that sort, as to *exempt* them from the cross. Hence the true Israelites and Canaanites cannot be discerned by these outward things; yet say not there is no difference between the afflictions of the one, and the other, as I have shown above.

QUEST. 2. *What LOVE DESIGNS may be carrying on by those WRATH-LIKE dispensations?*

ANSW. 1. The first love design thereby is to make *sin bitter*, and bring off their hearts from it, and make them leave it. *Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, even of God's children, but the rod of correction drives it off*, Prov. xxii. 15. See Jer. ii. 19. *Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee; Know then and see that it is an evil and a bitter thing, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee saith the Lord God of hosts. By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged*, Isa. xxvii. 9.

2. The next love design is, to *heal their hearts*: to humble the lofty heart, and soften the hard heart: therefore he puts them in the fire to melt them; they are naturally hard, stout, light, and proud: God melts them

them with this fire ; *Thou hast tried us with fire, as silver is tried. See Job xiii. 16. For God maketh my heart soft.*

3. The third love design is, to make them weary of this world, by finding they meet with such bad entertainment in it ; *Arise ye, and depart, for this is not your rest, for it is polluted, it shall destroy you even with a sore destruction, Mic. ii. 10. Hence John xvi. 33. In the world ye shall have tribulation, but in me ye shall have peace ; be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*

4. Another love design is, to awaken them : but he gives them something ado, and keeps them busy and fighting : *These are the nations God left to prove Israel by them ; slay them not, lest my people forget, Judg. iii. 1. Jer. xlvi. 11. They would sink and corrupt if they were not carried into captivity, and emptied from vessel to vessel.*

5. The next love design is, to exercise faith and patience ; *Rom. v. 3. We glory in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh patience ; and patience, experience ; and experience, hope. James i. 2, 3. Count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations ; knowing that the trial of your faith worketh patience : but let patience have her perfect work.*

6. Another love design is, to bring them to themselves, by prayer, and other duties, otherwise they would mistake themselves, *Hos. v. 15. and vi. 1. In their afflictions they shall seek me early, saying, Come let us return to the Lord, for he hath broken, and will heal. True, indeed, hypocrites may cry, when they are afflicted ; When he slew them, then they sought him ; and they returned and enquired early after God :—Yet they flattered him with their mouths, Psalm lxxviii. 35, 36. But even the children of grace need to be spurred up by the rod ; and then they cry to their Father in another manner than hypocrites, in a kindly and cordial manner, Isa. xxvi. 19. There it is said of his people, Lord, in trouble have they visited thee ; they poured out a prayer when thy chastening hand was upon them : then they visited thee ; they were growing strangers to God before the trouble came ; they made him
few*

few visits, and were like to grow out of acquaintance with him : but now they begin to renew their acquaintance with him ; they *poured out a prayer* : formerly, before trouble came, they prayed, but their prayers were but drops ; they came but slowly forth, drop by drop, like water out of a still ; but now their prayers are poured out like water out of a fountain : they pour out their prayers, and pour out their hearts in prayer before the Lord, when his chastening is upon them ; *They poured out prayer* ; in the margin it is a SECRET SPEECH : they may meet with God in public duties and ordinances, but especially their main intercourse with him is in secret ; there they speak with God, and commune with him : and thus by afflictions and chastisements their communion with God is advanced.— In a word, such are his love designs, by trials and wrath-like dispensations, that thereby he makes *his mercy the sweeter to them* when it comes : and their *love to God the greater*, because of his power and pity manifested to them in their afflictions.

QUEST. 3. *What LOVE is there in these afflictions, in punishments and chastisements ? What love appears in them ?*

ANSW. Besides what I have said, 1. There is love in the *measure* of the affliction ; while it is not in fury, but in measure, and in pity ; *Fury is not in me.*—*In measure when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it : He stayeth his rough wind in the day of his east wind,* Isa. xxvii. 4, 8. *As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him,* Psal. ciii. 13.

2. There is love in bringing them under *one evil*, to *save them from a greater* ; 1 Cor. xi. 32. *They are chastised of the Lord, that they may not be condemned with the world.* See Heb. xii. 6, 7, 8.

3. There is love in making them thus *sharers* of the *mercies of the covenant* ; for afflictions are a covenant promise ; See Sam. vii. 15. and Psal. lxxxix. 31, 32. For which the saints have prayed, as Jer. x. 24. *Correct me, Lord, but in judgment ; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing :* Thus Psalm vi. 1. and xxxviii. 1.

4. There

4. There is love in that thus he *favours and honours* them to take them under his correction, and care : See Job vii. 17. *What is man, that thou shouldst magnify him ? and that thou shouldst set thy heart upon him ?* Why ? how doth he magnify and honour him ? It follows, ver. 18. *And that thou shouldst visit him every morning, and try him every moment.*

5. There is love in his giving *sweet cordials* between-hands to bear up their spirits ; particularly, some cordials of the new covenant ; some words on which he causes them to hope, Psal. cxix. 49. *Remember thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.* Hence it follows, ver. 50. *This is my comfort in mine affliction ; for thy word hath quickened me.* He quickens and refreshes with his words of grace.

6. There is love in the *constant presence of grace* that he allows them under their trouble, according to his promise, Heb. xiii. 5. *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.* Psalm xci. 15. *I will be with him in trouble ; I will deliver him, and honour him.* When the goldsmith has cast the gold into the fire, he leaves it not there ; nay, then he waits best upon it, that he may suffer it to get no more of the fire than he sees meet.

In a word, such love there is in their afflictions that he is therein carrying on *all the love designs* that I was mentioning on the former head, and thus preparing them for the heavenly kingdom ; *Our light affliction, that is but for a moment, worketh a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,* 2 Cor. iv. 17. They would die and rot in their sins, if they were not *poured out from vessel to vessel.*

QUEST. 4. *What LESSONS may we learn from this inference ?*

ANSW. I. That we ought not to seek so much to be *rid of troubles* ; we ought to submit and comply with the troubles that are upon us, seeing they are such excellent things, so profitable and medicinal : we ought neither to lothe at, nor fret under God's physic.

I. We ought to *accept of the punishment of sin*, saying, *I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I*

have sinned. We should turn up our cheek to him that smiteth, and not weary of the Lord's chastisements, seeing it is for sin; *Why should a living man complain? a man for the punishment of his iniquities?* Therefore,

3. We ought to *quit sin*, saying, *What have I any more to do with idols?* God's designs, by trouble, to destroy some idol: join with him in seeking the destruction thereof; *I will go, and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offences, and seek my face,* Hosea v. 15.

4. Give way to the Lord Jesus Christ, and make open doors for him; for this is the great design of all afflicting dispensations: for they are so many knocks at the doors of our hearts. Give way to him in a fourfold capacity.

(1.) As a *Reprover*, Rev. iii. 15, 16, 17. Take with the charge of lukewarmness in being neither cold nor hot.

(2.) As a *Counsellor*, Rev. iii. 18. Harken to his counsel, as a Prophet, and buy his *eye-salve*; his counsel, as a Priest, and buy his *white raiment*; his counsel, as a King, and buy his *tried gold*.

(3.) Give way to him as a *Corrector*, a loving corrector, Rev. iii. 9. *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten*: he corrects us for our faults, and for our amendment. Be patient, which is a continued submission, and if sense fail, hold by the word.

(4.) Give way to him as an *importunate Suitor*, Rev. iii. 20. *Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him, and sup with him, and be with me.* He knocks by his word, and by his Spirit, and by his rod; invite him to come in, saying, as Laban in another case to Abraham's servant, Gen. xxiv. 31. *Come in, thou blessed of the Lord: wherefore standest thou without?* O come in and do not stand knocking, but make king's keys, and exert thy power and come in with salvation.—So much may suffice for the first inference. Hence,

2dly, I infer, that neither the *sinning* nor the *suffering circumstances* of the people of God, in this world,

is *inconsistent with his special love* to them. *Thy time,* (though in the context both a sinful and afflicted time,) *was a time of love.* By the love of God here, I do not understand, either *benevolence* or *good-will*, for this is common; *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.* He has sworn that he has *no pleasure in the death of sinners.* God may take pleasure in the execution of his justice, but doth not in the punishment of the creature; *As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of sinners.* Nor do I here understand his love of *beneficence*; for, he does good to all, *He makes his sun to shine upon the good and evil; and sendeth his rain upon the just and unjust.* Nor his love of *destination* towards the elect unconverted; because, whatever be his thoughts of peace, and designs of manifesting love to them, yet he can take no pleasure in them, as they are in themselves, while out of Christ. But I understand his love of *complacency and delight.* Now, I say, his people's *sinning and suffering circumstances* here, are not *inconsistent with his complacential love* to them.

For the further clearing of this inference, I would

1. Show that the *sinning circumstances* of his people here, are not inconsistent with his love.
2. Give a discovery of *these persons* whose sinning circumstances are indeed inconsistent with his love.
3. Show that the suffering and afflicted circumstances of God's people are not *inconsistent* with his love to them.
4. Give a discovery of *these* whose carriage in their afflicted circumstances is indeed inconsistent with this complacential love of God.

[1.] We are to show that the *sinning circumstances* of God's people here, are not inconsistent with his love. This may be cleared in the four following remarks.

Remark 1. "That none of God's children in this world, are *free of sin*:" they have a *body of death* in them; the *company of two armies; two nations struggling.* See Rom. vii. 15,—25.

Remark 2. “That they not only have sin, but it “may be *powerful and prevalent* :” *POWERFUL*, so as to carry them captive ; *I see a law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity unto the law of sin, which is in my members*, Rom. vii. 23. *PREVALENT*, as David says, *Iniquities prevail against me*.

Remark 3. “That God observes and regards the “*truth of grace* in his people, though the *measure* may “be small ; and he loves all his children, tho’ some “of them are babes, 1 John ii. 12, 13, 14.” Hence they are ready sometimes to speak thus, “*I pray in- deed ; but, alas ! I do not wrestle, like Jacob ; nor “water my couch, like David : I believe ; but I have “not joy and peace in believing : I fear ; but I am not “in the fear of God all the day long : I love Christ ; “but, O my love goes out after other things.*” Thus it is the *weakness*, not the *want* of grace, that troubles and perplexes them : yet God loves his children tho’ weak.

Remark 4. “That the *life* of the believer is *hid with “Christ in God.*” It is not so much in himself as it is in Christ ; and hence they are ready to conclude their sinful circumstances such, as are not consistent with divine love ; but their life is most in their head.—Four things the saints complain of, and they get ease only in Christ.—Alas ! I am *guilty* ; well, where get you ease but in Christ, as made of God your *righteousness* ?—Oh ! I have much *pollution* ; well, where is your relief but in Christ, as made of God to you *sanctification*, the fountain of holiness !—Alas ! there is much *folly* about me ; where is your relief but in Christ, as made of God unto you *wisdom* ?—Oh ! I have no *strength* for *duty* or *difficulties* ; well, where lies your strength but in Christ ? *In the Lord have I righteousness and strength* ; he is the *glory of their strength*. Hence the greatest part of the believer’s inherent righteousness, in this world, lies in his faith, faith going out of himself to Christ for all. This shows, that however sinful his circumstances are, yet he is a favourite of heaven.

[2.] We are next to give a discovery of *these persons* whose sinning circumstances are indeed inconsistent with his love.—There are six sorts of sinners, whose sinful case is indeed inconsistent with God's complacential love.

1. These whose religion lies all in *externals*; and whose hearts were never exercised before God about sin and wrath; *This people draw nigh unto me with their mouths, and honour me with their lips; but their hearts are far removed from me*, Matth. xv. 18. Their hearts were never engaged to approach to God.

2. These who never knew the *power* of the gospel, but are only taken up with the outward pomp of it; pompous words, the excellency of speech, the flourishes of eloquence, that tickle their fancies: they never got good of the word who never had better to say than this, O! there was a neat sermon; it was gilded with all the flowers of rhetoric, and embellished and set off with all the graces of oratory; an handsome and eloquent discourse; but never could say of any sermon, *Did not our hearts burn within us?* We were touched and conquered thereby. They know nothing that know not the power of the word; *The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power*: See 2 Thess. i. 4. *The gospel came not in word, but in power.*

3. These who *persecute the people of God*, and have no favour for them, no complacency in them; though they can be civil to them as to others, yet they are far from preferring them to others, in esteeming them, or delighting in them. This is the brand of a natural man, for it is otherwise with God's children, *To the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent in whom is all my delight*, Psalm xvi. 3.

4. These that can live *peaceably* in *any one sin*, without remorse, without repentance, or reluctance; or by bribing their judgment to defend it, or offering to God a satisfaction, like the whore in the seventh chapter of the Proverbs, *I have a peace-offering, this day have I performed my vows; come let us take our fill of love*, ver. 14, 18. God's children may have sin prevailing, but never have it peaceably reigning in them.

4. These

5. These that were never brought off from the *pollutions of the world*, such as drunkenness, whoredom, swearing, lying, cheating, stealing, Sabbath-breaking, &c. Some may escape these, through the knowledge of Christ, and yet be apostates, the *latter-end worse than the beginning*, 2 Pet ii. 20. Sure then, they are in a sad state that never escaped sin at all: they are not the spots of God's children.

6. These that being *strangers* to a *working* faith, are never brought beyond the legal or gospel-hypocrite.—By the *legal-hypocrite*, I understand, the man that is full of *good works*, yet they have not faith for their root: these are cast; for, *Without faith it is impossible to please God*.—By a *gospel-hypocrite*, I understand, these that *profess faith in Christ*, yet their faith has no *good works*, as the *fruits thereof*; these are cast; because, *As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also*.

[3.] We come to show, that the *suffering and afflicted circumstances* of God's people are not *inconsistent* with his love to them. This may be clear from the following remarks.

Remark 1. "That God has *connected* sin and suffering:"—By his DECREE; *Though hand join in hand, sin shall not go unpunished*: By the LAW; *The soul that sinneth shall die, or suffer*: By the GOSPEL; *If his children break his law, and keep not his commandments; he will visit their iniquity with the rod*: By his PROVIDENCE, wherein he declares himself a God that will by no means clear the guilty. What God has joined, we naturally separate, saying, *We shall have peace, tho' we walk after the imagination of our hearts*. This was the first heresy the devil bred in the world, *You shall not surely die*, though you sin; but God has connected sin and suffering.

Remark 2. "God's own people may lay their account with *suffering*, while they have *sin*." Though, through Christ, in a way of faith and repentance, they are freed from *hell*, and *eternal damnation*, yet they are not always freed from *temporal punishments and chastisements*; nay, *You only have I known of all the nations*
of

of the earth ; therefore will I punish you. Though he pardons their sins, yet he may take vengeance on their inventions. Therefore,

Remark 3. " There are many rods they are visited with." Sometimes *desertion*, sometimes *affliction*, sometimes *temptation*, *sickness*, *death* of friends and children ; Many are the afflictions of the righteous ; but the Lord delivereth them out of them all, Psal. xxxiv. 19.

Remark 4. " God has glorious and merciful designs in afflicting them." Glorious with reference to himself ; and merciful with reference unto them.—As to *himself*, it is to clear his justice, and manifest his equity in the administration of his government, and that the world may not think he bears with sin in his own, or indulges them in their rebellion ; therefore, though David repented of his adultery and murder, and got a pardon ; yet because his sin was scandalous and offensive, and made the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme ; therefore he must be punished with the sword of a bloody enemy, and a bloody sword must not depart from his house.—As to *them*, it is to do them good, to humble and prove them, to imbitter sin to them, and to make them forsake sin and flee to Christ, and that in their affliction they may seek him early, saying, *Come, let us return to the Lord, for he hath broken, and he will heal us ; he hath smitten and he will bind us up*, Hof. v. 15. and vi. 1. compared.

[4.] We now proceed to give a discovery of *these* whose carriage in afflicted circumstances is indeed, *inconsistent* with this *complacential love of God*.

1. Such as grow *worse* by their afflictions, and, instead of turning unto God, turn from him ; that gnaw their tongues and blaspheme, like these, Rev. xvi. 10. Is it not with many, as with Ahaz, 2 Chron. xxviii. 20, 22. In his *distress* he *sinned yet more* ? It is to be feared, many are worse instead of being better by the rod.

2. Such as are neither better nor worse, but rather *stupid* and *sottish*, never affected though afflicted. A child of God may become, in some respects, senseless for

for a little, with the acuteness and severity of his affliction ; but he comes to his senses again, and is stirred up to a suitable affectedness before the Lord : but it is sad when people are no way touched and moved with the hand of God upon them. It is a stubborn child that will not weep when the father chastises ; *Thou hast smitten them, but they have not grieved*, Jer. v. 3. Some are past feeling, they are, as it were, threshed on, and yet they feel it not.

3. Such as feel their misery and trouble, but do not *see the cause of it* ; and therefore never take the right way to be rid of it ; but being sensible of external trouble, look out for external help, as Ephraim *saw his wound*, and *went to King Jarib* ; but none says, *Where is God my Maker* ? Job xxxv. 9, 10. *Though they cry, by reason of the arm of the mighty, yet none saith, where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night* ? Few prayers to God, little amendment.

4. Such as in their affliction *turn to God*, but it is not with their *whole heart, but feignedly*, Jer. iii. 10. They pray and cry fervently for ease and relief, yet hold fast iniquity ; or, if they forsake some sins, yet not all ; their main business is to get ease from trouble ; thus Pharaoh cried, turned, confessed ; *Pray for me that this death may be removed*. Some never desire a prayer to be made for them till they fear they are on their death-bed : they go to God in affliction, like one that goes to a great man about business, not about a loving visit ; and if the business be done, they part and leave him, and perhaps never wait upon him again ; they have got their business done, and they seek no more : such are selfish seekers ; that seek Christ only for the loaves.

5. Such as seem to *turn cordially, and to return*, but it is *not to the Most High* : they not only pray that God would remove the outward trouble, but they acknowledge sin, and resolve never to be so bad again ; but it is merely a moral turning, whereby many deceive themselves : they think their forsaking of some things, and reforming of some things, and performing of some duties,

duties, wherein they may be wonderfully affected, that this is true grace, but it is not so ; it is a turning, indeed ; but not to the *Most High*. Distance from God is the great evil ; and nearness to him, through Christ, is that wherein our great happiness lies. Now, though men should go never such a length in reformation, if they live at a distance from God, it will be of little stead to them ; the great design of the rod is not obtained : our righteousness must proceed from the influence of another covenant. People may turn to duty, and not to God, and they may turn to God, and yet not to Christ ; or to God in Christ ; as Christ said to the disciples, *Ye believe in God, believe also in me*. If we believe in God, and yet not believe in Christ, we believe not in the Most High ; for God is most highly exalted only in Christ ; *He that honours not the Son, honours not the Father*. He that turns not to Christ by faith, never turns rightly to God by repentance.

6. Such as seem to turn to God and Christ, but *turn away from him again*, 2 Peter ii. 20,—23. And like these, Psal. lxxviii. 34, 37. *When he slew them, they sought him ; yet their heart was not right with God, neither were they stedfast in his covenant. If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.*—It is true, God's children may have many changes in their frames, and back-drawings in their hearts ; but still they have a fixed purpose of heart to follow the Lord : like the mariner, that sets out for such a port, though he may be tossed at sea, and carried backward with contrary winds, yet his fixed purpose leads him to make for the designed haven, at which he at last arrives. God's children may draw back, but they are not as these that draw back to perdition ; *The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own way*.



S E R M O N XCH.

EZEK. xvi. 8.

Now, when I passed by thee and looked upon thee ; behold, thy time was a time of love.

[The third Sermon on this Text.]

AS a throne of grace is erected for a *time of need*, Heb. iv. 16. *Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need ;* So a *time of love* is ordered for a *time of need*, and a time of trouble : and, indeed, as none will apply to a throne of grace, but these that are poor and needy, and are really sensible of their poverty, and need, and necessity ; so none will duly value and relish a time of love, but these that are brought to distress and trouble, especially under apprehensions of divine anger, wrath, and displeasure : hence our time of misery, and his time of mercy, are here joined together ; *Behold, thy time was a time of love.*

We have already improved this subject in several uses : We shall now proceed to another use of the doctrine, and that is of *examination*. Try then, if your *time of trouble* and *distress*, has been a *time of love* : for I cannot well separate these which the text and context join so closely.

First, We may view this *negatively*. There are some whose time of trouble is evidently *no time of love* ; as,

1. These whose trouble and distress never make them find more of the *vanity of the world* discovered to them ; nor their hearts ever more separate therefrom than formerly. If your farms and merchandise, your worldly concerns, (Mat. xxii. 5.) keep your hearts as much away from the gospel-feast, or from Christ, as ever,

ever, thou hast got little good of thy trouble. If trouble in a world was blest to thee, the world would become more tasteless to thee ; Jer. iii. 22, 23. *Behold, we come unto thee ; for thou art the Lord our God : Behold, in vain is salvation looked for from the hills and multitude of mountains.* Intimating, that as the Lord draws to himself, he looses from the world.

2. Such as were never more *awakened* by their trouble to a serious concern about spiritual and eternal matters, surely they cannot read a time of love in their trouble ; they continue asleep, still secure and careless ; they are so far from being turned to God, that they are not risen to their feet. See how David in his trouble is awakened to a concern about death and eternity, Psal. xxxix. He sees his *age as nothing*, and *every man vanity* ; then he said, *Lord, what wait I for ? my hope is in thee.*

3. Such whose trouble never put them to *pray more frequently and fervently* than they were accustomed to do, and in another manner ; when there is no change in their prayers. It is true, some in trouble may turn from fottishness to seriousness ; natural seriousness for help and deliverance ; but never from natural to spiritual seriousness, so as to pray in a spiritual manner, for spiritual blessings, and wrestle with God for the blessing : it is said of the hypocrite, that *he doth not cry when God enjoins him.* See Dan. ix. 13. *All this evil is come upon us, yet made not we our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquity, and understand the truth.* And Hosea vii. 7. *All their kings are fallen ; yet there is none among them that calleth unto me.* When God makes our chief enjoyments fail, and yet we turn not to him by faith and prayer, is it a time of love ? Nay, rather of wrath and anger. You may pray indeed, and yet be guilty of this here challenged, because you pray not better than you did. If the Spirit of prayer was poured out upon us in affliction, it would be a sign of love.

4. Such as under trouble have no more *hatred of sin*, nor heart-parting with it, and heart-exercise about it, cannot say their time of trouble is a time of love.

Love to God grows with hatred of sin ; but if you are no more burdened with sin than ever, your time of trouble hath not been a time of love. The troubles of God's people are to purge away the dross of sin, Isa. xxvii. 9. But if the bellows are burnt, and the metal consumed, and your iniquities not taken away farther from the heart, it is sad.

5. Such as under their trouble are brought to no more *love to God* and *duty*, so as to serve him better and more cordially in these duties, which before they either omitted, or slightly performed ; if your service be as faulty as formerly, you come under that charge, *I have so and so smitten thee, but thou hast not returned unto me.*

6. Such as find not *Christ more sweet and precious* to them, by the means of their affliction : the bitterness of trouble never made Christ sweet to them, the grievousness of their trouble never made Christ precious to them. Is there the same strangeness between Christ and you that ever there was ? No fellowship with him as your only help, and he in whom only God is well-pleased and reconciled ? Then your time of trouble has not been a time of love. Alas ! many wear off the sorrow of their affliction, partly by length of time, and partly by mirth and diversion, as Saul called for music to drive away the evil spirit ; partly, by supply of comforts, yet remaining, and this lulls them asleep ; but they know not what it is, like Hannah, to come to the Lord with a burdened spirit, and get ease from him ; *They locked to him, and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed,* Psal. lxxxiv. 5.

Secondly, Let us consider this *positively* ; the time of trouble and distress may be known to be a time of love. 1. More *generally*, by the gracious *effects* of a sanctified trouble. 2. More *particularly*, by considering the *particular troubles* we have been under, and their particular usefulness, through grace, to us.

1st, More *generally*. Try it by the gracious *effects* of a sanctified trouble. I shall mention some of these by which you may try yourselves,

1. If your time of trouble and distress has been a time of love, then your trouble has *humbled* you.—God's design, by all the troubles in the wilderness, was to humble them, as well as to prove them, and do them good in the latter end; *Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter-end*, Deut. viii. 16. *Pride and folly is bound up in the hearts of the children of men, but the rod of correction drives it from them*, Prov. xxii. 15. He designs to hide pride from man, that he may *keep his soul from the pit*, Job xxxiii. 17, 18. We would be apt to say proudly with Pharaoh, *Who is the Lord that I should obey him?* if he did not humble and lay us low. But happy is the man whom affliction humbles to the dust for the pride of his heart; humbles him to a meekness of spirit, and submission to his sovereign will; humbles him to a sight and acknowledgement of his sin and wickedness, and of unknown corruption, to make him know what was in his heart, Deut. viii. 2. See 2 Chron. xxxii. 32. Humbles him to a renouncing all confidence in himself, in his own righteousness, strength, and wisdom.

2. If your time of trouble and distress has been a time of love, then your trouble has *taught* and *instructed* you; *Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, and teachest out of thy law*, Psalm xciv. 12. Many a good lesson he teaches his own at that school; *Whom he loves, he chastens*; and whom he chastens in love, he teaches. He gives them many sweet discoveries of himself; he shows them their weakness, and his power; their guiltiness, and his righteousness; their emptiness, and his fulness; their baseness, and his highness; their blackness, and his beauty; their folly, and his wisdom; their treachery, and his faithfulness; their sinfulness, and his holiness; their misery, and his mercy; their insufficiency, and his all-sufficiency, &c. What has he taught you by your trouble and affliction? Has he taught you the sinfulness of sin, that not only it brings evil, but is evil, an evil against God? Jerem. ii. 19. *Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backsliding*
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ing reprove thee : know therefore, and see, that it is an evil and a bitter thing, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts.—Has he taught you the *emptiness* of the creature, and the vanity thereof, that *all flesh is grass*? Isaiah xl. 6. You may have a strong imagination of this in your head, *that all flesh is grass*, but, have you so learned it as to have a deep impression of it on your heart?—Has he taught you the absolute *usefulness* of Christ, his fulness, worthiness, and suitability?—When the apostle is brought, Rom. vii. 24, 25. to an *O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me ?* then follows, *I thank God, through Jesus Christ* : here is my up-making ; here is my help and deliverance ; has the God of heaven famished all your gods of earth, and starved you as to creature-comforts, so as to make you hunger and thirst after the fulness, sweetness, and righteousness of Christ ? Then your time of trouble has been a time of love.—Has he, by your trouble, taught you to *pray*, to weary of the earth, and to long for heaven, and to seek him early, and to seek him diligently, to seek him humbly, and to pour out your heart before him ?—Has your trouble taught you what is the *one thing necessary*, and set you in quest of that, with David, Psalm xxvii. 4. *One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life*?—Has your trouble taught you the *redemption of time*? In tranquility, many golden hours are lost ; but has your trouble taught you to *redeem your time, because the days are evil*?—Has your time of trouble taught you to *improve your Bible*, as well as your time ; to search it more diligently, to understand it more clearly, and to relish it more sweetly ? *This is my comfort in my affliction, thy word has quickened me.*—Has your trouble taught you to *prepare for death and eternity*, by drawing out your soul toward an eternal God ? You have heard of God before, but do you now see him ? Moses never saw God so clearly as when he descended in a cloud ; some never see God so clearly as when he descends in a black cloud of affliction : therein we may see his holi-

holiness, in hating sin; his justice, in correcting for sin; his faithfulness to his covenant, Psalm lxxxix. 30,—33.; his power in supporting; his mercy in comforting.

3. If your time of trouble and distress has been a time of love, then it has taught you to *forsake* sin, saying, *What have I any more to do with idols? This is all the fruit to take away sin.*—Has he taught you to *turn to himself*, and his way, (by hedging up your way with thorns, Hosea ii. 6, 7.) saying, *I will go and return to my first husband, for then it was better with me than now. It is good for me to draw near to God.*—Has he taught you to turn to *yourself*, and to your right senses? Indeed, true conversion brings a man to his wits; it makes a change in the understanding, making him know, believe, and apprehend otherwise than he did: you before thought sin but a sport; but do you now understand it is the greatest of evils? You imagined a glory in a present world; but do you now apprehend the emptiness of it, and where true substantial comfort lies?—Has affliction awakened you out of your *dream*, so as you apprehend things to be quite otherwise than you took them to be in your sleep? Conversion is a bringing a madman to himself, Luke xv. 17. The prodigal is said to *come to himself*: true grace makes as great a change upon a man, as the restoring of a man to his wits does, Mark v. 15. It is like the man called *LEGION*, clothed, and sitting at Christ's feet, and in his right mind. And, indeed, when a man comes to his right mind, he comes to a right carriage and countenance: we read of some, that the very shew of their countenances witnessed against them: you will know some wicked men by their very outward countenance; for, ordinarily, a proud, haughty, and unhumbed air is about them; whereas the grave, heavenly, gentle and sweet behaviour and countenance of God's people does sometimes speak out the habitation of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts, and will distinguish them from the hypocrite, that but affects outward gravity.—When a man comes to his
right

right mind, then he comes to a right *language*, the language of heaven, instead of the language of Ash-dod; the earthly mind speaks earthly things natively; but the heavenly-minded man speaks heavenly things as natively; for, *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*. A new heart gives a man a new *tongue*; a new heart brings him to new company, and makes him give up with his old, idle, graceless companions, and affect fellowship with them who fear God. A new heart brings him to a new *walk*, and conversation in heaven. It is true, the external change is less discernable in these who have been civilly and religiously educated; yet there is even as great a difference between that man before and after conversion, though he was never so civil before, as there is between art and nature, or between some old art, he learned at the schools, and a new nature, he has got from God.

4. If your time of trouble has been a time of love, then your trouble brought you to *submit* to trouble, and cheerfully to welcome it as God's send; especially if it shall accomplish God's gracious design, to welcome it kindly as coming from his hand, especially if he himself come along with it: this is called a receiving it at the hand of God; Job ii. 10. *Shall we receive good at the hand of God? and shall we not receive evil?* We kindly receive good at his hand, and every good thing we received, we ought to have acknowledged the hand of God in giving it, and so ought we to receive evil: for example, affliction and trouble is God's thunder to awaken secure sinners; now, do you welcome it with this view, and for this end? "Lord, let me, by this means, be awakened "out of security, and quickened to call upon thee?"—Affliction is God's *forge* and furnace to soften hard hearts, and to refine base metal: do you welcome affliction coming on this errand? saying, "Now, Lord, "let my hard heart be broken; let me be purged and "purified, and come forth as gold."—Affliction is God's *pruning-knife*, for lopping off luxuriant branches; do you welcome affliction, providing it has this errand? saying, "Lord, let me be pruned and purged;

“if by this means I may bring forth more fruit.”—Affliction is God’s *school*, where he disciplines his children, that they may learn obedience by the things they suffer: do you welcome affliction on this errand? saying, “May I receive correction, and be made an obedient child to my heavenly Father, and have evidence of my being not a bastard, but a true child of God. No matter what be the affliction thou orders, if thereby I be a partaker of thy holiness.”—Affliction is God’s *winnowing wind*, or fan, to unchaff his corn, that it may be fit for his garner: do you welcome it as coming on this errand? saying, “Lord, let my chaff be blown away, even all the chaff of my pride, unbelief, worldliness, and carnality, &c.”—Affliction is God’s *eye-salve*, for clearing the sight of his people, that they may see things to be what they are: now, do you welcome affliction, if it may accomplish this end? Saying, with Job, in his affliction, chap. xxxiv. 32. “*That which I know not teach thou me; show me wherefore thou contendest; tell me what is the quarrel and ground of controversy; and if I have done iniquity, let me do so no more.* What I know not of God, O teach thou me! What I know not about myself; what I know not about Christ, and the mysteries of the kingdom of grace, or about the mysteries of the kingdom of providence, teach me; make me know thy way that is in the sanctuary, and thy way that is in the sea.”

2dly, We now proceed more *particularly*, to consider the *particular times* of trouble we have met with in our life-time, and whether or not these have been times of trouble to us. The text leads me to observe our particular times, *Thy time was a time of love*; thy time, who art the favoured and beloved of God.—What time are theirs? The text allows me to speak of any time that has past over thy head, and enquire if it has been a time of love, of special love, I shall therefore speak a little, 1. Of some particular *periods* of your time. 2. Of some particular *trials* and *troubles* of your time, and enquire if they have been a time of love. As to the

[1.] The particular *periods* of your time; such as you are, or shall be capable to discern, are, the times of *youth*, the time of *middle-age*, the time of *old age*, and the time of *death*; and I would offer you a word of trial concerning each of these. By these we may be led to reflect upon the time of love either past, present, or to come in this world.

(1.) There is the time of YOUTH, that is over with some, and present with others, and would you know if your time of youth has been a time of love? Here let young persons consider what is present, and older persons consider what is past: and both try if their time of youth is, or has been, a time of love. Alas! I fear few have it to say; because the most part spend their youth in childish trifles and vanities, little better than catching butterflies. But if there be any here, whose time of youth has been a time of love, it may be known by these four scriptural marks.

1. Have you been made to *remember your Creator in the days of your youth*, according to the commandment of God, Eccles. xii. 1.—Have you been brought to a serious remembrance of God your Creator, God your Redeemer; and to remember him so as to love him above all things? For God has a kindly remembrance of young kindness; *Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, and the love of thine espousals*, Jerem. ii. 2. To remember him so as to seek him above all things; for God says, *I love them that love me; and they that seek me early shall find me*.

2. Have you been made to remember the *day of judgment* in the day of your youth? according to that advertisement, Eccl. xi. 9. *Rejoice, O young man in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment*. Have you been brought to know, that for all the sins of your youth, God will call you to judgment? Have you got the humbling knowledge of it so as you have born the yoke of humiliation

miliation in your youth? Lam. iii. 27. *It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.* Have you got the upstirring knowledge of it, so as to make you restless till you was reconciled with the judge, and got your judge to be your friend; God himself to be your God in Christ?

3. Have you been at the *school* with young Timothy, of whom it is said, 2 Tim. iii. 15. *That from a child he knew the holy scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus?* These whose time of youth has been a time of love, are verily the students of the scriptures, and of the mind of God therein.

4. Have you been *affected* with the word, as young Josiah was? of whom it is said, 2 Kings xxii. 19. *That his heart was tender, and he humbled himself before the Lord, when he heard the word of threatening read against Jerusalem? To this man will I look, young or old, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembled at my word.* Did the word of threatening touch your heart with fear; and the word of promise touch your heart with love, delight, and desire? And does this work of God upon your heart continue, though not always at the same height, and exercise, yet thro' all the stages of your after-life, and persevere to a progress in the way of the Lord, and acquaintance with him? For some begin with the Spirit and end with the flesh; they seem to begin their days in heaven, and end them in hell: but where it is a sound work of God, it is durable; *The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.* By these things you may try if your time of youth is, or has been, a time of love.

(2.) There is a time of MIDDLE-AGE, that is present with some of you, and over with others; will you try if that is, or has been, a time of love. Indeed, if your time of youth has been a time of love, then your time, or riper years, will be so too; for, *Whom the Lord loves, he loves to the end.*——But more particularly,

1. If your time of riper years be, or has been a time of love, then you have got grace to lament the *folly of your youth*, saying, with the Psalmist, Psalm lxxix. 8. *O remember not against us former iniquities.*

—As you have been convinced of the sin of your nature, heart, and way, so you have been particularly challenged for, and made to go heavily under the burden of the sins of your youth. Job was brought to say, chap. xiii. 26. *Thou writest bitter things against me, makest me to possess the sins of my youth.* Was never the sin of your youth bitter to you before the Lord, and made you cry, with David, Psalm xxv. 7. *Remember not the sin of my youth?* If you can look back upon the follies of your youth with pleasure, and are never humbled before God for them, know that a sin never imbibited, is a sin never pardoned; sin never hated, is sin never purged: but if thy time of riper years, be a time of love, it will be a time of hating sin, and of hating thyself for all sin, and even the follies of thy youth, which others make a sport of, as being nothing but the tricks of youth. *God will not be mocked.*

2. If thy time of riper years be a time of love, it will be a time of *ripening for eternity*, by redeeming the time that is past in idleness, wickedness, and folly; according to the call of God, Ephes. xv. 16. *See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time.* If you never began to redeem time, you never yet have had a time of love. O flighter and contemner of time, that knows not what to do with thy time, that idles and trifles it away, and has little or no remorse what time thou mispendest in idle work, idle talk, idle conversation, idle company; thou knowest nothing of a time of love; for time's redemption begins with it. And now, that thou are come to thy middle-age, it is full time to redeem time, as thou wouldst not be plunged unawares into eternity.

3. If thy time of riper years be, or has been a time of love, then it will be your desire and endeavour to give that *strength of time* and days to God, and his service, that others give to the devil, and their lusts.—The time of middle-age is a time of service amongst men,

men, then they are most fit for temporal service in their day and generation: even so, if we be servants to God at all, that time of life is most fit and proper for glorifying, and honouring, and doing something for his glory, and the good of our own souls, and the souls of others, and accordingly will be thus occupied, if our time in that period be a time of love: for, as his time of love begets love, since *we loved him, because he first loved us*; so, accordingly to the measure of our love, such will be the measure of our service with delight, from a principle of love. There may be a variety of changes in the measure and manner of this loving service: but this will be the habitual business of the man's life, whose time is a time of love, then it will be a time of service; and, as Jacob's love for Rachel made his service pleasant, much more will the love of Christ constrain to serve him.

4. If thy time of riper years be a time of love, then it will be a *growing time*; as you grow in years so will you grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, 2 Peter iii. 18. This will hold true of all the children of grace, notwithstanding of all their winter decayings, yet they have also their spring-times of reviving and restoration, vastly different from all the changes of frames and moods that may be among hypocrites; for, when the Lord restores his children's frame, he together with it, *restores their soul, and leads them in the paths of righteousness, for his name's sake*, Psalm xxiii. 3. And there they walk and go on in the *strength of the Lord*, and from *strength to strength, pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God*—Thus you may try if the time of your middle-age be a time of love.

(3.) There is the time of OLD-AGE that some are brought to. You that are come to it will you try if your time of old-age be a time of love? In order to your trial, you may tell me,

1. What is the *sorrow* of your old-age? Is the sin of your youth, and of your riper age, the sorrow and grief of your age? Is it your sorrow and grief before God that so much time has been lost, so many opportunities

tunities misimproven, and so little good has been got and done by you? May you not say with Jacob to Pharaoh, Genesis xlvii. 9. *Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been?* Do you reckon you have lived no longer than since you began to live unto God? Is it your grief that you have lived so little from him as your principle, and to him as your end, and that you lived so long without him?

2. What is the *joy* of your old-age? If it be a time of love, then as sin will be the grief, so Christ will be the joy of your old-age: when your joy and comfort in the world is withering and dying. Is your joy in the Lord Jesus beginning to live? *They are the true circumcision, that rejoice in Christ Jesus.* Sorrow for sin, and joy in Christ the Saviour, are very consistent; yea, true sorrow for sin, cannot be without joy in the Lord; and true joy in the Lord, cannot be without sorrow for sin: and if this be your sorrow and your joy in old-age, it is a time of love.

3. What is the *crown* of your old-age? Solomon says, Prov. xvi. 31. *The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.* Is the righteousness of Christ your crown? Is righteousness his imputed for your justification, your crown to cover you before God? Is his righteousness of grace imputed for your sanctification, your crown for adorning you, and making you all glorious within, and being the principle of holiness and righteousness of life and conversation before men? Is this the crown of your old-age: And is Christ himself your crown, as *the Lord your righteousness and strength.*

4. What is the *staff* of your old-age? Is the word of grace and promise the staff you lean upon for support and comfort in all your tribulations and difficulties; Do you walk and worship with this staff: as *Jacob worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff*, in a common sense, Heb. xi. 21.; so do you worship, leaning on the staff of the divine promise. And are you resolved to walk through death with this staff, saying, *Though I walk through the valley and shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me, thy rod and staff they*

they comfort me? Psalm xxiii. 4. Has God put this staff in your hand, and you resolve never to quit with it, but still to lean upon his word, and hope in his word? If so, it is a time of love.

(4.) There is the time of DEATH a-coming; and would you know whether that will be a time of love? Some go to the devil, or his instruments, to know what death they will die; but if you go to God, and his word, you may know indeed what death you will die, I mean, whether you will die in the favour of God, or if your time of death shall be a time of love. Would you know what will come of you at death, and how it will fare with you? Whether you will fall in the lap of God's everlasting love, or fall into the fire of his everlasting wrath, when death comes, which may be nigh at hand? Why,

1. A time of love in life will certainly *end* in a time of love at death; for *death* cannot separate from the *love of God*, once manifested, Rom. viii. 38. If you be sure then of a time of love now, whether in youth, or riper age, or old age, you may be sure that the time of death will be a time of love also; for, *He rests in his love*.

2. And more particularly, if Christ be your life now, Col. iii. 3, 4. *You are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God*. If to *you to live is Christ*, then to *die will be gain*, Phil. i. 21. Is Christ the hope of your life, the joy of your life, the strength of your life, the glory of your life, the Alpha and Omega of your life? Have you come to him for life? And do you live on him as your life? And do you reckon your life without him, to be but death? Then your time of death will be a time of love.

3. If Christ be in you by his *Spirit*, then the time of death will be a time of love: for this is the *well of water springing up to everlasting life*, John iv. 14. *If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*. But if you have the Spirit of Christ, he will *abide with you for ever*, John xiv. 16. This is the earnest of the inheritance, as he is a sanctifying and comforting Spirit;

rit ; a Spirit of prayer and praise ; a Spirit of grace and love, a Spirit of faith and of a sound mind.

4. Your time of death will be a time of love, if the *sting of death* be taken away by the *Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world*. Now, is sin taken away in the guilt and rule of it ? How shall I know that, say you ? Why, do you flee to Christ for *pardon* of sin, as he is the *Lord your righteousness* ? And do you flee to Christ for *victory* over sin as he is the *Lord your strength* ? And do you ever win to rejoice in his pardoning grace, having some peace of conscience in the faith of his atoning blood ? And do you ever win to rejoice in his victorious grace, having some begun victory, and some hope of full victory over sin ? Why then, according to the measure of this freedom from sin, which is the sting of death, such may be the measure of your assurance, that the time of death will be a time of love ; and you may sing in the view of it with Paul, *O death ! where is thy sting ? O grave ! where is thy victory ? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord, 1 Cor. xv. 55*. If you know none of these things in any measure, you then have no ground, as yet, to conclude but that your time of death will be a time of wrath, and a porch to eternal death.

[2.] As to the next thing, *viz.* the particular *troubles* and *trials* of your time, by which you may try the *time of love* : I cannot now insist upon them ; I only mention these two at the time.

1. Perhaps your time, at present, is a time of *fear* and *perplexity* about your *STATE*, not knowing if it be a state of *grace* ; fearing you know nothing of communion with God, or of the power of religion ; and you would understand, if it is possible that such a time may be a *time of love*, and how it may be known ? Why,

(1.) Some of the Lord's people may have communion with God, and experience of the power of godliness, and yet not be *assured* of it, because they have not that measure of it they would desire to have.—It is communion with God, when you have a *dealing* with

with God, and God with you ; when you ask, and he gives ; you knock, and he sometimes opens a door of liberty unto you.—There is somewhat of the power of religion, when at times you find your *indisposition* for duty, and that you can no more pray than remove a mountain ; yet, behold quickly the Lord looses your bonds, turns your darkness to light, your hard heart to a soft heart ; and you pour it out like water ; here is the finger of God ; and these things demonstrate a *time of love*, an interest in God, acquaintance with him, fellowship with him, and the power of his way, though you discern it not.

(2.) Is thy fear in this matter not a *lazy, idle* fear, but an *active, diligent* fear, stirring thee up to be about the Lord's hand, and his way ? Some have an idle concern : they are easy though they know not their state ; they reckon it only the privilege of some, and attainable by few ; and therefore no matter though they have it not. This looks like a total want of the knowledge of God and his way. But does your concern make you diligent ? and are you as humble, holy, and circumspect in your darkness, as others are in their light of assurance ? There is *hope in Israel concerning thee*, that *thy time is a time of love*, notwithstanding thy darkness.

2. Perhaps your time of particular trouble is a time of *heaviness* with respect to temporal calamities. I shall say no more of this at the time, but to refer you to Psal. lvii. 1. What is your *refuge* in a day of *calamity* ? If your time of calamity be a time of love, then such will be your exercise. Two things take place in all God's children in times of calamity, if faith be any way exercised ; and in none else but them.

(1.) They have a *refuge*, and God only is their refuge ; they are obliged to abandon all other refuges ; and though they may use means, as well as others, yet they have no other refuge but God, that they run to, as Psal. cxliii. 9. *I flee to thee to hide me* ; or, as it is in the Hebrew, I HIDE ME WITH THEE. They have no other refuge but the secret of God's presence, and

the shadow of his wings : they are brought off from all confidence in themselves, and in the creatures.

(2.) They are humbled to be *content* with a *refuge* without a *delivery* ; even though the day of calamity be not over, yet they can rejoice in their refuge, till the day of calamity overpass. They can rejoice in God, as a promiser, even when he is not yet a performer ; and rest on a promise, without a performance ; in a refuge, without a delivery.—Try if you know any thing of this, and if your time of *trouble* has been a time of *love*.



S E R M O N XCIII.

EZEK. xvi. 8.

Now, when I passed by thee and looked upon thee ; behold, thy time was a time of love.

[The fourth Sermon on this Text.]

BETWEEN the time of *life*, and the time of *death*, our concern should be, that a *time of love* intervene. Solomon speaks of a *time to be born*, and a *time to die* ; intimating, that there is no time to *live*, that we can promise upon ; and therefore, between our birth and our death, our main care should be to have a time of love ; for, if death prevent us before we know *that*, wo will be to us that ever we were born. As fire kindles fire, and one flame lightens another ; so, nothing more reasonably demands love, than love ; and no love so powerfully commands love again, as the love of God : our love cannot but be best laid out upon one who is so far before-hand with us, that even, before time, prevented us : he provided for our cure, before ever we had received our wounds ; for our healing, before we had contracted our diseases ; for our deli-

deliverance, before we had been ruined ; for our redemption, before we were in thralldom ; for our rising, before we were fallen ; and for our advancement to heaven, before we were become heirs of hell. Thus was our kind Redeemer *rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights were with the sons of men.* The time wherein he vents his love is strange, even the time when we are most worthy of his wrath, and unworthy of his love.

In the preceding discourse, we mentioned two evidences, to know if the particular *troubles* and *trials* of our time were *times of love*. We intend at present to enlarge a little further upon this point. Try then if your *time of need* be his *time of love*, since infinite wisdom uses to make these two meet in the experiences of his own people, whose time in this world is a time of tribulation, wherein yet he has said, *In me ye shall have peace.* What *time of need* is it with you ? Why, say you,

1. “ My time is a time of *want*, even of outward want and poverty. I have very hard living in the world ; and can such a time be a time of love ? ”

ANSW. Yea, it may be a time of love, if your want and poverty be weaning you from the world, and winning you to Christ, in whom is all store of provision ; and if you be living upon his promise and providence. Know you what it is to live upon such a promise as that, *Isa. xxxiii. 16. Bread shall be given him, and his water shall be sure ?* Have you got the faith of his providence, that he *feeds the ravens and clothes the lilies* ; and therefore you rely upon him for provision, though you should be kept, as it were, from hand to mouth ? Christ says to the church of Smyrna, *I know thy poverty ; but thou art rich,* Rev. ii. 9. It may be said of some, Christ knows their riches, but they are poor, not having Christ for their stock and store : but happy they of whom he says, *I know thy poverty ; but thou art rich ;* rich in faith, rich in grace : however poor in hand, yet they are rich in bond, by virtue of the bond of the covenant, wherein they have Christ bound for their support in a present world.—If you know any thing of this,

your time may be a time of *want*, and yet a *time of love*.

2. “But, says another, my time is a time of *inward want, spiritual want*; want of faith, and want of grace; and can such a time be a time of love?”

ANSW. It may be so, if you are *humbled* under a sense of your want, and really see your want and poverty in spiritual things, you may reckon the Lord thinks upon you with *thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an unexpected end. I am poor and needy, but the Lord thinks upon me*, Psalm xl. 17. Yea, you may reckon that the Lord looks towards you with an eye of pity, *To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word*, Isaiah lxxi. 2.—And again, if your want and poverty commends Christ and his fulness to you; *To them that believe he is precious*: and even to them who believe their own want and his fulness; who believe their utter insufficiency, and his infinite all-sufficiency; who believe they are nothing, and he is all in all.—If you be kept empty, and sensible of your utter want, so as to have no confidence in yourselves, or in the flesh, and hence find no cause of rejoicing, but only in Christ, and his fulness, and dependent upon that, your time of want is a time of love. *Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*, Matth. v. 3.

3. Say you, “My time is a time of *guilt*; I have a sense of much guilt lying upon my conscience; and can that be a time of love, which is a time of the prevalence of sin, and the pressure of guilt?”

ANSW. It may be a time of love in the following cases—If the prevalence of sin be *humbling* you to the dust, saying, *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death?*—If the pressure of guilt be leading you to the *fountain* of Christ’s blood for cleansing.—If the *pardon* of sin be highly valued by you, above all things in this world, saying, *Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, and to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity.*—And if at any time the sense of pardon, or the hope of pardon, melt your heart, and make you fear to offend any more, and afraid

afraid of falling into sin, and lead you to say, *Henceforth we will not go back; quicken us, and we will call upon thy name*, Psal. lxxx. 18.—Do you get any grace to *hate* sin, and to resolve a *war* against it? grace to *hope* for victory at last, though you should fight all your life? And are you made sometimes to *fight* in hope of full victory through Christ, saying, *I thank God, thro' Jesus Christ*.—In this case, thy time of *sensible* guilt, and of the prevalency of sin, may notwithstanding be a *time of love*.

4. Say you, “My time is a time of *weakness*; I find “no strength for duty, no ability for work or worship that God calls me to; and can that be a time “of love?”

ANSW. Why, even that time may be proven to be a time of love.—If the sense of thy weakness drives thee *out of thyself* to the strength and sufficiency of Christ, saying with the apostle, *Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God*, 2 Cor. iii. 5.—Do you know, when you are *weak in yourselves*, then to be *strong in the Lord*; *strong in the grace that is in Christ*?—When you find in yourselves no grace to *pray*, yet even then have you gone to prayer, and found strength before you was aware, so as you could say, *In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me; and strengthenedst me, with strength in my soul*, Psalm cxxxviii. 3. I found my soul weak and without strength; but when I began to try in that case, he strengthened me with his secret power, his invisible hand.—Did you find, that he who brings *light out of darkness*, brought strength out of weakness? And is your weakness sometimes the *occasion* of magnifying and setting off the strength of Christ? according to 2 Cor. xii. 9. *My grace shall be sufficient for you, and my strength shall be perfect in thy weakness*.—And are you thence sometimes made to *glory in your infirmities*, that the power of Christ may rest upon you? and content that your stock of strength is not in your own hand, but in Christ's? *Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee*.—In this case, your time of *weakness* may be a *time of love*.

5. "Perhaps your time is a time of *difficulty*, about
 "some piece of work, some step of your pilgrimage,
 "wherein you know not what to do; can such a time
 "be a time of love?"

ANSW. Yea, it may, in the following cases. Are you getting grace to spread the case *before the Lord*, to acquaint him with your case, according to that call, *In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy steps?*—Do you *commit* the guiding of your ways to him, according to that, Psal. xxxvii. 5. *Commit thy ways to the Lord; trust also in him, and he will bring it to pass?* Though you see *no light*, nothing but darkness, it is a sign he will direct according to his promise; *I will lead the blind in ways they know not; and in paths which they have not trode.*—Are you waiting on him for his promised conduct, according to that promise; *They shall hear a voice behind them saying, This is the way walk ye in it?* Thy time of *difficulty* is a time of love; *He will guide thee with his eye.*

6. Say you, "My time is a time of great *affliction*;
 "on; affliction on my body, affliction on my soul, af-
 "fliction in my family; how shall I know if this time
 "of affliction be a time of love?"

ANSW. It is so in the following cases. Are you helped to *cast your burden on the Lord*, to roll this case upon him?—Do you see the *wisdom* of God in afflicting you, the *holiness* of God, the *faithfulness* of God, the *mercy* and *love* of God in your affliction? Do you see his *name*?—Are you brought to *submit* to God, and put yourself in his hand, to lay the rod on your back as he pleases, if it be needful? And especially to look to him for *sanctifying* the rod, and concerned rather to have affliction sanctified, than removed, saying, O let the wind blow, till my chaff be blown away; let the fire burn, till my dross be purged out, &c.—Thy time of *affliction* is a time of love.

7. "Oh! but my time, say you, is a time of *rebel-*
 "*lion* and *incurribleness*; tho' I have been afflicted,
 "yet I am not the better; I find my heart rebelling
 "against his chastisements; and that though *he hides*
 "*himself*, and *smites*, yet I go on *frowardly in the way*
 "of

“ of my heart, as it is said, Isa. lvii. 17. I find corruption irritated by the cross, and enmity strong; can such a time be a time of love?”

ANSW. It may be terrible, indeed, to think of thy rebellion against word and rod; yet thy time notwithstanding all this may be a *time of love*; if thy enmity be afflicting to thee, and thou heavily lamentest it before the Lord, saying, “ Lord, thou seekest nothing will do with me; no word, no rod; such is the power of sin and enmity: nothing but a sovereign step of grace will overcome me; therefore, *See my ways, and heal me*, in a way of sovereign grace:” And dost thou therefore cast thyself down at the throne of sovereign grace, that thou mayest be conquered, pitied, and saved in this way? Art thou complaining of thy enmity before God, and of thy incorrigibleness, and waiting upon God for more and more of his power exerted for destroying it, and delivering thee? *There is hope in Israel concerning thee*, that thy time is a *time of love*; he will see thy ways, and heal thee.

But, say you, “ My time is a time of *divine absence* and *anger*; I think the Lord has cast me off; and can such a time be a time of love?”

ANSW. Yea, it may be a *time of love*, notwithstanding these apprehensions of thine: if in this case thou art endeavouring, through grace, to look to the temple of God, saying, with Jonah, chap. iii. 4. *I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again to thy holy temple.*—Art thou *out of the belly of hell crying to God*; and *against hope believing in hope*, looking and longing for the rising of the Sun of righteousness, and a reviving in the bondage?—And while he is absent and angry, can you say, *The desire of your soul is to his name*? A believer at his lowest, may be known by his hidden and holy desire.

QUEST. *When is the desire holy?*

ANSW. 1. When you desire to be *justified*, that you may be *sanctified*; or to be *pardoned*, that you may be *purified*. 2. When you desire to be *saved*, that God may be *glorified*; or to have *happiness*, that God may have *honour*.

Again.

Again, try the *time of love* by the REMARKABLENESS of that time. And here I would offer two things, for helping your trial. 1. The remarkable *parts*. 2. The remarkable *attendants* or *properties* of the time of love.

1st, Try the remarkable PARTS of it ; I mean, 1. The *commencement*, or morning of it. 2. The *progress*, or mid-day, of the time of love ; for it never has an evening.

1. One of the remarkable *parts* of it is the *commencement* thereof ; preparatively, by the law ; effectively, by the gospel.

(1.) *Preparatively*, by the law ; giving a view of sin, and the wrath of God for sin ; for people never value the revelation of the love of God in the gospel, unless they have got a revelation of the wrath of God in the law : has ever *the commandment come* ? Was you ever brought to the foot of Sinai, and there got you a discovery of your sin and guilt, and of the wrath of God you deserve, making you tremble, and fear hell and damnation, saying, *Oh ! what shall I do ?* I cannot live, and I dare not die : *what shall I do to be saved ?* Have you come under the spirit of bondage and conviction ?

(2.) *Effectively*, by the gospel ; the law breaks the hard heart, but the gospel melts it. A stone duly broken, may be still a hard stone : but the gospel melts, the Sun of righteousness dissolves, and that partly, by the *revelation* of mercy to the sinful, guilty creature ; partly, by the particular *offer* of mercy ; here is mercy for you, a Christ for you, salvation for you, that deserved damnation ; O this melts ! And partly, by the *Spirit* of faith, given to fall in with the gospel, and receive Christ for *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*, and to inlist with Jesus Christ.—Then the *time of love* is commenced in the soul.

2. The other remarkable *part* of the *time of love*, is the *progress* thereof. The time of love is continued, and the design of love carried on more and more. And that,

(1.) By

(1.) By *teaching* ordinances ; as *faith comes by hearing* ; so the *increase* of faith by hearing more and more.

(2.) By *sealing* ordinances, and solemn occasions ; they see his *power and glory in the sanctuary* ; get *here a little and there a little*. And,

(3.) By *crosses and judgments* ; for, *By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged ; and this is the fruit of all, to take away sin*. *It was good for me that I was afflicted, for now I have learned thy law*.

(4.) By *mercies* outward and inward ; they are brought to *fear the Lord and his goodness* ; get new discoveries of his glory from time to time ; new communications of his grace, new restorations after decays ; *He restoreth my soul* ; and new conversions, as it is said to Peter, *When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren* ; and David, *Restore to me the joy of thy salvation ; then will I teach transgressors thy way*. They get new excitations and upstirrings ; new drawings, new quickenings, new gales of the Spirit. By these means the time of love is continued, even to the believer's sense now and then ; and the design of love carried on.—This is the *progress* thereof.

2dly, Try the *time of love* by the remarkable *attendants* and *properties* thereof.

(1.) Try it by the remarkable ATTENDANTS of it. I only mention two of them.

1. It is attended with remarkable *power*, Psal cx. 3. The *time of love* is called a *day of power* ; but how can this power be remarked ? Why, how do we remark the power of God in the works of creation, but by the effects thereof in the visible heavens, sun, moon, and stars ? so, how do we remark the power of God in the work of grace, but by this effect thereof, *our being made willing* ? The invisible power of God may be known by this effect.—But many say, they are willing, who are not truly so.

QUEST. *When is one made truly willing ?*

ANSW. There are four properties of true willingness.

(1.) It is a *pleasant* willingness, not constrained by terror or dread only ; but made freely willing, plea-

fantly willing. And this pleasant willingness hath two things in it, joy and generosity. It has *joy* in it; the man is glad to *sell all, that he may buy the pearl*. It has *generosity* in it; he would give a world for Christ; nay, a thousand worlds for him, had he them at his command.

(2.) It is a *present* willingness; the man goes in presently to the call, according to that, *Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation*. Many are content of Christ for the future, and they delay till some other time; but they are not for Christ's being a present portion: it is otherwise with such who are made willing.

(3.) It is a *peremptory* willingness: the soul says, O! I *must* have Christ; I cannot want him; I cannot live without him; I cannot die without him; I perish without him: give me Christ, or else I die.

(4.) It is an *universal* willingness; the soul is made willing to have Christ for sanctification, as well as righteousness; to be saved from sin, as well as from wrath; to have Christ and his cross, as well as Christ and his crown.

2. It is attended with remarkable *light* and *knowledge*, 2 Corinth. iv. 6. Try then your time of love by its being a time of light, and saving knowledge.—And this knowledge is remarkable for these four properties.

(1.) It is a *down casting* knowledge and light; *The loftiness of man is brought low, and the Lord alone exalted*, Isaiah ii. 11. Other knowledge and learning puffeth up; the more a man has of it, he is the more proud: but this knowledge casts him down to the dust, down to the ground; it casts down self, and self-righteousness, self-wisdom, self-love, and self-seeking.

(2.) It is an *up-lifting* knowledge; it exalts Christ in the heart, and lifts up the heart in the ways of the Lord, in respect of satisfaction; it brings in satisfaction to the heart and conscience: this water being given, the man *thirsts no more*, in respect of absolute want,

want, John iv. 14.—Nothing satisfies him but this knowledge of Christ ; or, rather this Christ made known.

(3.) It is a *singular* knowledge ; singular in respect of the object, author, and subject.—The *object* is a God in Christ ; whatever men know, if they know not God, in Christ, they are miserable ; though they had all scriptural knowledge, if they want the knowledge of Christ, *It may be said of them, they know nothing as they ought to know.* In paradise, there were many trees, and every one good ; but only *one tree of life* : in the scriptures, many truths, and all good ; but there is only one tree of life there ; and we perish, if we eat not that.—The *Author* of this knowledge is God ; *Flesh and blood has not revealed these things to thee, but my Father who is in heaven.*—The *subjects* are ordinarily poor *babes*, who have neither wisdom nor prudence, in respect of others in the world ; *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes*, Mat. xi. 25. Some are capable of this knowledge of Christ, that are not capable of other learning.—A wooden candlestick can hold a candle as well as a silver one ; so are these capable of the knowledge of Christ, that are destitute of outward ornaments and literature.

(4.) It is a *warming* and *working* light and knowledge. We know so much of God and Christ, as we are affected, touched, and wrought upon. It is said, Jer. ii. 8. *They that handle the law, know not God.*—Some may handle the law, and yet not know God ; they may handle the gospel, and yet not know Christ, by his special, singular, and saving knowledge : they may have a vast deal of head knowledge ; but a spark in the heart is worth a torch in the brain. The knowledge of Christ feeds all graces. It feeds *faith* : *They that know his name will put their trust in him.* It feeds *repentance* ; *They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn.* It feeds *love* ; they only who know him to be *altogether lovely, do truly love him.* It feeds *all grace* ; strengthening all grace.—Examine this

knowledge; and be sure you find the difference between it and the *form of knowledge*, which never warms the heart, or works any change in you: it is but like the sun painted upon a board for a sign; you call it a sun, but it has no sun-light, no sun-influence, no sun-warmth; so you may call that the knowledge of Christ, which hypocrites and profane graceless men may have; you may call it knowledge, but it is but a *form*, a shadow, a picture: there is nothing of the light, heat, and influence that will take place when you come to the true light.—Examine yourself by these things.

[2.] There are some remarkable PROPERTIES of the *time of love*, by which you may try.

1. It is a time of remarkable *joy* and *sorrow*; sorrowing for sin, and yet rejoicing in the Lord: *They shall come with weeping; and with supplications I will lead them*; or with FAVOUR, Jer. xxxi. 9. He leads them with weeping, and with singing; weeping, for their sins; and singing, for his favours. The *time of love* is called, Song ii. 11. *a time of the singing of birds, and the voice of the turtle*; which, applied to the believer, is his mournful notes. It is remarkable, that the book of Lamentations is all poetical: every chapter, except the third, has twenty-two verses; and every verse begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet; the first verse with the first letter, *Aleph*; the second verse, with the second letter, *Beth*; and so on to the close: and the third chapter has sixty-six verses, and every three verses begins with a letter thereof, three times over; the first three verses begins with the first letter, three times over; the second three verses, beginning with the second letter, three times over, and so on. What is the meaning of all this, but to show, that a time of mourning and lamentation may be to the Lord's people a time of mirth and holy music? And ordinarily it is so: and when hath the believer more joy than when in a flood of tears before the Lord?

2. It is a time of *prayer*; and very remarkable for it.

QUEST. *What is there remarkable in the prayers of these, whose time is a time of love?*

ANSW. There are two remarkable outpourings, viz. the outpouring of the *Spirit*, mentioned, Zech. xii. 10.; and the outpouring of the *heart*, mentioned, Psalm lxii. 8. When these two concur, then it discovers a *time of love*. At other times prayer comes drop by drop, as water out of a still; but then it comes plentifully as water out of a fountain. See Isaiah. xxvi. 16.

3. It is a time of *praise*; the heart is filled with the *high praises of God*. And this heart exercise takes in both admiration and invitation: *admiration*; O wonder! says the soul, that ever God manifested his love to the like of me, *What am I, or my father's house?* *Invitation*, to all the creatures to help them to praise; *O let sun, moon, and stars praise him*. This seems to be the temper of the heavenly harpers in their hallelujahs, *Praise ye the Lord*; importing, that they cannot praise him; therefore let all the creation help us to praise; *Praise ye the Lord*.

4. It is a time of *love*, a loving time; for love manifested begets love; the love of God kindles love in us in the time of love: and it is remarkable in two things. The love that results from the manifesting of divine love, gives, *first* the HEART; and *secondly* the HAND to the Son of God.—The HEART; *My son, give me thy heart*. Many say they love Christ, and yet give their heart to the world, and to their lusts; but as Delilah said to Samson, Judg. xvi. 15. *How canst thou say, that thou lovest me, when thy heart is not toward me?* So, how can you say, that you love Christ, when your heart is not toward him, but given away to other lovers? If Christ be your treasure, your heart will be set upon him.—Again, the HAND is given to him, to serve and work for him: we read of the *labour of love*. As Jacob served for love to Rachel, so the love of Christ constrains to his service; *If ye love me, keep my commandments*. It is true, the believer's heart may frequently misgive him, and then he draws away his hand too; but this is not acted like a believer; this is his burden

burden and disease ; and he is never himself till his heart and hand be both given to the Son of God.— Try yourself by these things.

We shall now shut up our present exercise, with a short *address* to you whose *time*, either formerly has been, or at present is a *time of love*. And our *advice* to you is, *O render unto the Lord, love for love*. And to induce you hereunto.

1. Consider, how *absolutely free, unmerited, and undeserved* his love was to you. There was nothing that could induce him to love you : every thing about you was wretchedness and misery, as we endeavoured to shew in tracing the connexion where our text lies. You was *lying in your blood, no eye to pity you* : and yet, in these deplorable circumstances, in his passing by, *Behold, your time was a time of love*. It was said of Mary, that she *loved much, because much was forgiven her*. Well, see that you love the Lord more than ever, because much iniquity hath been forgiven you, and much love conferred upon you. *Thy time was a time of love*.

2. Consider, in order to persuade you to render him *love for love*, that he was *before-hand* in his love towards you : his love prevented yours : and if it had not been so, your *time* could never have been a *time of love*.— Therefore, says the apostle, *We love him, because he first loved us*, 1 John iv. 19. Let the priority of his love to you, influence you to love him. *Behold, thy time was a time of love !*

3. Consider, what an *agreeable and comfortable time* your *time of love was*, when he brought you into the *banqueting house*, and displayed his *banner of love over you*. When you was enjoying these love-calls, love-visits, love-tokens, love-looks, and feasting upon the loving-kindness of God ; how was your soul ravished with his love ! Were you not made to cry out, *O the height, the breadth, the depth, and the length of the love of God !* Should not this then be a powerful motive to engage you to render him *love for love* ? And, is it not the best way to have his love-interviews continued with

with you? *O love the Lord, all ye his saints. Keep yourselves in the love of God.*—We might adduce many other considerations to persuade you to this, but we defer them at present; we may, perhaps, have an opportunity afterwards.



S E R M O N XCIV.

EZEK. xvi. 8.

Now, when I passed by thee and looked upon thee; behold, thy time was a time of love.

[The fifth Sermon on this Text.]

THERE are two words that should take up most of our thoughts and cares, namely, **TIME** and **ETERNITY**; *time*, because it will soon be at an end; and *eternity*, because it will never come to an end. The candle of time is fast burning, and if we play the fool, and be idle about eternal work, till the candle be burnt out, we will have ourselves to thank, if we go to bed in the dark; I mean, if we go to death and eternity, under the dark cloud of God's wrath, we cannot expect, unless we are madly deceiving ourselves, an eternity of happiness in the other world, if we are strangers to a time of love in this world: for, whom God loved, with an everlasting love from eternity, he draws them with loving-kindness in time, that he may crown them with loving-kindness to eternity. His everlasting love, in point of manifestation, hath its beginning in time, upon all the objects thereof; and these in whom it has no beginning in time will be the objects and vassals of wrath for ever. It is therefore a matter of the highest moment to know what takes place in time now; and if your time be *a time of love*.

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We have not only finished the doctrinal part of this subject ; but also insisted at considerable length, on the application, in the prosecution of several uses. It now remains that we conclude the subject with an use of *exhortation*. And our exhortation shall be tendered to two sorts of persons. 1. To these whose time NEVER was a *time of love*. 2. To these whose time HAS BEEN such a *time of love* as I have spoken of.

First, We tender our exhortation, to you whose time NEVER was a *time of love* ; I mean, you, who notwithstanding of your living under a loving dispensation of divine grace, by the gospel, yet have never seen or believed, the love and grace of God in Christ, so far as to draw out your heart-love to Christ. I would say to you,

1st, O consider what a *miserable state* you are in, and like to be into, to all eternity. In *time* you are miserable ; for, you are empty of all good, and full of all evil.—How *empty are you of all good*, while you are without Christ, and love to him, having nothing of the love of Christ ? you have no good in you ? you would think it a bad house to dwell in where there is neither meat, nor drink, nor clothes : but a worse house is your heart, while you have neither God, nor Christ, nor the Spirit.—How *full are you of evil*, while destitute of the love of Christ ? Full of enmity against God, full of sin, full of hell, full of the devil, full of the wrath of God, it *abideth upon you* ; and you are exposed to the utmost measure of it. You are miserable through all eternity, if you live and die in that state ; *If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be ANATHEMA MARAN-ATHA* ; [that is, *accursed until Christ come*,] 1 Cor. xvi. 22. Let him come under the sentence of the *greater excommunication*, of being for ever banished from the presence of God.

2dly, Consider how it comes about, that your love goes not out *after Christ*, when you live in a time where-in his love and loveliness are manifested. Surely, it must be from some desperate enmity. Have you not heard of his fame ? Is there any thing in all the world, challenges your love so much ? If you have heard and forgotten,

gotten, I will just now lay before you so much of the loveliness of Christ as may for ever render you inexcusable, if you henceforth fall not in love with him above all things else. Consider what he is in *himself*, what he is to *God*, what he is to you, *sinner*.

[1.] Consider what he is in *himself*. Is he not *altogether lovely*, considered either in his natures or person?

1. View him in his *natures*, divine and human.—In his *divine* nature, he is God's equal; *Who thinks it no robbery to be equal with God*; he is the *true God*, and *eternal life*; and has in him *all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*, that is, personally; *The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand*.—In his *human* nature: view his human body and soul. His human *body* now glorified in heaven, what a glorious body is it? The apostle speaks of the glory of bodies terrestrial and celestial; how much more glorious are celestial above terrestrial? And, how glorious above all celestial bodies is that of the Lord Jesus Christ! When Paul, at his conversion, got a view of it in a vision, it exceeded the sky in its meridian brightness. His human *soul*, how much more lovely is that? By how much the soul is beyond the body, by so much the soul is more glorious than the body. All the excellent qualities that ever adorned a soul are in him to perfection: and besides these, a supereminent unction of the Holy Ghost, the *Spirit above measure*, whereby he is immensely full of grace and truth.—He is thus the most amiable object, viewed in both his natures, human and divine distinctly. But beside this,

2. View him in the *union* of both these natures, as different, as finite and infinite, in one person: this brings God down to man as near as he can come, and raises man up to God as high as he can ascend. What a terror might unvailed Deity be to guilty sinners, were it not allayed with the vail of humanity? But, O! how fit a Mediator is he, being IMMANUEL, *God-man*? Thus he has a divine fulness and sufficiency to save us, together with a human meekness and congruity for applying it in a manner most suitable and pro-

per to our condition. Now, may not that question be for ever silenced with contempt, *What is the Christian's Beloved more than another's beloved, that he should be so mightily extolled? Is there one in the world so lovely and glorious? Is he not white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand?*

[2.] Consider what he is to God; particularly in these two respects.

1. Is he not God's *darling*? Has not the Father testified his love to Christ above all things else? Isaiah xlii. 1. *Behold my Servant, whom I uphold; mine Elect, in whom my soul delighteth.* Mark i. 11. *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* What honour consequently has he put upon him, in *raising him from the dead, and setting him at his own right-hand, and giving him a name above every name, committing all judgment, yea all things* into his hand. He is the Son of his love. We are then to love Christ for his own sake and his Father's sake: and ought we not to love him as the Father's favourite? Is it not a sufficient incentive to our love, that, beside his own personal amiable qualities, he is so much the object of the Father's love.

2. Is he not the Father's *representative*? God's greatest representative, in whom he displays all his perfections? 2 Cor. vi. 6. John xiv. 9. John i. 18. The representations of the divine glory in Christ exceeds all other representations in these particulars.

(1.) It is the *brightest*: the glory of God shines nowhere so brightly as in his infinitely fair face, who is therefore called the *brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image*, [or, REPRESENTATION] *of his person*, Heb. i. 3.

(2.) It is the *fullest*: the representation of God's glory, in the work of creation and providence, set forth, in a most illustrious manner, *some* of his perfections; but here *all* his glory shines with inconceivable brightness; all his attributes, even his *mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other.* Here they all shine with a peculiar lustre, and harmoniously conspire and centre,

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(3.) It is the most *intimate* and *propitious* : how could God reveal himself more *nearly*, than through the flesh of his Son? How more *graciously*, than by giving him to us, and for us? How more *kindly* could he represent his infinite justice and holiness, than as vindicated, satisfied, and glorified in Christ, by whom *grace reigns, through righteousness unto eternal life*.

(4.) It is the most *safe* representation of the divine glory, and secure from being perverted to an undue exaltation of the medium : for, the glory of God, represented by the heavens, has been abused to idolatry, men worshipping the means by which God manifests himself : but here there is a safe representation ; the mean and end meet in one : we cannot put too much honour upon Christ ; *He that honours him honours the Father*.

(5.) It is the most *mysterious* : here is the *wisdom of God in a mystery* ; the *manifold wisdom of God* : such a large compass, both in contrivance and execution, that none can penetrate into the depth.

(6.) It is the most *durable* and *permanent* : see Isa. li. 6. *The earth shall wax old as a garment ; but my salvation, through Christ, shall be for ever ; and my righteousness shall not be abolished*. God will never cease to manifest his glory through Christ : though there may be different ways of that manifestation, yet it will be to eternity ; Revel xxi. 23. *The Lord God, and the Lamb, is the light of the place*. Rev. xxii. 3. *The throne of God is the throne of the Lamb ; and his throne is for ever and ever*.

Now, consider what a sacred and precious thing the divine glory is above all other concerns ; and that a proportionable love and esteem is due to things according to the impressions of God upon them, and their reference to God's glory. Doth not Christ then challenge our highest love and esteem on this account, besides what he merits from us by his original intrinsic excellency.

[3.] Consider, what he is to us, or what relation he stands in to sinners ; and what he has done, or is doing, by virtue of that relation.

1. What relation he stands in to us, sinners, as a Saviour of God's appointing and anointing ; *We testify that God sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world,* 1 John iv. 14. He is a Saviour of sinners by *office* ; and should not sinners love their Saviour, and employ him ? Should we not love him with a love of desire, to close with him as our Saviour ; and then with a love of delight in him ? The general relation to us arising from his partaking of the same nature, is the foundation of a particular relation, and should be improved to the nearest relation of being mystically one.

2. What he *has done* and is *doing*. He came from heaven to earth to *seek* and to *save lost sinners* ; he made himself in all things *like unto us, sin only excepted* ; excepted as to the *inhesion* of it, which was absolutely remote from him : but not excepted as to the *imputation* of it ; for, *He bore our sins in his own body*, and submitted to have the *iniquities of us all laid upon him*, that he, as our Surety, might become accountable and answerable for them : and as the *Lamb of God sacrificed for us*, might take them away : finding us obliged to the *perfect obedience* the law required, but utterly unable to perform it, and so cut off from the remotest possibility of ever obtaining that life it was ordained to convey : he yielded in our place, an obedience to it absolutely perfect, and meritorious of eternal life, and gives this his righteousness to us, to become our title to heaven and eternal happiness : finding us pressed down under an *immense debt* to divine justice, and the penalty of the law, he took it on himself, paid it off, and discharges us by suffering for us ; thus he is the *end of the law*, and perfection of it, *for righteousness*, which we could never attain ourselves, but do now in him, the end and determination of its penal sanction : finding us in prison, bound with the fetters of our own iniquities, held in the cords of sin and misery, and reserved to the day of wrath and vengeance, he comes and visits us in our prison, and is content to be kept there for a time, in our room, till he should satisfy for our crimes, that we might be set at liberty : finding us
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under the *curse*, he is made a *curse* for us, that we might be redeemed from it ; finding us *doomed* to death, he *died* for us, that we might live : finding us lying under the edge of the *flaming sword* of vindictive justice, he put his own neck upon the block, and made his *soul* an offering for sin : finding a cup of heavy *wrath* and *indignation* prepared for us, he took it out of our hands, into his own, and drank it off, in our stead, that we might not have the least drop to our own share, but in lieu of it a cup of salvation for us to drink.

Was there ever love like Christ's, which such floods of tribulation could not quench or drown ! Though he was God, yet he became man ; yea, *His visage was more marred than any man, and his form more than the sons of men*, Isa. lii. 14. So that he was so far from appearing like a God, that he scarce looked like a man, but rather as a *worm*, Psalm xxii. 7. A worm trampled on by all ; a *reproach* of men, and *despised* of the people. Why all this, but that his love might shine the brighter through the dark shades that eclipsed his glory ? The more he lessened his person, the higher he raised his love, which appeared in all his fulness, while the other disappeared, as it were, for a season, and seemed to fade away. Thus he is amiable in his *poverty* ; for, *He was made poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich* : amiable in his *stripes*, whereby we are healed : amiable in all the amazing instances of *self-abasement*, providing for the greatest happiness to us, at the greatest expence to himself.

Ought he not to be loved, who thus has loved us unto death ? Who must be loved if not he ? And how sweetly may the love of a believer entertain itself at the very cross of Christ, which is a tree of life ; of life to us, though it was a tree of death to him ; a tree of blessedness to us, though a tree of bitterness to him ? We may gaze at the cross, and Christ hanging upon it, and have loving, ravishing prospects here, without the least partaking of the distress and bitter anguish of spirit Christ endured upon it ; for the cross of Christ being the greatest proof and pledge of his love, ought to be the joy, crown, and glory of every beholder ;

der; and viewed, not with a sad, heavy, and fearful, but with a glad, chearful, and joyful heart; at which we are to dry up every tear of heart-breaking grief, and vent none but tears of joy, mixt only with these of sweet relenting sorrow; mourning over sin, which by no means marrs, but friendly accords with this joy. We may sit under the shadow of his cross with great delight, with a rejoicing heart, and find all the fruits of it, being fruits of love, grace, favour, and happiness inexpressibly sweet to our taste. Here the horror of his cursed, painful, and shameful death can by no means damp the joy and satisfaction; *Weep not for me*, said Christ. Why? his sufferings were voluntarily necessary, designed for an happy issue; and it was not possible he could be swallowed up, or consumed by them; and they are now long since past and gone, as to the smart he felt below, though abiding still in their virtue, use, and excellent fruits, and are now so many trophies of honour; beauties instead of blemishes, and highest matter of glory and triumph: hence he appears in heaven with the marks of his bleeding wounds, *A Lamb as it had been slain in the midst of the throne*. The shame and pain of his cross redounds to him for an ensign of honour and eternal glory; a perpetual memorial of his love, merit, and victory.

3. What is he *still doing*? Still pursuing the *same kind design*, though in a *new manner*. As his love was proved here by *poverty and tribulation*, it is now proved by a *fulnes of glory and power*: his love was here in *labour and distress* for us; now it is *enthroned and triumphing*, yet still for us also. He remembers us so as to think himself imperfect and incomplete, and as only half glorified till we come to be glorified together with him. As he laid down one life for us on earth, so he employs another for our use in heaven; living there to intercede in virtue of the obligation he made, Heb. vii. 25.: living there to send down his Spirit, as a Spirit of wisdom and revelation, of grace, supplication, sanctification, and consolation: and to lead, guide, direct, begin, and carry on his good work; make application of his redemption; living to execute his offices

fices fully, which he happily began on earth ; and to perform his promises, that are *Tea and Amen in him*.—Is there no loveliness here ? Is this love and loveliness of Christ discovered to you, and yet no *time of love* with you ? No love of desire after him wrought in you ? How inexcusable art thou, and wilt thou be, that loves vanity instead of him !

Secondly, We next direct our exhortation in a word to these whose time HAS BEEN a *time of love*. And these are of two sorts ; either such as *doubt* if their time has been a time of love, or such as are *assured* their time has been a time of love.

1st, Such as DOUBT of it, and yet their time has really been a time of love. These doubters are of two sorts : some are waking and mourning doubters ; others are sleeping and slumbering doubters.

[1.] Some are *waking* and *mourning* in their doubts, and apprehensive that they NEVER HAD a *time of love*. “ Alas ! say such, many a sermon and sacrament have I attended ; but, to this day, I never met with a time of love : wo is me that I cannot get a discovery of the glory and loveliness of Christ, nor my heart engaged to love him !” If this be thy case and exercise, mourning and crying, O for a time of love ! There are two scriptures I would direct you to for relief.

1. If you are *mourning* and in *heaviness* because you reckon your time has not been a time of love, or of power, read Isa. lxi. 1, 2, 3. *He is anointed to give these that mourn in Zion, beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise, for the spirit of heaviness.*

2. If you are *crying* for a time of love, read Isaiah xxx. 18, 19. *He is a God of judgment ; and blessed are all these that wait for him. He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry ; when he shall hear it, he will answer thee.* He will turn at a cry, as that word need signifies, Heb. iv. 16. *Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of NEED.* Pressing need, that makes you cry :
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he turns, as it were, at the cry, according to the promise here, *He will be very gracious to thee at the voice of thy cry.* Therefore wait patiently, hopefully, and carefully for him, who has either begun, or is beginning the good work.

[2.] Some are *sleeping and slumbering* doubters, that HAVE HAD a *time of love*, but now it is out of sight, by reason of their backsliding, and leaving their first love. To you I would say,

1. O remember whence thou hast fallen, and repent, and do thy first works ! Consider what answer you will have to these questions: *What INIQUITY have you found in him, that you have gone far from him ?* Have you seen any thing in Christ to alienate your affections from him ? Was he ever worse than his word ? Or, is there any uncomeliness in his way ?—What *comeliness* have you seen in other lovers ? Have you found any other object like him ? Is there any amongst the creatures that can do for you what he has done ? Can the world give you that which he has to give you ? Do you find rest and satisfaction to your heart and conscience elsewhere ? What *sweet days* had you once when your heart went out after him ? Could you not then have said, *My Beloved is mine, and his desire is towards me, and the desire of my soul is towards him,* when he brought you to the banquetting-house, and displayed his banner of love over you, making you to drink of the spiced wines ? May not a reflection upon these sweet days you had, when his candle shined upon you, break your heart, that now you are set to the back of the door, and say, *O that it were with me as in months past ?*—What *sad days* have you had since you departed from him, and was shut out of doors, and had a screen drawn between him and you ? What a *sad change* is there when you want that sweet communion with him that once you had ? O then ! remember whence you have fallen.

2. Return to him, saying, *I will go and return to my first husband.*—Return ye backsliding children, though you have played the harlot with many lovers, for I am married unto you, saith the Lord. I hate putting away.

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I am God, and change not ; therefore you are not consumed. Return for he stands ready to heal your backslidings.

To both sorts, whether you be waking or sleeping Christians, to whom a time of love is dubious, I would exhort you to hear his *loving cries* after you, and let it be followed with your cries after him.

(1.) Hear HIS loving cries after you.—One cry he sends after you, is that of the angels, Luke ii. 10. *Behold ! I bring you good tidings of great joy ; for to you is born a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. To you a child is born, to you a son is given.*—Another cry after you is that, Rev. iii. 20. *Behold ! I stand at the door, and knock ; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in, and sup with him, and he with me.* He is seeking to sup with you, to have communion with you, and you with him. I am knocking at the door of your understandings, at the door of your wills, at the door of your hearts and affections : do you not hear me knocking ?—Another call is that, Song v. 2. *Open to me, my sister, my spouse, my love, my dove ; for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.* I have suffered the midnight-shower and storm of divine wrath for you, it fell on my head ; I have suffered for you, and now I am here ready to apply the blessing of my blood ; *open to me* : I own you for my love, my dove, and my undefiled, having no spot but what my grace shall cover.—Another cry is that, Song iii. 11. *Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him.* He is holding forth the sceptre ; to thee to go forth by faith and take a view of him till your heart be fully satisfied ? O come, taste and see ; come and see him ; see what he has done for you, what he is doing for you, and what he will do for you.—Another cry is that, John i. 29. *Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world !* Are your sins great and many, yet, O let no sin keep you away ! *The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin* : there is infinite virtue in that blood for making you perfectly clean.—Another cry is that, Matt. xxii. 4. *All things are ready, come to*

the marriage. O was you never married to the Son of God? Come, and be the *bride the Lamb's wife*; give your heart and hand to him, and take hold of him for your Head, Husband, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Or, have you have been already married to Christ? O come and get confirmation; get a new token of his love; come to the *marriage supper of the Lamb*.—Another cry is, in case you think it is not a free wedding, 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.*—The poorer you are the welcomer to the market: no money here is good price: here is grace and glory freely; *Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely.*—But, are you yet sighing under the burden of sin and guilt? Then another cry is, Matthew xi. 28. *Come to me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest to your souls: come, and get rest to your minds in him, who, as a Prophet, is the wisdom of God; come, and get rest to your conscience in him, who, as a Priest, is the righteousness of God; come, and get rest to your hearts in him, who, as a King, is the power of God, and has all the riches of divine fulness in him.*—Another cry that he is sending after you is, Jer. iii. 14, 22. *Return, O backsliding children; for I am married unto you, and I will heal your backslidings.* As if he had said, “However grievously you have revolted and rebelled from the womb “unto this moment, all by-gones shall be by-gones; “only henceforth let it be a bargain between you and “me, an everlasting bargain never to be forgotten.”—Another cry after you is, Song ii. 14. *O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rocks, and in the secret places of the stairs, let me hear thy voice, let me see thy countenance; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.* “Do not hide your face from me for shame, “might he say; do not blush to look to me, nor afraid to speak to me; come boldly to my throne of “grace, for I delight to hear thy voice of prayer and “praise, though it be but a mourning like a dove; “and

“and I delight to I see you coming boldly and confidently, depending upon me : you need not fear to face me, for I am your kindly suitor ; come, trembling dove, and flee in to my bosom.”——Hear HIS loving cries after you.

(2.) Let it be followed with an echo from *you*, even with a *loud cry* after *him*. I will tell you some of the cries you may send after him.—One is, Psalm xxv. 11. *O Lord, for thy name's sake, pardon mine iniquity ; for it is great.* Let not your great sin hinder your crying after him, but be made an argument, inducing you to cry after him more ardently and fervently.—Another cry is, Psalm cxliv. 5. *O bow thy heavens, O Lord, and come down ; touch the mountains, and they shall melt.* Mountains are in the way, but let them *skip like lambs*, and the *little hills like rams*, at the presence of the Lord.—Another cry you may send after him is, Song i. 4. *Draw me, we will run after thee.* “Put forth thy drawing power ; for I cannot come, I cannot move, I cannot stir without thee ; but I promise to run if thou draw.”—Another cry you may send after him is that of blind Bartimeus, Mark x. 51. *Lord, that I may receive my sight.* “O enlighten my eyes, that I may know the mysteries of the gospel, that I may see the glory, grace, and love of Christ.”—Another cry is, Psalm xc. 13, 14. *Return, O Lord, how long ? O satisfy us early with thy mercy, that we may be glad and rejoice all our days :* “Thou hast an infinite ocean of mercy, O let the waves of the ocean reach my soul ! pardoning mercy, purifying mercy.”—Another cry is, Song ii. 17. *Till the day break, and the shadows flee away ; turn, my Beloved, and be thou like a roe, or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.*—“I want ability to mount up the hills of sin, guilt, and difficulty between thee and me ; but it is the glory of the roe to ascend the rocks and mountains : O get glory this way !”—Another cry is, Song iv. 16. *Awake, O north-wind, come thou south, blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain that they may live.* “O send the promised Spirit like

“water upon the thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground.”
 —Another cry you should give after him, that is thus crying on you, is, Jer. iii. 22. *Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God; and with the poor man in the gospel, Lord, I believe; help my unbelief. O send forth thy light and thy truth to lead me.*

2dly, We come next to address ourselves to these who are more ASSURED their time has been a *time of love*. I offer these four advices following.

[1.] Do not *deny* or *disown* the time of love; beware of questioning if ever such a time went over you. —Do not deny it to your *fellow Christians*, that you may have it to say, *Come hither all ye that fear the Lord, and I will tell you what he has done to my soul.* —Do not deny it to God, that you may have it to say, *O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord.* And that you may maintain your confidence before him.

[2.] In *all time coming* remember the *time of love*; for it may be very serviceable to you. —In the time of *temptation*, remember the *time of love*; wherein God becomes forth-coming, that, *with the temptation, he would give a way of escape.* —In the time of *tribulation*, remember the *time of love*; when it was secured that he would be with you in trouble. —In time of *desertion*, remember the *time of love*; wherein it was promised, *He would never leave you, nor forsake you.* —In time of *defection and backsliding*, remember the *time of love*; wherein it was secured, that he would *heal your backslidings, and love you freely, and restore your soul.* —In time of *want and poverty*, remember the *time of love*; when you was made to believe that your God should *supply all your needs, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus.* —In the time of *reproach* for his sake, remember the *time of love*; wherein it was insured, that, *If you be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of God, and of glory resteth upon you.* —In time of *man's wrath, rage, and persecuting fury*, remember the *time of love*; wherein it was secured, that *the wrath of man should praise him, and that the remainder of his wrath he would restrain.* —In the time of *di-*
vine

wine wrath, heavy judgments, and gloomy terrible dispensations, remember the *time of love* ; wherein it was promised, that, though in a little wrath he should hide himself for a moment, yet with everlasting mercy he would gather thee. See Isa. liv. 7, 8.—In a time of sin and corruption prevailing, remember the *time of love* ; wherein you was made to say, *Though iniquities prevail ; yet, as for our transgressions thou wilt purge them away.*—In a time of sorrow and heaviness, remember the *time of love* ; and then you may be led to say, *Why art thou cast down, O my soul ? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him.*—In a time of danger remember the *time of love*, as did the apostle, 2 Cor. i. 10. *We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver ; in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us. He delivered me from the paw of the lion, and mouth of the bear, and will he not deliver from the hand of this uncircumcised Philistine ?*—In a time of diffidence and distrust, remember the *time of love*, as a notable means and motive to faith, Lam. iii. 21, 22, 23. *This I recal to mind, therefore have I hope : THIS, what is it he recal to mind ? even the time of love and mercy that follows : It is of the Lord's mercy we are not consumed, and because his compassions fail not : they are new every morning ; great is his faithfulness.*—In a time of darkness, remember the *time of love* ; and then you may say, *Though I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me ; The Lord my God will enlighten my darkness.*—In a time of deadness, remember the *time of love*, and say, *Quicken thou me, according to thy word.*—In a time of weakness, remember the *time of love*, and the words of love ; *My grace shall be sufficient for you, and my strength shall be perfected in your weakness.* In a time of death, remember the *time of love* ; and in the believing remembrance thereof, you may say, *Tho' I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil ; for thou art with me, and thy rod and staff they comfort me. O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ?*

[3.] Has ever your *time of need* been his *time of love*, then in all future times of need come *boldly to the throne of grace, that you may find grace to help in time of need* : for, the time of love, in times of need formerly, secures his loving help in all time of need to come : only observe these rules about *help in time of need*.

1. " That your expectation of things *not necessary* " or *absolutely needful*, may fail you." You may be in a delusion in your expectation of certain outgates you would have, and of sensible comforts at all times ; but you shall never be in a delusion in your expectation of needful help from the throne of grace ; for, the matchless God of Jeshurun *rides in heaven, for the help of his people, and in his excellency on the sky*, Deut. xxxiii. 26.

2. " That *needful help* and support comes from the *same throne* from which *sensible comforts* come." It is remarkable, you are called to come *boldly* to that throne, for these things you may be always sure to find there, namely, MERCY and GRACE *to help in time of need* ; you are not assured always of sensible comforts there ; be content of support promised in time of need ; and remember, it is no little mercy to get a little help ; that the same love may be read in the meanest, lowest measure of grace and mercy that is to be read in the greatest ; they come from the same fountain, the same throne of grace.

3. " That they that get this help may lay their account, notwithstanding, to be kept *weak and infirm*." Look not for such help in this world as shall make you no more poor and needy beggars at the throne of grace : help and assistance, you know, is for weak and infirm people. Look not for help that will make you better stored in yourselves than you were before ; you must be kept *poor and needy*, that the Lord may think upon you, as the Psalmist says, Psal. xl. 17. ; and as it is, Dan. xi. 34. you must be content to be *holpen with a little help*, and kept from crushing, though you be holden in the the dust : *Troubled on every side, yet not distressed ; perplexed, but not in despair ; persecuted, but not forsaken ; cast down, but not destroyed*, 2 Cor. iv. 8, 9. Lay your account, though you get help, that, as it finds you

weak,

weak, so it will keep you weak in yourselves, and yet do your turn.

4. "Help is given to them who have their *hand at a turn*." We do not speak of helping or assisting such as desire and endeavour to do nothing themselves ; so here, expect not help but in God's way, and about his hand, and his throne ; aiming at duty, though you are not able to go through it : when thy heart is overwhelmed, and yet thou art crying, when thou art sinking, it is in that posture needful help uses to be given, Psal. lxi. 1, 2.

5. "That help comes not, and is not to be expected, till a *time of need*, and *pressing* need ; such as puts you to cry under the pressure of the need ; as I said before, the word in the original signifies, to *turn at a cry*, as God promises to do, Isa. xxx. 19." People would be content of help if they could get it beside them, always at hand ; but, says the apostle, a time of need shall come, and help in a time of need ; *In due time you shall reap if you faint not*. This may be a cure to all anxiety about what shall happen hereafter, or what may be before us. We have no strength to grapple with such unforeseen difficulties ; why, but let us remember we are to be busy at the present work of the day, and leave the next day to God, who gives help in time of need : as Christ says in another case, Matth. vi. 34. *Take no thought for to-morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself ; sufficient for the day, is the evil thereof*. What have we to do with help till it be needed ? To what purpose is it to have Jordan running dry, till the priests feet be set in the water ? To what purpose is it to know wherewith we shall serve the Lord, till we come thither ? And then it shall be given in the hour it is needed, as Christ says, of *speaking to enemies*, much more in speaking to our best friend. This may assure us also that we cannot expect help till we cry, as David, *Out of the depths have I cried to thee*. We are many times in distress murmuring and not crying ; we need help, but are not seeking help : God is an observing God as well as a hearing God ; he would have us cry when he requires us.

6, "Though

6. "Though *secret support* may be given to them "that cry under their need, yet *satisfying help* may be "delayed for a time." And there are several causes of this delay ; some relative to ourselves, and some relative to the church, or the public.

(1.) Some causes relative to *ourselves*. The Lord will not always help when we are pressed under the need of help, that puts us to cry, until the trial comes to the *utmost extremity* ; Deut. xxxii. 26. *He will judge his people, and he will repent himself for his servants, when he sees that there is none shut up or left.* As long as we have any thing that looks like doing our own turn without him, he will ly by, Psal. xciv. 16. It is not till the Psalmist said, *My foot slippeth*, and I am just falling over, that needful help comes ; but then, *thy mercy, O Lord, held me up.* Thus with Abraham in the matter of offering up his son Isaac, Gen. xxii. 10, 11. The Lord is not seen in the mount, till the knife is at the throat of Isaac. This is the Lord's way not to come just when we are really pressed, and hard put to it ; as long as there is a step further for the difficulty to go, he may let the trial go on before he comes with help that we may be humbled under the pressures, under the guilt that drew them on ; and that we may be put in a capacity of esteeming it a great mercy when we are thus *helped with a little help.*

(2.) Relative to the *public*. The Lord suspends many a time, at least, the comfortable help of particular saints, till he bring up the public interest with it : and it is not unsuitable to see the children in distress while the mother is wearing a mourning weed. Desertions are not readily the less frequent among saints, that God covers himself in a cloud in his anger from Zion : but there is a blessed time of relief coming, as you may read, Psal. cii. 20, 21, 22. and ver. 16, 17. When the *Lord appears in his glory to build up Zion*, then he will *bear the prayer of the destitute*, and the *groaning of the prisoners*. As we use to say, when a thaw comes after a great frost, or rain after a great drought, it looses many prisoners : so when a shower of the divine influences

come

come from above upon the church, and an outpouring of the Spirit, then many prisoners shall be set at liberty, many bonds shall be loosed, many a cord broken, that is fettering the people of God : therefore, we are to wait the Lord's time of giving needful help, and be thankful for needful supports, though we yet want sensible comforts : needful waterings shall not be withholden in the mean time, unless we in our petted humour will not be content with support and help, nor will bless him for it, and so provoke God to let us feel our own weight, that we be humbled and learn to gather our comforts among the midst of our crosses, and our mercies among our miseries, and pleasures among our pressures.

[4.] Has your time been a *time of love*, of God's love to you ? Then, let *all your time* be a time of love to him. *O love the Lord all ye his saints*, and let his love *constrain* you to his service : and for this end, maintain a deep sense and impression of his love to you. —Mind how *antient* his love to you was, even prior to your being, from eternity ; on the mere foresight of your sin and misery, his eyes affected his heart, and provided a cure before you got the wound. —Remember how *free* and *generous* his love is ; how he loved you, not only when you was a stranger to him, a mean person, infinitely below him, a worthless person, having no good quality to recommend you, and indued with many odious qualities, but an enemy, a desperate rebel, mere grace only could draw out this love. —Recollect how *unchangeable* and *everlasting* it is, so as he will never cast you out of his affections, however deserving to be rejected ; *He is God, and changes not, therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed*. He is still overcoming evil with good ; as he enjoins us to do it, so he is always doing it himself. —Call to mind how *distinguishing* it is, not only when he passed by angels that sinned, but many of your fellow-creatures. —Remember how very *sympathizing* it is, causing him who suffered for you on earth to suffer with you in heaven ; for, *In all your afflictions, he is afflicted*. —Mind

how *manifold* it is : it is a love of *desire* after you ; he desires fellowship with you, and will never rest nor reckon himself a complete Christ, as to his mystical body, till you be with him together with the rest of his members mystical.—It is a love of *delight*, he takes pleasure in your company ; *O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, and in the secret places of the stairs, let me hear thy voice, let me see thy countenance ; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely. The Lord takes pleasure in his people.*—It is a love of *beneficence* always doing good ; and shall not love work love. O let your time be a time of love to him. You that expect an eternity of love, let it be evident to the world, that *your time is a time of love.*

SERMON

S E R M O N XCV.

SENSIBLE PRESENCE, SUDDEN ABSENCE;
or, the Believer's most comfortable Interviews, but
of short Duration *.

GENESIS XXXV. 13.

And God went up from him, in the place where he talked with him.

I HOPE some, at this occasion (however few they may be) have had some access to God, and fellowship with Christ Jesus; yet such are to remember, and consider that it needs not be thought strange, tho' they should sensibly enjoy him, and lose him in a moment, as Jacob here; *He went up from him, in the place where he talked with him.* What intercourse was between God and Jacob, you have an account of, from the 9th ver. *And God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came out of Padan-aram; and blessed him.* God met with him in this place, viz. BETHEL, and blessed him, and he appears again to him. Those to whom God has once manifested himself, may expect a new visit of him. At this time there are two notable effects of the appearance God made unto him.

1st, God confirms the name he had formerly given unto him, calling him ISRAEL. As God gives to all his people, to whom he savingly manifests him-

* This sermon was preached at Orwell, on Monday, August 5th, 1734. after the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper there.—In the first edition of this sermon, we are told, it was printed, not from the Author's manuscript, but from the short-hand notes of one who wrote it down in the time of the delivery. On this account, probably, it is neither so complete in itself, nor yet, perhaps, appears with such advantage as it would have done, had it been copied from the original.—This is the fifth impression.

self, a *new name* ; so he loves to call them by that new name.

2dly, He confirms the *promise* he had made unto him of his own name EL-SHADDAI, the *Almighty God* ; the God that, when he pleases, can give a being to his word, and will make his promise effectual in his own time and way.—There are two things God promises unto Jacob.

1. That he should be a *father of many nations*, and great kings ; and a nation and company of nations should be of him, and kings should come out of his loins.

2. That he should be the *possessor* of a good land, viz. the land of Canaan. These two things had a spiritual signification ; and we now, who live under the gospel-dispensation, if our eyes be open, may see the meaning of them, perhaps, better than Jacob could, under this typical representation : the *promised seed*, pointed at, was CHRIST himself, the Great King of Zion, who was to come of Jacob : and the *promised land* pointed at, was HEAVEN itself, the heavenly kingdom. The former was the foundation, and this the top-stone of the *building of mercy* * that we were hearing of. Here then is the promise that God makes unto him. God, when he savingly manifests himself to his people, he comes to them as a promising God in Christ Jesus.

But then, in the words of the text, you have an account how this intercourse is interrupted, and marred at present, *God went up from him, in the place where he talked with him*.—Where we may observe two things. 1. *How* he left him. And, 2. *Where* he left him.

1. *How* he left him, *God went up from him*. It was by some visible appearance, that had hovered over him, while God talked with him. God may go up from his people in sovereignty, when he does not go away from them in anger. However, we are carefully to

* Alluding to the action-sermon, preached on these words, Psalm lxxxix. 2. *Mercy shall be built up for ever*.

observe, that it is not *visible* appearances of God that now we are to expect, *God is a Spirit*, and invisible; and as we are to worship him spiritually, so we are to see and enjoy him spiritually.

2. Observe *where* he left him; it was *in the place where he talked with him*. The name of the place is BETHEL; and you see that Jacob here sets up a pillar, as a memorial of the communion he had with God there, and calls the name of the place BETHEL; he confirms the name formerly given to the place, when he had met with God there, he calls it BETHEL, *the house of God*: it was even here, in this very place, *the house of God*, that *he went up from him, where he talked with him*.

The doctrine, that I propose to speak a little unto, is the following.

DOCT. *That they who have had communion and converse with God, may miss him in the very spot where they enjoyed him.* God went up from him, in the very place where he talked with him.

Thus it was with the disciples at Emmaus, Luke xxiv. 31. their eyes was opened, so as they knew him, *And he vanished out of their sight*; or, as it is in the margin of some of your Bibles, *He ceased to be seen of them*; They enjoyed his presence, and yet instantly he ceased to be seen of them. Again, you may observe, the passage in the mount of transfiguration, where Peter says, unto Jesus, *Lord, it is good for us to be here*; and then it follows in the next verse, *While he yet spake, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them*, Matth. xvii. 4, 5. A cloud may quickly intervene between God and the soul that has communion and fellowship with him.

In handling this subject, I propose, as the Lord shall be pleased to assist, to observe the following method.

- I. To touch a little at the *communion* his people may have with him, which is here called a *talking with him*.
- II. Offer a few remarks concerning their *missing* and *finding* the Lord.
- III. Enquire in what *respects* they may miss him where they enjoyed him.
- IV. I would give some *reasons* of this dispensation.
- V. Make *application* of the whole.

I. As to the *first* of these, To speak a little of this *communion* that God's people may have with him, which is here called a *talking with him*; *God went up from him, in the very place where he talked with him*.

This communion and converse with God may import these five things.

1. It imports the *presence of God*, and his perfections round about them; for, *As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about them that fear him*, and so his perfections do surround and environ them. Indeed, we are to distinguish between *sensible* presence and *real* presence: God is always *really* present with his people; for he has said, *I will never leave thee nor forsake thee*; but he is not always *sensibly* present. He may be present at their hand, when they do not see him, as in the case of Mary, when she was talking with Christ, and yet asked where she might find him. We are to distinguish also between his *quickening* presence and his *comforting* presence: the Lord may be present with his people quickening them to duty, and yet they may want sensible comfort in duty. To this purpose says the spouse, *I sought him, but I found him not. I sought him*; there is his quickening presence exciting her to duty; *But I found him not*, I wanted his sensible comforting presence.

It imports *vicinity* and *nearness*; the Lord is graciously near to them; he is graciously near to all that *call upon him in truth, a present help*, especially in the *time of trouble*, as here he was to Jacob in his trouble.—
Again,

3. This converse^s they have with the Lord, not only imports vicinity and nearness, but *amity* and *friendship*, as says the prophet Amos, iii. 3. *Can two walk together except they be agreed?* So I may say, *Can two talk together unless they be agreed?* There is no sweet converse with God, but what imports agreement. It takes in, then, their friendship with him; their being reconciled to him in the blood of Jesus.

4. It imports *communion* with him, such as that, *Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ.* They have fellowship with God in Christ: fellowship with him in his *LIFE*; *Because I live, ye shall live also*: fellowship with him in his *LOVE*, while he *sheds abroad his love in their hearts.* Again,

5. It imports *communication*; and this communication, or God's talking with his people, it has many things in it.

(1.) There is therein, sometimes, a mutual *intimation* of love? the Lord sometimes intimates his love unto the soul, saying, *I have loved thee with an everlasting love*: the soul sometimes intimates its love to him again, *Thou that knowest all things, knowest that I love thee.*

(2.) It takes in sometimes a mutual *commendation* of one another; I say, mutual commendation; the Lord, when he is talking with them, he sometimes *commends* them forsooth, *Behold, thou art fair; thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee*: and indeed they cannot but blush, when he commends them after this manner. Again, they commend him, (as it well becomes them,) *My Beloved is white and ruddy, the chief among ten thousand; his mouth is most sweet; yea, he is altogether lovely, infinitely lovely.* Again,

(3.) This communication has in it, sometimes, mutual *counsels* imparted, their minds imparted.—The Lord imparts his mind to the soul, *The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant*: and the soul imparts its mind again to God, and pours out its heart unto him, telling him all his mind, that he cannot tell the world. Again,

(4.) This

(4.) This communication takes in the mutual *confidence* they express in one another. It is wonderful that the Lord has a kind confidence and trust he puts in them : there are some believers he will not trust, knowing what is in their hearts ; but there are others to whom he commits a trust, he commits his *name* and *truth* to them, Rev. ii. 13. knowing that, through his grace, they will be faithful. They put their trust in him : Lord, all my confidence is in thee ; I have no hope but in thyself : and they express their trust in him, as Job does, chapter xiii. 15. *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.* Again,

(5.) This communication, it takes in the mutual *care* they express to one another : O the wonderful care that Christ expresses of his people ! That is observed by the church, when she says, *His left hand is under my head, and his right-hand doth embrace me,* Song ii. 6. O the tender care of the Lord Jesus towards them ! And then they sometimes express a care with reference to him and his interest, and his concerns ; their great concern is, to have his honour and glory advanced in the world.

(6.) This communication takes in mutual *assurances* of love : he assures them of his love unto them, and relation unto them ; *I am thy God, I will be thy God.* Well, they acknowledge sometimes this relation, and therefore cry out, *My Lord, and my God* : and sometimes, when they are under the influence of the Spirit of God, the Spirit of adoption, they acknowledge their relation, crying out, *ABBA, Father.*

In a word, this communication sometimes takes in a mutual *dedication* of themselves to one another : the Lord gives himself unto them : he gives himself, he gives his Christ, he gives his Spirit, he gives his blessing unto them, and they surrender all that they have, and are, unto him : they give up themselves, their name, their children, their soul and body, and all their concerns unto him ; they put all into his hand. This is a part of their communication, their mutual talk with him.—So much shall suffice for a touch at this first head. I go on,

II. To the *second* thing proposed, viz. To offer a *remark* or two concerning the *finding* and *missing* the presence of God. O Sirs, what know we, or do we know any thing of that presence and fellowship with God, that I have been mentioning? That the Lord's people may have some further view of this matter, there are those few remarks I would offer, concerning their meeting with him, and their missing of him.

The *first* remark I offer is this, "That these who are acquainted with his coming, and going, they are the *seed of Jacob*, praying Jacob, to whom God has said, *They shall not seek him in vain.*"—And sometimes they have it to say, *I sought him, and I found him*; but many times they have it to say, *We sought him, but we missed him: we sought him, but we found him not.* There is a generation that seek the face of *Jacob's God*.

But, *secondly*, I would here remark, "That such an enjoyment of God's presence, as his people desire, and would be at, is *denied* them while they are in the world." And this he is pleased to do for many wise and good reasons: partly, to draw out their desires more after him; partly, to quicken their endeavours, in seeking after him; partly, to prove and humble them, and *to do them good in the latter end.*

But then, *thirdly*, another remark, I would offer is, "That the Lord's communicating himself unto his people, is in a way that is very *variable.*" He many times surprises them with his visits.—Sometimes he comes when they are in their worst case. He sometimes talks with them when they are napping, as it were; he takes them when they are dead, and *like beasts before him.*—Sometimes when they are in their worst frames; *For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him; I hid me and was wroth; and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart.* Well, saith the Lord, *I have seen his ways and will heal him; I will lead him also, and restore comforts to him, and to his mourners,* Isaiah lvii. 17, 18.—Sometimes he comes to them, when they are just at the giving over; *I said I am cast out of thy sight, said Jonah, yet will I look again*

towards thy holy temple, Jonah ii. 4.—Sometimes their ordinary attainments do exceed their communion-attainments ; and hence they have it many times to say, O that it were with me at a communion-table, as in such a time, and such a time.—The Lord's way is *variable*.

But again, in the *fourth* place, I would here remark, “ That the Lord's hiding himself, and the soul's “ missing of his presence, when either they are seeking after him, and are disappointed ; or, when they “ have found him, and do immediately miss him, I say, “ it is very *heavy* unto them.” Alas ! it is a great burden to them ! Usually, when they thus miss him, they are compassed with clouds of darkness. It may be they are in darkness about *duty*, not knowing what to do. Perhaps, they are in darkness about their *graces*, not knowing whether they are gold or counterfeits. It may happen, they are in the dark about the *promises*, not knowing whether they belong to them or not. It is possible, they are in darkness about their *experiences*, whether they be delusions or not.—They are oft-times filled with amazement, when they miss their Beloved. When their love is away, they think such a dispensation is contrary to his merciful nature ; they are apt to think sometimes, that it is contrary to his gracious promise, and that it is contrary to the experiences of his people ; and, perhaps, contrary to their own experiences ; and contrary to the hopes they have had.—They are, I say, in great *heaviness*, for ordinary, when they miss him.

But again, a *fifth* remark I offer here, is, “ That “ when the Lord has been long away from his people, “ and, at last, returns to them, readily the meeting is “ very *remarkable*.”—Their meeting with him then is readily remarkable for its *fulness* : it is like a great shower after a long drought ; or, they get the more full meal, that they have been long fasting ; and the longer they have wanted access, the access is the nearer.—Readily such a meeting is remarkable for the *sweetness* of it. O ! how sweet is it when the Lord's people meet with him, when he hath been long absent !

It is like the *lost piece of silver*, Luke xv. 8, 9. Here is a lost privilege I have found again ; I thought the Lord would never have returned to me again ; but now I have got him again.—Such a meeting is remarkable for the *melting quality* of it : it is like the meeting of two dear friends, that have been long asunder, that fall a weeping for joy in one another's arms. O the joy that a meeting between Christ and his people causes, after they have been long asunder.—It readily also is remarkable for the *power and efficacy* of it. It has a powerful and strong impression on them, when they meet with him, after he has been long away. It is a Bethel that they will not easily forget ; *I will remember thee*, says the Psalmist, *from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, and from the hill Mizar*, Psalm xlii. 6.

But again, in the *sixth* place, I would here also remark, “ That these meetings with the Lord are very *“ rare.”* They are not to be expected from the Lord often : they are feast-days ; and every day is not a feast-day. They must come down from the mount ; *We must live here by faith, not by sight.* The Lord's people, many times, cannot bear a full cup, far less carry with it for a long time.

But again, *seventhly*, I would here remark, “ That “ the Lord's coming and going, his peoples meeting “ with him, and their missing of him, are remarkable “ and discernable, according to the *degree* of his coming and going.” Sometimes in his coming unto them is more *sudden* and *surprising* ; and then they readily know his coming. Sometimes it is more *gradual*, and less discernable ; so it is also with his going. Sometimes he goes away more suddenly, and they miss him immediately ; and sometimes he goes away gradually, and then they may not so easily know that he is gone ; as it is said of Samson, *The Lord departed from him, and he wist it not.*

But then I would remark, in the *eight* and *last* place, “ That this dispensation of divine grace, his manifesting himself, and allowing his people access to him, “ and such communication with him, as it is a rare “ thing,

“thing, so it is a *great mystery*.” It is even a mystery to them who know it; for they know but *darkly*: *Now, we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face*. It is a hidden mystery to the most part of the professors: it is like the *holy of holies*, that none but the priests entered into; so none but these that are *kings and priests* unto their God know any thing of it.

Having offered these remarks concerning this his *coming*, and *going* from his people. I go on

III. To the *third* thing proposed, which was, To enquire in what *respects* they may miss him, where they enjoyed him; *God went up from him in the place where he talked with him*. On this head, there are these eight particulars I would shortly touch at.

1. They may miss him in the *duties* wherein they have enjoyed him. They may miss him in the *word* wherein they have enjoyed him to their sweet experience; *I will remember thee*, says the Psalmist, *from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, and from the hill Mizar*, Psalm xlii. 6. I will remember by-past experiences.—But it seems, for all that, he missed him there; for he says in the next verse, *Deep calleth unto deep, at the noise of thy water-spouts; all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me*.—They may miss him in the duty of *reading the scriptures*, wherein sometimes they have enjoyed him. It is sometimes the food of their souls; at other times it may be a sealed book to them.—They may miss him in the duty of *meditation*, where sometimes they have enjoyed him; *My meditation of him shall be sweet*, says the Psalmist, Psalm civ. 34. But again, they may have it to say, *I remembered God, and was troubled*.—They may miss him in the duty of *prayer*, wherein they have frequently enjoyed him, and got him in their arms; they may so miss him, as to be obliged to say, *Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? Wherefore hidest thou thyself from me?* But again,

2. They may not only miss him in the duties wherein they have found him, but they may miss him in the *frames*

frames wherein they have enjoyed him.—They may miss him sometimes even in a *mourning* frame, and may go *mourning without the sun*. Mary seeks him weeping and mourning, and she misses her Lord, though she was in that frame.—Again, they may miss him in a *melting* and a *loving* frame ; so it was with the church, when she says, *I sought him, whom my soul loveth ; but I found him not*.—They may miss him, even when in a *right lively* frame ; *I sought him*, (I was quickened to seek him) *but I found him not*.—They may miss that presence that sometimes they had, and that they would gladly be at. But again, in the *next* place,

3. They may miss him in the *best cases* wherein they have enjoyed him : they may miss him in that case they think to be best, and that case which is really best. They may miss him when they think they are best, *viz.* in a *joyful* case ; yet they may miss him, in regard of that measure and degree of presence they would be at. They may miss him in that case when it is really best with them. When is it best with them ? It is best when they are believing, and their heart is opening to the Son of God ; and yet in that case they may miss him ; the spouse says, Song v. 6. *I opened to my Beloved ; but my Beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone*. When they have much and sweet enjoyment of him, they may suddenly miss him, and when they are opening the door of their heart to him, he may disappear. But again, in the

4. Place, They may miss him not only in the best cases, wherein they have enjoyed him ; but they may miss him in the *worst cases*, wherein they have been prevented and surprized with the communications of his favour : for instance, they may miss him in *confused times*, when the enemies of the Lord are making a tumult, and when all things are seeming to run to disorder and confusion, though the Lord uses sometimes to refresh them in such circumstances, according to his word ; *There is a river*, says the psalmist, *the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God*, Psal. xlv. 4. I remember it is said, Psal. lxxxiii. 1. *Keep not thou silence, O God ; hold not thy peace and be not still, O God ; for lo, thine*

thine enemies make a tumult, and they that hate thee, have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones ; and at the same time it supposes, that the Lord is silent, was not taking notice as he used to do, and as they expected he would.—Again, they may miss him in the time of *persecution*, when he uses to stand by his people, as Paul says, *The Lord stood by me ;* even in such a time they may miss his presence, as the church says, Song v. 7. *The watchmen, that went about the city, found me, they smote me, they wounded me ; the keepers of the walls took away my vail from me :* there was persecution, and at the same time she is crying, and yet finds him not.—Again, they may miss him in the time of *temptation*, when he uses to stand up in succouring them, making a way to escape ; thus it was with Paul, he was buffeted by Satan : he prays and prays again, yet the temptation continues ; and he misses him, until he goes on and finds him ; and the answer the Lord gives him is, *My grace shall be sufficient for thee, and my strength shall be perfected in thy weakness.* However, I say, in the times of temptation they may miss him.—Again, in times of *tribulation* and *affliction*, he uses to come to them, according to his word, *When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee ; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee : when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee,* Isa. xliii. 2. Yet even when going through fire and water they may miss him ; as it was with Job when, in great affliction, he cries unto the Lord, and he does not regard him ; *Behold, I go forward, but he is not there ; and backward, but I cannot perceive him : on the left-hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him ; he hideth himself on the right-hand, that I cannot see him,* Job xxiii. 8, 9. Oh ! say the Lord's people, I would think nothing of my affliction, if the Lord did not hide his face : this is not a strange case ; you may miss him even then, as is evident from what I have said.—Again,

5. In the next place, the Lord's people they may miss him, in the *words of grace*, wherein sometimes they

they have enjoyed him. The Lord manifests himself sometimes in the word, and gives them his presence by means of his word ; and then they have it to say, perhaps, with the psalmist, *The Lord hath spoken in his holiness, and I will rejoice*, Psal. lx. 6. But at other times, they may so far miss him, that they may cry out, *All men are liars*. But how, Sirs, can believers make God a liar, but by making the prophets liars, and the words of the prophets lies ? *Will the Lord cast off for ever ? And will he be favourable no more ? Is his mercy clean gone for ever ? Doth his promise fail for evermore ? Hath God forgotten to be gracious ? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies ?* Psal. lxxvii. 7, 8, 9. They may at some times meet with a promise, and rejoice therein ; but at other times that promise may be tasteless to their souls ; they can see nothing of God there. I say, they may miss him sometimes in the words wherein they have enjoyed him. Again,

6. In the next place, they may miss him in the *instruments* whereby they have enjoyed him ; it may be such a minister, and such an instrument, is blasted to them. He comes to them sometimes with full breasts and they sweetly suck out of these full breasts of consolation ; but behold, at other times, he comes to them, with *dry breasts*, as it were ; they can find nothing of God in his sermon, where they have formerly met with God by him. Why Sirs, we ministers are *the favour of life*, just as the Spirit of life is pleased to go along with the word : and therefore we have little need to idolize instruments.—We may miss him in the instruments, whereby we have enjoyed him. Again, in the

7. Place, we may miss him in the *society* of the Lord's people wherein we have enjoyed him. It is a commendable practice of some of the Lord's people, that they meet for social prayer, and conference, and the Lord many times countenances them in it. It is said, Mal. iii. 16. *They that feared the Lord, spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it : and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them*
that

that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. They sometimes meet with the Lord there : but at other times they may miss him very suddenly, and be obliged to say with the church, Lam. iii. 8. When I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer. And in the 44th verse, Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, that our prayers should not pass through. But again,

8. In the next place, to add no more, they may miss him in the very place where they have enjoyed him ; *God went up from him, in the very place where he talked with him.* I say, they may miss him in the very times and places where they have enjoyed him ; and they may enjoy him, but suddenly the Lord may withdraw from them. They may miss him in the public places, the ordinances where they have enjoyed him ; they may miss him in secret places, in the chamber, in the field, in the spot where they enjoyed him ; *God went up from him, in the place where he talked with him.*
—So much shall suffice for the third head.

IV. The *fourth* thing I proposed was, To give the grounds and reasons of this dispensation : Whence is it that the Lord's people may enjoy God, and yet may quickly miss him, even in the very spot where they have enjoyed him ? I cannot stand to enlarge upon this ; I shall offer some reasons in so many words.

1. By this the Lord shews his *sovereignty*, that he is the sovereign dispenser of his blessings, and confers them when, upon whom, and in what manner he pleases.

2. The Lord by this would also confirm his people unto their *Head*, Jesus Christ, who was deserted of the Father, *My God, my God*, says he, *why hast thou forsaken me ?* Alas ! this was a bitter cup, yet the Lord will have his people to be plunged in it, so to speak, to know the bitterness of that cup of desertion.

3. It is ordered also, to make a *difference* between heaven and earth. We are but strangers and pilgrims here : and are not to expect an uninterrupted enjoyment of our Lord in this world. There is an eternity
of

of the enjoyment of God a-coming, unto all the children of grace; and therefore he takes the liberty with his people now to hide himself from them. Again,

4. It is ordered also, for shewing unto us that the Lord may *approve* of his people, and *accept* of their services and duties in Jesus Christ, even when they miss that in duty which they would be at, namely, his blessing of them with his comfortable presence: this is what he will give unto them as he pleases.

5. He would have them to know they are not to *rest* on the means; that they are not to be depended upon, but that they are to use the means, with a respect to his command, and a regard to his authority, even though the Lord should deny his comfortable presence therein.—The Lord orders it also, it may be,

6. To *chastise* their former misbehaviours, either in seeking, or in the enjoyment of him: he will learn them to value his presence, by absenting himself from them.

7. Many times he does it, to *quicken* their endeavours after him, and to lead them unto the due acknowledgment of their sins, by which they have provoked him to depart and hide his face; as the Lord says by his prophet, *I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.* Many such reasons might be given, why the Lord orders matters thus.

8. I shall give you one reason more; (and, Sirs, we may tremble when we speak of it) the Lord may hide his face, in many of the duties of his appointment, to shew his *displeasure* against his church and people; and to shew what vengeance may be a-coming upon them, because of their sins and provocations: and the Lord may withdraw from his own people, and hide his face from them, because of their sinful accession to the evils of the time and place wherein they live. Ah! what strokes may be a-coming upon a sinful generation! And also, for this reason, he may hide his face from his people, that it may not be in their

power to stand up in the gap, to hinder the stroke to come on; and therefore he hides his face, and hardly allows them to pray. What is the language of it? It is to this effect, *Pray not for this people*, when I am peremptorily resolved to *bring down vengeance on them*; therefore he with-holds the Spirit of prayer. And he sometimes withdraws with reference to this very point, that they have not so much as the assurance of the delay of a stroke, because he is quickly to bring it on; and, perhaps, this may be one great complaint of the Lord's people, and of some that go many a foot to his ordinances; Oh! the little communion they meet with in them! It may be the Lord is reserving the comforts of a communion till the time of a wilderness want shall come; *Behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness*, saith the Lord, by the prophet, *and speak comfortably to her*, Hosea ii. 14.

V. I come now, in the *last* place, to make *application* of the whole. I shall confine my application to these two uses. 1. By way of *trial* and *examination*. And, 2. By way of *exhortation*.

1st, Is it so, that the Lord, when he allows communion and fellowship with him to his people, may suddenly withdraw, and they may miss him in the spot where they have enjoyed him? Then, O Sirs, you should try what you know of his *presence*, and of *communion and fellowship with him*. It were the less hazard that you knew, to your experience, that of *missing* him, if ye really knew what it were to *find* him, and what it is to *enjoy* him, and to have communion with him. Why, Sirs, I would have you put it to the trial, if God has been talking with you at this occasion, or at any other time.—Do you know what it is to have God talking with you; I mean, to have communion and fellowship with him? You cannot expect to have the enjoyment of glory hereafter, if it be not begun in grace here. Why, how shall we know, say you, if we have met with the Lord? Or attained any thing of the enjoyment of him? Why, in the

1. Place,

1. Place, you may try it by this, There are some things you will be hardly able to *endure*, if you have met with him.—The Lord's people they cannot endure that God go *away* from them again; or that God should hide his face. Oh! it is heavy to think of the Lord's withdrawing from them: they cannot endure to think that God should be angry with them: they cannot endure that any thing should have Christ's room in their hearts: they cannot endure that any thing should hinder or marr that meeting with, and enjoyment of, God they have: they say with the Psalmist, *Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for I will keep the commandments of my God.* What will all the world be to me, says the soul, if I have not communion and fellowship with my God?—Again, the soul cannot endure any thing that tends to *marr* the enjoyment of God; when he has it, when he is *brought into the banquetting-house*, and has the light of God's countenance, he is ready to charge all about him, with the spouse, that they do not provoke the Lord to depart; *I charge you*, says she, *O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the binds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love till he please*, Song ii. 7.—What know ye of this? Again,

2. If ye know his gracious presence, you will be one that *rejoices* in his *presence*, and *laments* at his *absence*.—His *presence* will be your *chief joy*; his *absence* will be your chief sorrow: his *presence* will give you more joy than all the world can; his *absence* will make you more sorrowful, than any thing in time can make you joyful. This is the import of that word, *Thou hast put*, says the Psalmist, *gladness in my heart, more than in the time, that their corn and their wine increased*, Psal. iv. 7.—Again, if you be one that has had a meeting with the Lord, then, to be sure, his *absence* will be a *distressing* thing to you. As you desire his *presence* above all things, *and count all things but loss and dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ*, and communion with God in him; so, when you cannot win at the enjoyment of him, when you cannot get your heart brought up to love him, when you cannot get your

eyes open to see him, you look upon yourself as a distressed person, as a broken person, as a miserable person, by reason of the absence of God, and the presence of sin. A child of God looks upon himself to be, and is really, an afflicted and a broken body, by reason of the presence of sin, and the absence of the Lord; and therefore he cries out, *O that I knew where I might find him!* But again,

3. If you are one that have experience of this presence of God, and fellowship with him; then you will have some fellowship with the *saints*, the *excellent ones of the earth*. What know you of this? I think this is a good sign, when the heart warms towards one that is a child of grace, though he be a beggar, or in poor circumstances, or one of little wit otherwise; when your heart warms toward the picture of Christ, when your heart warms towards one, because he has the image of Christ; *By this we know*, says the apostle John, *that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren*, 1 John iii. 1, 4. The heart warming towards these that have the image of God; it has in it something of heart-warming towards Christ himself. Again,

4. We may know it by the *humbling effect* of it. When a person has the image of God on him he will be humbled; thus Job, when he had got a clear sight of himself, says to the Lord, *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*, Job xlii. 5, 6. O the presence of God makes the person hate sin; it humbles him to nothing, as the Lord says by the prophet, Isaiah ii. 11. *The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of man shall be bowed down, when the Lord alone is exalted in the soul*, when he is present on the throne of the heart. Again,

5. We may judge of it by this, they that have met with God and have his presence, whether they have it sensibly or not, they have still an *high esteem* of Christ, even though he should be absent.—They have also an high esteem of his ordinances, even when but dry breasts; they dare not undervalue them: nay, they have

have a great regard for every thing that appertains to him, and bears an impression of his image.

6. They have something also of a *tendernefs of heart*, that they dare not allow themselves in fin; they dare not live in the omission of known duty, or in the commission of known fin; and they have something also of a tendernefs of walk; though *iniquities prevail against them*, yet they never dare run *into an excess* of riot with the wicked world. They are such as *fear the Lord*; or have the character given them that we find recorded in the first chapter of Nehemiah, verse 11. *they desire to fear his name.*—You may enquire by what I have been saying, whether you know the presence of God, and fellowship with him.

I thought to have spoke by way of *address*, 1. To these who have *known* fellowship with him, but now they have missed him. 2. To these who at *present* may be under the joyful impressions of their having fellowship with God, so that he is *talking with them*. And, 3. To these that know *nothing* of this intercourse with God, and as little care for it. I would say but a few words to each of these.

1st, As to these who *found* the Lord *talking* with them, and who have had some intercourse with him allowed them: but now they have *missed* him, and it may be have provoked him to hide his face. All I would say to you, is, to offer you these two or three advices.

1. I would have you to study *divine providences* towards yourself, and the providence of the Lord towards others of his people, in his coming and going towards them. Eye the sovereignty of his dispensations. Why, it may be, in this study, you may meet with him; *Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord*, Psal. cvii. 43.

2. I would advise you, in these circumstances that you are in, if you would have your captivity returned, be concerned on your knees before the Lord, about your *friends*, and others you should be concerned for

for. It is remarkable, Job xlii. 10. *The Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he was praying for his friends*: when you are applying for your friends or others, you may find the Lord turning your captivity.

3. I would advise you to be concerned for the church of Christ. It may, perhaps, be one cause of the Lord's withdrawing from you, in your private case, on account of your having little concern about the church of Christ. You will find, that when Daniel was applying to God for his church and people, then he met with that intercourse with God, wherein he spake unto him, saying, *O man greatly beloved*: and, says the Lord to Baruch, *Seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not: for behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the Lord: but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey, in all places whither thou goest*, Jer. xlv. 5. Well, be concerned for the public; and in this way you may come to meet with the Lord again. But, then again,

4. Another thing I would advise you to, is, endeavour, through grace, to be concerned for, and weighted with, the *sins* of the day and generation you live in: by this you may get a *mark set upon you*; for, he *sets a mark upon the foreheads of them that sigh and cry, for all the abominations that be done in the midst of the city*. But then, again,

5. Believer, see that he have you *alone*, if you be complaining that you miss him in ordinances. I remember what was said concerning Christ and his disciples, chap. iv. 34. *When they were ALONE he expounded all things to his disciples*. See that he have you alone, and see that you be much in secret with him; and thus the Lord may communicate himself to you. He will not readily tell you his mind until he get a convenient time; you may get that in secret, that you have not got at a communion-table. Again,

6. I would have you to beware of *conformity* to the generality of professors in our day. O beware of being conformed to them in their neutrality and indifference about the work of God; and bringing their neutrality

trality this way under the good names of *moderation*, *good breeding*, and the like : beware of conformity to these ; for it is your reproach to be conformed to them in their selfishness, while most part *seek their own things*, and *few the things of Jesus Christ* ; and in this way you cannot expect to meet with Christ.—In a word, Do you yet miss him ; Wait on him : *The Lord is a God of judgment, and blessed are all they that wait for him.*

2dly, But I would now speak a word to these who have *found* the Lord at this occasion, so that he is *talking* with them. It is possible there are some that have the joyful impressions of communion with God, and with Jacob, are *talking* with God, and God is *talking* with them. Are you brought into the mount of communion and conversation with him ? Then I would give you two or three advices.

1. O believer, if that be thy case, O be *thankful*, let God have the praise of his mercy : remember to adore, and stir up others to adore and magnify him. You are dignified before many others that are in many respects better than you : What are you that you should be so dealt with ? Again,

2. O beware of *idolizing* your entertainment ; when you are enjoying these fruits of the Master's kindness, beware of resting upon the fruits ; for they will not bear you ; but you must rest upon the Tree of life : beware of making a Christ of them : beware of being strong in the grace received ; but be *strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus*. Again,

3. I would advise you to *entertain* Christ well, when he is with you ; and beware of provoking him to depart from you. There are several things we should beware of, that provoke him to depart. He may go away in sovereignty, and it is best when he does so, and you have not a sinful hand in it. Beware of *unbelief* ; this is readily the first door by which your comforts will go out from you.—Beware of *doubting* of his love, and disputing of the mercy of God, Do you enjoy his love ? Are you sure concerning it, as having an infallible mark of it in his word ? Then take instruments, that it is no delusion : that so when the Lord
hides

hides his face, you may not raze the foundation, calling all in question.—Again, beware of *security* and *sleeping* after you have got a good meal. If a friend should come and pay you a visit, and you should fall asleep beside him, he will think, that you make very little of his visit, and he will soon make away from you.—And then I would have you beware of *covetousness* and *worldly-mindedness*; *For the iniquity of his covetousness I was wroth, and smote him; I hid me and was wroth,* says the Lord, by the prophet, Isa. lvii. 17. There you see is both anger and absence, by reason of a covetous heart, a worldly heart, and worldly-mindedness; I say, beware of this.—Again, I would advise you to beware of *defiling the Lord's house*: keep the house, where he is, clean, so as he may not be provoked to depart. Keep the house clean for him: endeavour, thro' his grace, to keep the heart clean, to keep it clean from secret sin; *Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults,* says the psalmist, Psal. xix. 12. Endeavour to be clean, not only from secret faults, but public faults and sins in the day and generation wherein you live. The neglect of this may greatly provoke him to withdraw his presence from you. Endeavour to be faithful to his truths that are controverted *. Some will be ready to say, Why should we be concerned for *controverted truths*? If, indeed, we do not stand up for any but these which are uncontroverted, the devil and his instruments will not trouble us; but if we do not so, we cannot be faithful to God. And we are to be faithful to the least truth of Christ. Some may be ready to say, If, for the cause of truth, we are to suffer, why not? But many are contending about these things that are trifles. O Sirs, If they be the matters of Christ, beware of calling them trifles. I remember to have read of a lady in France, at the time of the massacre there, that was led away to be drowned for the sake of her religion; her persecutors

* Several of these controverted and opposed truths of God are condemned on above, Vol. I. p. 238, Vol. II. p. 304, 305, 466. Vol. IV. p. 148. See also Vol. V. Sermon. LXXXII, LXXXIII, LXXXIV. LXXXV.

promised her life, if she would but say, *Ave Maria*, or *Pater Noster*. She answered, " I might easily repeat these words ; but if my doing be so interpreted by you a renouncing of my religion, and a yielding up of the cause of Christ, in that sense I will not do it:" and so she was drowned. If we come to yield in smaller things, we may do it in greater. We are to reckon nothing small in the matters of Christ. Then,

4. See that you *improve* his presence, if you have got it at this occasion. How shall we improve it in the behalf of *Christ*, to commend him more to you than ever : and sure, if you have his presence, you cannot say too much of it ; O improve it for the commending him more and more to you.—Improve it in behalf of his *ordinances*, making them more precious in your view.—And improve this presence of the Lord in behalf of your *children* : Have you children, man, woman ? Improve it in behalf of them, and cry to God, wrestle with him for a blessing to you and your seed, seeing he has brought you near.—Improve it in behalf of the *church* of Scotland : plead that he may not take a farewell of Scotland ; that he may return to his ordinances ; that he may return to the judicatories.—O improve your enjoyment of the presence of Christ, in behalf of the churches *abroad*, that are brought very low.—O improve his presence in behalf of your *friends in Christ*, these that are in Christ, that have not win your length, that have not win half your length. Are you brought into the King's court ? O speak a good word for the Joseph's that are in prison, that are under the hatches, that the Lord may advance them as well as you.—Then improve his presence in behalf of *strangers* who never saw any thing of his glory, as we find the church in the Song does, Song viii. 8. *We have a little sister*, says she, *and she hath no breasts : what shall we do for our sister, in the day when she shall be spoken for ? If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver ; and if she be a door, we will inclose her with boards of cedar.* We should pray for a blessing upon the design of preaching the gospel unto a Pagan and a Heathen world : we wish that you would mind them

that are called to preach the gospel to the heathens. O pray that the Lord may be with them.—Then remember the advice that Joseph gave to Pharaoh, *Lay up for the years of famine* ; lay up comforting promises and experiences : you may need all that you have got ; yea, you may need much more.

3dly, I shall only speak a word to you that *know nothing* of this presence of God, of his coming and going ; that know nothing of finding or missing him ; and, perhaps, as little care. You never had any concern about his presence ; for you are strangers to fellowship and communion with the Son of God. O man, woman, I would say a word to you ; O hear what God says to you, before he go away from the place where he is speaking to you : he is speaking to you in this everlasting gospel. We are not to stay here, but we are to part : and we will probably never meet all again, until we come before the tribunal of God, when *the Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Before God go away, who is talking to you in this gospel, come to Christ, who is dealing with you and speaking to you. Consider, that if these messages of grace, that you have got already, at this occasion, be all slighted by you, there are more terrible ones abiding you than ever came to Job, and they were right fearful ones : there came one to him and told him, *The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them, and the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away ; yea, they have slain thy servants with the edge of the sword, and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.*—That man is hardly done speaking, when another comes and tells him, *The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burnt up the sheep, and servants, and consumed them ; and I am escaped alone to tell thee.*—While that man is speaking, another comes in and tells him, *The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon your camels, and have carried them away ; yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword ; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.*—While that man is speaking,

ing, another comes in and tells him, *Your sons and your daughters were eating, and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house, and behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are all dead and gone; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee*, Job i. 14,—19. These are heavy messages; but they are nothing in comparison of the heavy message that, a few days hence, it may be a few moments, for ought you know, at death, is abiding you. One message will be, That you must part with all your dear and near relations you have had upon the earth, and you must part with them for ever. Upon the back of this message another comes, Man, you must part with all your enjoyments of time; you must part with all your profits, pleasures, or honours. Ere that message is given, another comes, Man, you must part with your soul; however near the relation was between your soul and your body, yet your body must go down to the dust, and your *soul to God who gave it*: yea, a sadder message comes yet, Man, you must part with the presence of God, and you must be sent to hell, and there *punished with everlasting destruction*, and be banished for ever, from the *presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power*, 2 Thess. i. 9. Why, poor Christless man, you must lay your account with this message; unless you could make yourself immortal: this will infallibly come upon you. This will be the message of death.

And there is a four-fold wo that will come upon you, if you continue in this your natural state.

1. Wo unto you, for you are *certainly* miserable: *The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God*, Psalm ix. 17.

2. Wo unto you, for you shall be *suddenly* miserable; when you are saying, *Peace, peace*, to yourselves, *then sudden destruction shall come upon you, as travail upon a woman with child, and you shall not escape*, 1 Thes. v. 3.

3. Wo unto you, for you shall be *doubly* miserable; you are not only despisers of God's law, but despisers

of the gospel; therefore your damnation shall be double. Then,

4. Wo will be unto you, for you shall be *eternally* miserable: as long as God lives, you shall live in Tophet; and when you have lived in it as many thousands of years, as there are piles of grass on the earth; and when these are expired, and you have lived as many thousands of years in it, as there are pickles of sand on the sea-shores; and when these are also expired, and you have lived in it as many thousands of years as there are stars in the firmament; and when these are also done, and you have lived in it as many thousands of years, as there shall be moments from the beginning to the end of the world; and when you have counted numbers until they come to be innumerable, one of your great miseries will be, that it is *eternal*; for time is gone, and there is nothing but eternity remains.

O consider thy dreadful case that hast no concern about the messages of the gospel, that hast not been affected with it to this day: I would have you to consider this, that Christ is yet in your offer, before we go from the place we are in; he is yet in the place. I would give you another offer, and if you do not accept thereof, it will make you the more inexcusable. What should hinder your acceptance, but your unbelief? Has he not condescended to be a Saviour to you? Yea; for he is exhibited as the *Saviour of the world*. He is as much your Saviour, as a physician of an army is so to the whole army, whether they employ him or not. You have a right to close with him; ye despise your own mercy if you reject him. O Sirs! has he come in your nature, and will you not come to him? Has he *become sin for you*, and will you not come to him? Has he *become a curse for you*, and will you not come to him? Has he come at this occasion to you, and will you not come to him? Has he not said, *To you is the word of this salvation sent*, man, woman, every individual of you? Has he come and declared upon his veracity, that *him that cometh unto me, I will in no-wise cast out*? O Sirs! why then will you not come to

to him? If thou wilt not let him in at the door of thy heart, thou must answer for it at the great day; *Behold, ye despisers, and wonder; wonder and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no-wise believe, though a man declare it unto you, Acts xiii. 41.*

It may be you have been wondering at all these offers of Christ, and at all these sermons and sacraments; if you will not wonder and be saved, you must wonder and be damned; *Behold, ye despisers, wonder and perish.* What is it, man, that is the matter with you? What is thy case? Art thou not fully warranted to come to this Jesus? What sort of sinner art thou? Art thou *destitute* of knowledge? Why, he comes to be *wisdom* unto thee. Art thou *guilty*? He comes to be *righteousness* unto thee. Art thou a *polluted* sinner? He comes and offers himself to be *sanctification* unto thee. Art thou a *miserable* sinner? He comes to be *redemption* unto thee. Art thou lying among the *unclean pots* of hell? He comes to thee, to make thee as the *wings of a dove, covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.* Art thou a *backslider*, He says unto thee, *Come unto me, and I will heal thy backslidings, I will love thee freely; for mine anger is turned away from thee.*—What sort of a sinner art thou? If you be upon the face of the earth, you have a right to accept of the offer of Christ made to you in the gospel; *Lack unto me, saith the Lord, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else, Isa. xlv. 22.* O that the power of divine grace may draw you! Are you destitute of all grace? Christ comes to you with the offer of his grace in his hand; who is full of all that grace and truth you stand in need of. Are you unable, and saying you cannot come to him? Why, that need be no hinderance: you cannot come to God but by Jesus Christ; and not only as he is the *Way* to God, but as the *Leader, the Mighty God*, on whom God *has laid thy help*; and he says, Will you be helped out of that horrible pit and miry clay you have fallen into? O! will you take the Mediator's help? Sirs, go alone when ever you have time, and plead that the Spirit of
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the Lord may back the word to you, for without this, it will all fall to the ground.

I shall only speak a word (and close with it) to the *Lord's people*. Perhaps your hearts have been touched, and you have seen something of the Lord's glory in his sanctuary. O improve what you have got for strengthening you ; remember what is said of Jacob, after he got a view of God at Bethel, it is said, *He went on his way* ; it is in the original, *He lifted up his feet*. He was, as it were, dragging his feet before, but then he went on his way, and walked without wearying. O improve any thing you have got at this occasion for exciting you to run your Christian race, and for fighting your Christian battles. Go forth in the name and strength of the Lord, depending and leaning upon your Beloved. *Walk in the fear of the Lord*, and so you shall also walk *in the comforts of the Holy Ghost*, as it is said, Acts ix. 31. If you walk under the influence of the Spirit as a Sanctifier, you shall walk under his influence as a Comforter.

May the Lord back his own word with his own blessing ; and to his name be the praise.

SERMON

S E R M O N XCVI.

The MOUNTING CHRISTIAN; or, the EAGLE-
WINGED BELIEVER *.

ISAIAH xl. 31.

—*They shall mount up with wings as eagles.*—

WE have a remarkable question of the disciples, and answer of our Lord, Luke xvii. 37. The question is, *Where, Lord?* The answer is, *Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.* Christ had been speaking of days of great tribulation a-coming; and the meaning of the question seems to be, Lord, where shall these that fear thy name fly in these days of trouble and distress? Where shall we find peace in the midst of war? Where is he who gives peace to the world? Where is Christ to be found, to whom the believer shall fly like an eagle to his prey? Faith needs not be at a loss in this inquiry, *Where Lord?* In the womb, in the rags, in the manger? thither may we go to see the Son of God in a low humbled state.—*Where, Lord?* Go to the garden, and see him suffering for your sins the wrath of his Father.—*Where, Lord?* Fly to *Mount Calvary*, and see him on the cross; there may the eagles gather together, and behold him bleeding, suffering, crying, dying for them.—Again, *Where, Lord?* From Calvary to heaven, there he is now, and there must the soul fly, and see him crowned with glory and honour.—*Where, Lord?* Even at a communion-table, where he is spiritually present, to be fed u-

* This sermon was preached at Kinclaven, on the Sabbath evening, immediately after the administration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper there; June 1. 1735. It hath been five times printed

pon like a carcase, by the poor, believing, greedy, hungry eagle.—*Where, Lord?* Wherever he be, the the believing souls must be at him; if on earth, no corner must be unsearched: if in heaven, distance must not keep them from him; nay though he be mounted up to glory, yet they must mount up after him, according to his promise, *They shall mount up with wings as eagles.*

In the four preceding verses we have the prophet,

1. Reproving the children of Israel for their *unbelief* and *distrust* of God, their dejection and despondency of spirit; *Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel; My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God,* ver. 27. Why do you think and speak, as if God did not heed and observe you, and as if God could not help and save you, whatever be your afflicted miserable case?

2. He reminds them of what is able to *silence* all their fear and distrust, *Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding,* ver. 28. *q. d.* He is an *eternal* God; so that there is no defect, no decay in him; he is an *omnipotent* God, who created the ends of the earth, and doubtless is as able to save as he was at first to make the world. He is of infinite wisdom to contrive your salvation; *There is no searching of his understanding*: none can say, so far God's wisdom can go, and no further; for when we know not what to do, he knows; and he is a God of infinite power, he *faints not, nor is wearied*: he upholds the pillars of heaven and earth, and is neither wearied nor toiled with it.

3. The prophet relates to them God's *communicative* goodness, *He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength,* ver. 29. He is not only powerful himself, but he communicates power and strength to these that need the same: *He gives power to the faint.* Many out of weakness, even of bodily, are made strong, and recovered by his providence; and

and many that are feeble in Spirit, unable for service and suffering, yet are strengthened by his grace, with *all might in the inward man* ; and especially to them that are sensible of their weakness, he *increases strength* : for when they are weak in themselves, they are *strong in the Lord*.

4. The prophet states the *difference* betwixt them that trust in themselves, and them that trust in God : as for them that trust in themselves, and trust to their own sufficiency, they shall find their strength to be but weakness ; *even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fail*, ver. 30. ; the young men who are strong, and apt to look upon themselves as stronger than they are, and so look not unto God for his grace to be sufficient for them, they shall faint and fall, and be made to see the folly of trusting to themselves. But as for them that trust in the Lord, and wait on him for supplies of grace, *They shall renew their strength : they shall mount up with wings as eagles ; they shall run and not weary ; they shall walk and not faint*, ver. 31.

Thus you see the connexion of the words with the preceding ; and in them you have three things, 1. The *exercise* of God's people. 2. Their *privilege*, *They shall renew their strength*. 3. The *effect* of this privilege, *They shall mount up with wings as eagles ; they shall run, and not be weary ; they shall walk, and not faint*.

1. The *exercise* of God's people ; they are such as *wait upon the Lord*. Now, who are these that wait upon God ? I answer, in the words of the psalmist David, Psal. xxiv. 6. *This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob* ; that is, O God of Jacob. And hence seeking and waiting are joined together ; *The Lord is good to them that wait for him, and to the soul that seeks him*, Lam. ii. 25. The true waiter is a seeker, and the true seeker is a waiter upon God. It is a duty comprehensive of the whole character of the religious person. If you be truly seeking God, man, woman, at this ordinance, then you are waiting upon him.

2. But what *advantage* have they that thus seek and wait upon God ? This is shewed us in the second part of the words, their *privilege* ; *They shall renew their strength*. Their strength shall not only be increased, but renewed ; as there is new occasion, they shall have new supplies, and so *they shall renew their strength* ; or, as it is in the Hebrew, *They shall CHANGE their strength*, as a man changes his raiment : as their work is changed, their strength shall be changed, whether it be doing or suffering work ; they shall have strength to labour, strength to wrestle, strength to resist temptation, and strength to bear burdens ; *They shall renew their strength* : get new strength for new duty. The best of God's children, if continuing long in duty, their spirits are wasted : well, God will renew their strength, especially their spiritual strength, which is from God himself, from whom is their new temper and disposition, their new nature. But what of all this, say you ; indeed they shall have much benefit, if you consider,

3. The *effect* of this privilege, or how it is made evident ; that is evinced in three particulars.

(1.) *They shall mount up with wings as eagles*. O it is a great privilege for a believer to be brought, thro' grace, to fly ; yea, not only to fly like a weak bird, but to mount up like an eagle, the strongest of flying birds : the weak believer, by waiting on God, becomes *strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*. Grace strengthens the soul to mount heaven-ward, and carries it above the world and the things of it.

(2.) *They shall run and not be weary* ; that is, they shall run in the way of God's commandments chearfully, and with alacrity, constancy, and with perseverance.

(3.) *They shall walk and not faint* ; weak and sickly persons are in danger to faint and fail when they walk, but *they shall walk and not faint*. You have a word, Gal. vi. 9. *Let us not weary in well-doing ; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not*. O says a child of God, that is endeavouring, through grace, to wait upon the Lord, I fear I never reap, because I will soon
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be faint and weary : but here is the promise you are to take hold of, *You shall run without wearying, and walk and not faint* : and in this way there is no fear but you shall reap : grace is promised, as well as the reward of grace.

We have already discussed one doctrinal observation from these words, *viz. That as it is the duty and practice of God's people to wait on God ; so it shall be their privilege to have their strength renewed.* But having finished what we intended upon this doctrine, we come now to consider the second observation, namely,

DOCT. *That believers, who, in waiting on the Lord, get their strength renewed, they shall mount up on wings as eagles.*

The scripture is full of parables, where spiritual things are represented by natural ; so here, the believer is compared to the eagle : the gospel of Christ is full of them ; and it may be for these two reasons.

1. Because parables make a *lively impression* on the minds of auditors, and convey the truth to the person before he be aware : some, who are ready to forget the truth, will mind the simile ; and so it leads them back again to the truth which they had forgot.

2. To teach us a *spiritual and sacred use* of the creature, like Jacob's ladder, the foot on earth, and the top in heaven ; that by these we may ascend to heaven, and by the creature look above the creature.

The method we would propose, for illustrating this subject, through divine assistance, shall be the following.

I. We shall speak a little of the *wings* wherewith they mount up.

II. The *things* wherein they mount up.

III. The *seasons* when it is especially they mount up.

IV. The *manner* how they mount up.

V. The *reasons* why they mount up, And.

VI. Make *some application* of the subject. And in the whole of these particulars study as much brevity as possible.

I. We are to speak of the *wings* wherewith they mount up. And here I might tell you the wings wherewith they are mounted up, and the wings wherewith they do mount.—The wings wherewith they are mounted up are nothing else but the *influences of the Spirit of Christ*; the enlightening and enlivening influences thereof: they are, indeed, more passive than active at first; *When I am lifted up, I will draw all men after me.* Christ being mounted up, he makes all his remnant to mount up after him: and herein they are acted before they act; for, *he works in them both to will and to do.* They are carried up, as it were, on the *wings of the wind*; for these influences of the Spirit, wherewith they are mounted up, are compared to the *wind*, Song iv. 16. *Awake, O north wind: come thou south: blow upon my gardens that the spices thereof may flow out.* Believers know well enough what it is to be mounted up on the wings of the Spirit.—But more particularly, as to the wings wherewith they *do* mount up, they are especially these two, *viz.* the wing of *faith*, and the wing of *love*.

1. The wing of *faith* they have, and must have, who would mount up heaven-ward. Now, there is not a feather in this wing, but is made in heaven; *By grace ye are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God*, Eph. ii. 8. Yea, after the believer hath got faith, he cannot spread out his wing without God; *To you it is given, not only to believe but to suffer for his sake*, Phil. i. 29. To you, believers, it is given to believe; not only the habit of faith, is the gift of God, but the exercise of faith is his gift also. Now, this is one wing, and none can mount up to heaven without it; for it is a grace that looks not at things that are seen in this world, but at things that are not seen; it is *the evidence of things not seen*; it mounts the soul to heaven and heavenly things, and makes them evident.

2. There

2. There is the wing of *love*, by which the believer mounts up to heaven: and this is a wing made also by God; *The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost*, Rom. v. 5. This is a wing then framed in heaven, a grace that comes from the God of love; and therefore it flies up to heaven again: the holy spark of this fire flies upward. This grace is of such a mounting quality, that it unites the soul of the believer to Christ, as well as faith. As Jonathan's soul was knit or joined to the soul of David by love; so is the soul of the believer knit and glued to Christ by love: and, O this wing of love is a strong wing! Song viii. 6. *Love is strong as death*; yea, stronger than death and life, and principalities, and powers: *I am persuaded*, says the apostle, *that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*, Rom. viii. 38, 39. This is such a strong wing that the fire cannot burn: martyrs have found that it would abide the fire, when they glorified God in the fires; the fire did not burn their love, no; it mounted up to heaven with the flame.

II. The *second* thing was, To shew the *things* wherein they mount up. Here we shall give you both a negative and a positive account of them.

1st, We propose to give you a *negative* account of these things.

1. They do not mount up in *airy speculations*: some mount up only in airy motions; they have a great deal of head-knowledge, but no heart-love to the truth: *They receive not the love of the truth, that they might be saved; for which cause, God sends them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie*, 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11. The devil himself knows God and Christ; but hath no love to God or Christ in his heart: there may be much speculative knowledge, where there is no saving grace.

2. They do not mount up in *sinful curiosity*, to pry
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into the secrets of God ; *For secret things belong to God, to us the things that are revealed*, Deut. xxix. 29.—

Many mount up too far into the decrees of election and reprobation. Oh ! I fear I am a reprobate, say some. Alas ! Sirs, beware of such blasphemy ; as, if, forsooth, you were omniscient, like God ; and as if you had been upon the privy council of God from eternity, when he marked down the names of elect and reprobate : this is a thing cannot be known. In this side of time you cannot be sure you are a reprobate, as long as you are out of hell ; but I can give you assurance, better than the stability of heaven and earth, that if you truly repent of your sin, and flee to Christ, the only Saviour, you are no reprobate ; *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts ; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon*, Isa. lv. 7. But if you will not part with sin, nor flee to Christ, you subscribe your own reprobation. Now, I say, the believer doth mount up in sinful curiosity, concerning the decree of election and reprobation ; but in so far as it is revealed to him, *to give all diligence to make his calling and election sure* : neither doth he pry curiously into the secrets of God's providence ; *It is not for you to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power*. Some have been very rash in telling when the day of judgment would be : we should not meddle with such secrets ; *For of that day and that hour knoweth no man*, Matt. xxv. 13.

3. They do not mount up in *self-conceit* and *self-estimation*, as some do, who mount up in the pride of their hearts ; God abhors the proud, and he will cast them down, let them mount up never so far : *He resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble*, James iv. 6.—Pride was the sin of fallen angels ; they would be as high as God, viz. self-dependent : and therefore God casts them down. This was the ill lesson that the devil taught our first parents, *You shall be as gods* ; and they were taken with this bait to their overthrow and ruin ; and ever since, pride and self-conceit hath been natural to their posterity ; and hence it is, so much self

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is mixed with all our preaching, praying, communicating. But when the believer mounts, he mounts in some measure above self, and gets it trode under his feet in self-abasing, self-abhorring thoughts.

4. They do not mount up in *fits and starts of devotion*, in modes and pangs of affection in a transient way. Many professors, when they hear the word, they seem to be mounted up in joy; but what comes of it? It is but a flash, and like a land-flood. The stony-ground hearers may receive the *word with joy*; but *having no root*, they wither and dwindle to nothing, Luke viii. 6, 13. Some, when they hear of Christ's sufferings, and see him sacramentally crucified, it draws tears from their eyes, and they never mount further.

2dly, We come now to give a *positive* account of these things wherein the believer mounts up. Believers *mount up with wings as eagles*, in these following things, or the like.

1. They mount up in *spiritual-mindedness, contemplation, and holy meditation*: Hence says David, *My meditation of him shall be sweet*, Psalm civ. 34. Having got the Spirit, they mind the things of the Spirit; *They that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, mind the things of the Spirit: that which is born of the Spirit, is Spirit*, Rom. viii. 5. Their heart is set and bent to mind the *great mystery of godliness, God made manifest in the flesh*, 1 Tim. iii. 16. *And to know the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of the love of Christ*. They do not suffer their thoughts to wander on the mountains of vanity.

2. They mount up in *high designs and intentions*: their ultimate design is the *glory of God*, and the *enjoyment of him*, which, you know, is *man's chief end*. This is the winged Christian's end: he mounts up in this high and holy end, and that in all his actions; in his *civil* actions, as in his buying and selling, travelling, labouring; and in his *sacred* actions; as his praying, reading, hearing, communicating; or, in his *relative* actions, what he doth as a father, master, servant, or child; and in his *natural* actions, *Whether*
he

he eat or drink, or whatever he doth, he doth all to the glory of God, 1 Cor. x. 31. At least his short-coming herein is matter of sorrow and shame to him.

3. They mount up in *holy desires*, saying with Job, *O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!* And their desires are not like the faint, languishing wish of the wicked, such as Balaam had; no, no: their desires are *spiritual* and *sincere*, such as these spoke of, Isa. xxvi. 9. *With my soul have I desired thee in the night; and with my spirit within me will I seek thee early.*—Their desires are *strong* and *fervent*, none but Christ will satisfy them; *What wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless?* said Abraham, Genesis xv. 2. So says the soul, mounting up towards God, *O what what wilt thou give me, seeing I go Christless? It pants after God, the living God.*—Their desires are *restricted* to God and Christ alone; *One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord, all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee,* Psal. lxxiii. 25.—Their desires are *dilated* on a whole God, and a whole Christ; *O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord, my God, my King,* Psal. xvi. 2. They will have a whole God in all his essential perfections, and in all the relations he stands in to his people. They will have *this God for their God for ever and ever*, and for *their guide even unto death.* And they will have a whole Christ; Christ for sanctification, as well as for salvation; yea, Christ for their all in all.

4. They mount up in *pious inclinations*: they have an aversion at sin, at the sinful pleasures of this life; yea, they abhor them with Ephraim, *What have I any more to do with idols?* That is the language of the eagle-like believer; he hath a great inclination, a strong bent of spirit after a God in Christ, as the top of his perfection, as the very spring of all his pleasure, and as the magazine of all his treasure, as the rest of his soul; if the devil and his evil heart hath set him at any dis-

distance from God, his mind is restless till he return to him again ; *Return to thy rest, O my soul ; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee*, Psalm cxvi. 7. The top-swarm, as it were, of his inclination mounts up this way.

5. He mounts up in *heavenly affections* : hence is that injunction, *Set your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth*, Col. iii. 2. He endeavours through grace, to have his affection some way corresponding with God's affection, so as to love *what* God loves, and hate *what* God hates ; yea, to love *as* God loves, and to hate *as* God hates. God loves holiness with a strong and great love ; so doth the believer. God hates sin *with a perfect hatred* ; and so doth the believer, *I hate every false way*. See also, Psalm cxxxix. 21, 22.

6. They mount up in a *gospel-conversation* ; so saith the apostle, *Our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ*, Phillip. iii. 20.

7. The winged saint mounts up in a *heavenly walk* : as Enoch and Noah *walked with God* ; so doth the winged soul, *whose strength is renewed ; he runs without wearying, and walks without fainting on the Lord's way*. His heavenly walk discovers itself, 1. In his *heavenly words*, *they are seasoned with salt, and edifying*. And, 2. In his *actions*, wherein he studies sobriety, righteousness, and godliness in all the duties of religion, prayer, and praise. And, 3. In his *company*, for he can say with David, *I am a companion of all them that fear thee*, Psalm cxix. 63.

II. The next thing was, *The seasons* when it is that the believer, whose strength is renewed, doth mount up.

1. Whenever he gets the *new nature*, and the *disposition* ; whenever he is converted, he *mounts up on wings as an eagle*. It is said of Paul, Acts ix. 11. whenever he was converted, *Behold, he prayeth*. think you Paul never prayed any before that time ? Yea, many a prayer had he uttered, no doubt ; for he pro-

fited in the Jewish religion, above many of his equals in his own nation : he had learned to say his prayers as well as the best of them ; but he never prayed spiritually and acceptably before ; he had never mounted up to heaven in his prayer before : but now, *behold he prays ; behold he mounts up, whenever he is converted.*

2. He mounts up to heaven, *all the days of his life*, after his conversion ; he is still making some progress heaven-ward ; whatever backsets he may get by sin and Satan, now and then, yet he gets up again, and still ascends nearer and nearer heaven ; *Nevertheless, I am continually with thee*, Psal. lxxiii. 23. Whatever I do, I endeavour still to be up on the mount with God. David would have both day and night spent with God ; *The Lord will command his loving-kindness in the day-time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life*, Psal. xlii. 8. He went to bed, as it were, with God in his arms ; *For he remembered him upon his bed, and meditated on him in the night-watches ; and his soul was satisfied as with marrow and fatness : and when wakened out of his sleep he found him in his arms ; When I awake, I am still with thee.*

3. He mounts up, when he gets a *fresh gale and new influences* of the Spirit. The believer, at his lowest, is like a ship wind-bound, lying at anchor, but ready to set sail whenever the wind is fair ; he can but make small progress with the oars of diligence, when the wind and tide is against him. O Sirs, if there be any gale of the Spirit blowing among you this day, then mount, mount, mount ; you may make more progress then in an hour, than you will do without it in many a year, yea, in a whole life-time.

4. The believer uses to mount up with wings about a *communion-time* ; nothing less will serve him than to come to BETHEL, the *house of God* ; he will go into the chambers of presence, and never rest till he be at the end of his flight. Where is that, say you ? Doth he mount to a *communion-table* ; nay, he must be farther : doth he mount to the top of *duties and ordinances* ; nay, he must be farther : doth he mount to
heaven ;

heaven ; nay, he must be farther yet.—Strange ! Where would he flee next ! Indeed, he would flee in- to the heart of Christ ; *Set me as a seal upon thine heart : yea, and which is more yet, he would not only have himself in Christ's heart, but he would have Christ in his heart ; Christ in him the hope of glory.* And what would he do with him when he hath got him there ? O then, saith he, *He shall ly all night between my breasts ; if I can, I will keep him all the night-time of this life, which is but a night, Till the day of eternity break, and the shadows fly away.*

5. The believer mounts up on wings as an eagle at the day of death ; then he soars aloft ; *This night thou shalt be with me in paradise.* It is said of the adder, that when she is old, she goes through some strait pas- sage, and leaves her old skin in the passage, and there- by renews her vigour and life. This passage of death is strait, and uneasy to the body, which, like the ad- der's skin is left in the way ; and not without much pain and difficulty to it : but the soul passeth through without any harm ; and the next moment mounts up to her state of immortality and happiness : then the believer mounts up indeed to the *general assembly and church of the first-born, to the innumerable company of angels, to God the judge of all, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant ; yea, then he is mounted up a pillar in the temple of his God.*

6. The believer will mount up at the day of judg- ment as with eagle's wings ; then will he flee up to meet Christ in the air ; *Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord,* 1 Theff. iv. 17.—You see then when the believer mounts up.

IV. The *fourth* thing is, To speak to the manner how the believer mounts up, *He mounts up with wings as an eagle.* In whatever respects the eagle mounts up, the same way doth the believer.

1. The eagle mounts up *freely and naturally ;* God gives it a mounting nature : *Doth the eagle mount up at*

thy command? says the Lord to Job, chap. xxxix. 27.; nay, it is by the instinct which the Lord hath given it; so that it is natural to it. Thus the believer mounts up naturally after God hath given him the new heart; it is natural to him to be mounting towards God: when the hypocrite mounts, he is forced up contrary to his natural tendency, as it were, like a stone cast up into the air; it is not natural to it to fly up, but rather to fall down: but the believer mounts up naturally and freely.

2. The eagle mounts up *highly*; she flies higher than other birds: she makes her nest on high, on some inaccessible rock; not like the ostrich, that leaves her eggs in the sand, as some leave their souls here on earth: but these spiritual eagle believers, these heavenly birds, they fly high, even to the Rock of ages; and hence their daily desire is, *Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I.*

3. The eagle mounts up *strongly, vehemently, and violently*; it is a strong bird, and when it hath got the prey, it flies with violence. Thus doth the believer mount up; *For the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.* With such earnestness and intentness doth he mount up towards heaven, that no difficulty in the way shall hinder him.

4. The eagle mounts up *swiftly and suddenly*: this follows upon the other; for its strength and violence in flying, infers celerity: so doth the believer, under the lively influences of the Spirit. O how quick is his motion! *Or ever he is aware, his soul makes him like the chariots of Aminadab*——It is a speedy flight, that the believer makes towards Christ; he mounts swiftly.

5. The eagle mounts up *gradually*: tho' its flight be strong and swift, yet it is gradual; it comes not to the utmost extent of its motion, but by degrees: so the believer mounts gradually; he goes *from strength to strength, till he appear before God in Zion*, Pl. lxxxiv. 7. He flies still higher and higher; and so the object of his aim draws nearer and nearer to him, while he comes

to more and more knowledge of God, and more and communion with him, till faith and hope land in vision and fruition.

6. The eagle mounts up *frequently and daily*; and, in respect of its mounting disposition, *constantly*: so it is with the believer, he is always mounting; he hath still a mounting disposition, and he is constantly endeavouring to be actually mounting. The carnal professor never mounts up, but about the time of a communion, or the time of some sore affliction or conviction; and whenever these seasons are over, he goes as fast down as he went up: but it is the believer's trade of life to be mounting on week-days, as well as on Sabbath-days; and on ordinary Sabbaths, as well as communion Sabbaths.

V. The next thing is, To shew the *reasons* why the believer, who hath his strength renewed, mounts up on wings like an eagle.

1. Because he hath an eagle's *nature*. I said before, that the believer mounts up naturally; why, because he hath an eagle's nature. It is the natural disposition of the eagle to fly upward: so the believer hath a disposition to mount up to God, he being a new creature; *If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature*, 2 Cor. v. 17.—This new nature ascends to heaven from whence it descended; the old nature goes always downward, but the new nature mounts upwards. If you want the new nature, you want the mounting disposition.

2. He mounts up on wings like an eagle; because he hath an eagle's *eye*: so the believer, he can see that invisible Sun, which no natural eye can attain to: *The poor in spirit, and pure in heart, shall see God*, Matt. v. 3, 8. *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him*, 1 Cor. ii. 14.: but the believer knowing the mind of Christ, sees farer than the world; he sees *the King in his beauty, and the land afar off*. When he sees these things, he cannot but mount up to them; *He endures, as seeing him who is invisible*, Heb. ii. 27. He is far sighted;
Abraham

Abraham rejoiced to see Christ's day afar off, and he saw it, and was glad. This is that blessed object, which every believing soul doth see, even when he is in this world.

3. He mounts up on wings like an eagle ; because he hath his *nest* on high, like an eagle : no wonder then he flies up, for his nest ; I mean, his seat, his food, his treasure, his heart, his head, his all is above. —His *seat* is above : the believing eagle cannot find himself safe while here below ; therefore he flies to the *Rock of ages*, and there he sits.—His *food* is above : Christ is his food ; *My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.* Now, his food being above ; *Where the carcase is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.* —His *treasure* is above : he hath an *inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, that is reserved in heaven for him* ; and up we must to visit his inheritance.—His *heart* is above, where his treasure is ; yea, Christ hath gotten his heart a-keeping ; and he must be where his heart is.—And, in a word, his *head* is above : and must not the members be where the head is ? And must not the stones of the building be where the foundation is ? Christ is the head corner-stone.—His *all* is above : Christ is *all in all to him* ; and therefore, mount he must ; for this eagle hath a rich nest above.

4. He mounts up with wings as an eagle, because his *strength* is renewed, like the eagle's ; *Who satisfies the soul with good things ; so that thy strength is renewed like the eagle*, Psal. ciii. 5. Therefore, having renewed his strength, he mounts up on wings like the eagle. Some say the eagle is renewed, when it casts its old feathers, and gets new ones ; so the believer gets the old feathers of corruption removed, and *puts on the new man*, Eph. iv. 24. Others say the eagle's youth is renewed, when, its stomach being thirsty, it drinks the blood of the prey ; and so the believer gets his strength renewed, by drinking the blood of Christ by faith. Eph. iv. 13. *It is in the unity of the faith, that he comes to the perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.* If you have got a drink of the
blood

blood of Christ this day, to be sure your strength will be renewed; and if your strength be renewed, you cannot but be mounting up on wings as an eagle.—Here we might shew the influence between the renewing of the believer's strength, and his mounting up; but this is easily perceived, especially by these that know it experimentally.

VI. The *sixth* thing in the general method, is the *application*. Is it so, *That believers, who, in waiting on the Lord, have their strength renewed, do mount upon wings as eagles?* Waving several uses that might be made, hence,

1st, May we not see ground to *lament*, that so few are mounting up as on eagle's wings at this day. Many peoples mind are no-ways with God; *God is not in all their thoughts*.—Some mount up only in vain thoughts: and, Oh! *How long shall vain thoughts lodge within you?* Jer. iv. 14. Some spends their thoughts on worldly affairs, the profits, pleasures, riches, and honours of it; they *mind earthly things*. Some seem to mount, and they mount a little, but they come down again; like Herod, who heard John gladly, but soon did he fall. Some, when they are young, they are very religious, but their religion is easily rubbed off again; *They begin in the Spirit, and end in the flesh*.—Some mount no farther than restraining grace, while the Lord withholds them, as he did Abimelech from sinning against him; but they want restraining grace; they know not what it is to have *the love of God constraining them*. Many, instead of mounting in time of ordinances, the devil and the world run away with their hearts; or if they get any kindly frame about a sacrament, whenever they go home, they forget all, and give loose reigns again to their thoughts and words, to their affections and actions.

2^{dly}, We may apply it for *examination and trial*. Try whether you be mounting Christians or not: to be sure, you are mounting or sinking. You need to try after as well as before you go to the Lord's table.

How

How shall I know, say you, whether or not I be mounting up as on eagle's wings? I shall keep by the simile, and give you the following marks.

1. If you be mounting up on wings like an eagle, then God hath opened the *iron cage*, and set you at liberty.—While a man is in a state of nature, or in legal bondage, he is like a bird in an iron cage; he cannot mount, till God come and knock off his fetters, and loose his bands, and *proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison doors to them that are bound*; and so lets them out to the free air, that they may fly. If you be a mounting soul, you will know something more or less of this; you have found yourself in the iron cage, in the devil's claws: and you have found the Lord *turning you from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God*; at least, you can say, in some measure, *Once I was blind, now I see*; once I was bound, and now I am set at liberty.

2. If you be mounting up on eagle's wings, then you will have something of an eagle's *appetite*; *Where the carcase is, thither will the eagles be gathered together*. The eagle, it is said, doth very greedily devour her prey; and if you be a true eagle, you will eat greedily of the flesh and blood of the Son of God. It is not a little of this heavenly carcase that satisfies the believing eagle; he must feed upon it greedily, and daily; yea, and live upon it constantly: *The life that he lives, is by faith on the Son of God*.

3. If you be mounting up on eagles wings, then you have got something of an eagle's *heart*: the eagle is a noble kind of creature, disdaining to prey upon mean birds.—We have a common Latin proverb, *Aquila non captat muscas*; [that is, The eagle doth not catch flies.] It preys only upon creatures worthy of it: so, the noble generous soul of the mounting believer will not stoop to these things that are inferior to him, or unworthy of him; no kingdom will please him, but the *kingdom of heaven*; no heritage, but the *heritage of Jacob*; no rock, but the *Rock of ages*; no portion, but a *portion in the Son of Jesse*.

4. If

4. If you be mounting up on eagles wings, then you will be daily *casting off your old feathers* ; such as, the old feather of *self-righteousness* : you will never allow yourself to mount up with the wing of your own righteousness.—You will know that the devil clipt old Adam's wings ; yea, that by the fall he brake his wings, and that never one since the fall could mount up to heaven on the wing of this old covenant-righteousness, unless it was the double eagle, if I may so express it, the God-man in two natures, and one person, who came to bring in everlasting righteousness : under this great wing, do all the little eagles flock, as the hen's chickens do under her wings, desiring to be found in Christ, *Not having their own righteousness, which is after the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith*, Phil. iii. 9.—And as they will be casting the old feather of their own self-righteousness, so the old feather of *self-conceit*. O the mounting believer thinks little of himself ; so little, that he thinks nothing of himself. If *nothing* could be *divided*, he is *LESS than nothing* in his own sight ; and if nothing could be *disparaged*, he is *WORSE than nothing* ; he is the *least of saints*, and the *chief of sinners*, as Paul was in his own eyes : he casts down all his attainments, all his enjoyments, all his qualifications, all duties at Christ's feet as nothing ; that so he may have nothing to be a weight to keep him from mounting up.—In a word, he casts off the old feathers of *sin* and *corruption* daily ; also enmity, unbelief, hypocrisy, carnality ; he seeks to have these works of the devil destroyed wholly. It is said, that there is an antipathy between eagles and serpents ; so there is a continual antipathy between the believing eagle and the old serpent ; and all the serpent's brood are abominable to him.

5. If you be mounting up on eagle's wings, then you will be *cloathed with the sun* ; the sun will be big in your eye. The mounting eagle gets a view of the sun ; and the higher it mounts, the bigger doth the sun appear. If you be a mounting Christian, you have got above the clouds of darkness and unbelief now and

then, and got a view of the Sun of righteousness ; and he hath been so big in your eye, as to darken the glory of all created objects ; yea, so big in your eye, that you have seen him to be *all in all* ; to be the all of the covenant, the all of the sacraments, the all of the gospel : you have seen him to be all things, and above all things, and better than all things : you have seen him to be heaven itself, yea, more than heaven, yea, more than ten thousand heavens : you have seen all things to be in him ; election, redemption, justification, sanctification, grace, glory, and all.—O Sirs, to you that believe, *he is precious, and a pearl of great price.*

6. If you be mounting up on wings as eagles, you will be *cloathed with the sun*, and you will have the *moon* of this world *under your feet*, Revel. xii. 1. The mounting eagle being above the clouds, sees the sun big above, and the earth little below ; and the higher it mounts, the less will the earth appear. O the mounting believer thinks little of the world ; if we were as high as the stars, we would not see the earth ; the higher we fly to heaven, the more doth the nothingness of the earth appear to us.—The believer sometimes mounts up so high, that he flies out of sight ; the world is out of sight of him, and out of his sight and mind also ; when he is on the mount of communion with God, glad would he be that he might never come down to the world again, as Peter on the mount of transfiguration, *It is good for us to be here.*

3dly, This doctrine may be applied for *exhortation*, which I shall form in a short address. 1. In a word of *terror* to the soul that *never* mounted. 2. A word of *comfort* to the *mounting* soul. 3. A word of *counsel* to the *hovering* soul.

[1.] A word of *terror* to you that *never* mounted up to heaven towards Christ. Alas ! what shall we say to you ? You are not like eagles, but like filthy black ravens, that do not mount heaven-ward, nor look upon the sun, but wander to and fro upon the earth, as Noah's raven did, and feed upon dung-hills
and

and fordid things; you cannot fly to heaven, but flutter upon the earth: but if you do not mount up to heaven, the curse of God will come upon you; all the curses mentioned, Deut. xxvi. 15,—20. You will be *curled in your basket, and in your store; curled in your outgoings and incomings*. The curse of God will be in your house, Prov. iii. 23. *The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked*; that is, the man that doth not mount up to Christ by faith, nor mount up in the ways of God. The curse of God will be in your prayers and duties; *The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to God*: your sacrifice will be curled to you: the word you hear will be a curse to you, it will be a favour and seal of death, and not of life to you, 2 Cor. ii. 16. The sacrament of the Lord's supper will be curled to you; for there *you eat and drink damnation to yourself*. If you never mounted by faith, and yet went to a communion-table, you have been eating and drinking God's curse, which you will never vomit up again, unless you mount up to Christ with the wing of faith. What shall I say? If you do not mount, Christ himself will be curled to you; *We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness*. If you do not mount, you will stumble into hell; and Christ himself will be a stumbling-block over which you will fall and break your neck, and perish for ever. O then, do not tempt Christ by lying still in your sin and unbelief, when you should be mounting. See a remarkable word, 1 Cor. x. 9. *Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents*. If you do mount, with the eye of faith, towards Christ, the mystical brazen serpent, you will be destroyed with worse serpents than the Israelites were: he will let loose the old serpent the devil; he will let loose the young serpent, your conscience, upon you, and both these will tear you to pieces to all eternity; besides, the fiery serpent of God's everlasting vengeance: if you do not mount, God will cast you down into the dungeon of hell, to live among all these serpents, as long as God lives. Think not these to be words of course, man, woman; I am not jesting with you; nay, I de-

clare to you in the name of the everlasting God, that if you do not mount up to Christ, you shall go down to hell with the devil ; Matth. xxv. 30. *The unprofitable servant shall be cast into utter darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* Rev. xiv. 10. *They shall have no rest.* Consider this, all ye that forget God, and forget to mount up to him.

[2.] A word of *comfort* to the *mounting* soul.—Are you a mounting eagle ? Then you shall be *blessed* in your outgoing and incoming : God's blessing will be in your house ; *For he bleisseth the habitation of the just* : you will be blessed in your prayers and duties : *For the prayer of the upright is his delight* : the word will be blessed to you ; it will be a river of life to comfort you, poor believing eagle, when you droop your wings : the sacraments are blessed to you ; the communion-table is a foretaste of the fruit of the *vine, which you shall drink for ever new in your Father's kingdom, where you shall be for ever with the Lord* : you are happier than the tongues of men and angels can tell.—And as the mounting soul is blessed, so he is *safe* : as long as he is mounting, he is out of the reach of this world's misery ; safe against death itself ; yea, safe against the wrath of God ; you are above all this, for you are mounted up to the love of God, and that is above his wrath. O believer, if you be mounting, keep up your head, and be always mounting, till you come to the throne of God, and of the Lamb. O mount, mount, mount, till you come to heaven, to the top of the tree of life, where the birds of paradise shall sing, *Hallelujah, to him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.* The eagle is never in danger, but when she is on earth : we are never in danger when we are in Christ, but till we fly down to the earth ; therefore, seeing God hath renewed your strength to mount up as on eagles wings, O soar aloft ; look down with a generous disdain upon the world, and the vanities thereof, and keep your heart up in heaven.

[3.] A word of *counsel* to the *hovering* soul. Perhaps there are some hovering sinners, and some hovering faints here.

(1.) As for hovering *sinners* that never yet mounted, they have some thoughts of mounting; but some objections come in their way, and they are in a hover.

OBJECT. *Oh! say you, you are desiring us to go about a duty we are not able to do; alas! I am a poor thing, not able to fly up to heaven: how is that possible to me that want the wing of faith and love?*

ANSW. 1. Up, you must go, or else go down to the bottomless pit: God commands you to mount; and if you be not able, consider whence your inability flows; the fall brake your wings; *For God made man upright, but he found out many inventions: thou hast disabled thyself in Adam, therefore God may condemn thee.*

2. The reason why you do not mount up, is, because you are wilful; *You will not come to me that you might have life, John v. 40.*—Your weakness flows from your wilfulness: if the weakness of your will were taken away, then you would mount up with ease.

3. Do what you can to fly up; if you cannot fly, endeavour to *run without wearying*; if you cannot run, endeavour to *walk without fainting*: if you cannot walk because of your broken leg, then will you creep to the physician with it, and hold out the broken leg, the withered arm to him; if you cannot creep, will you cry to him; *He hath not said to the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain*: if you cannot cry, will ye look to him; *Look to me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth*: if you cannot look to him, will you long for him; for, *He satisfies the longing soul*: sigh, and sob, and groan after him. And, if after all, you think you can do nothing, because of your absolute weakness; then, O will you *wait on the Lord, and you shall renew your strength*; wait on him in the use of means; ly at the pool, and you cannot tell how soon you shall get strength to mount: *Wait, I say, on the Lord.*

OBJECT. *Alas! say some, my mounting time is gone; my day of grace is past; I have been a long hearer of the gospel, and many a call have I slighted; I fear Christ*
will

will never take pains on me, to make me mount up to heaven.

ANSW. To you I would say, 1. O how dare you meddle with God's decree? I said something to this already; mind this is a stratagem of Satan, to keep you from coming to Christ. I have read that the devil said once to a man, "You need not serve God any more, for you will not win to heaven." The man was troubled at this: But what was his answer? "If I cannot win to God in heaven, I shall have as much of God as I can on earth." O man, you will cheat the devil effectually, if you tell him in earnest, I will take all of God that I can now, though I should never get any more of him.

2. Are you not waiting on God in ordinances: and forrowing at your heart, that you have sinned so much, and slighted Christ so long? Then your day of grace is not past, it is yet time to mount. *Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation*; and it is, perhaps, now or never. O young sinner, old sinner, your mounting time may be gone before you get another call. Death will dismount you from these high privileges in a little, and then you shall never mount again; but sink, sink, sink for ever in fire and brimstone.

(2.) There may be some hovering *saints* here, who know what it is to have mounted some time a day, but now they are fallen down again; gladly would they mount, but many things hinder them from mounting.

OBJECT. 1. *Alas! say some, the woful WORLD keeps me from mounting; the losses, and crosses, and temptations of the world are a clog; whenever I go home, I will meet with something that will draw me down by the heels again, as it were.*

ANSW. O believer, be not discouraged, but set a stout heart to a steep mountain: oppose the love of the world as much as you can; and see vanity written on its forehead: you know that communion with God is better than all the enjoyments of this life; cast off these things that trouble and afford vexation to you,
O let

O let not the world get into your heart ; if the world mount up in your heart, it will indeed draw you down, that you shall not mount up to heaven. Beware of your graceless friends, their carnal walk and conversation may rob you of all your spirituality in half an hour, and spoil a good communion in two minutes. O Sirs, be as little in their company as you can ; and when you are obliged to be with them, yet let your heart be always mounting, and giving a stolen look to Christ — But, perhaps, there are other things in the world also that keep you from mounting, and keep you down with discouragement : you see things going all wrong in the church, grievances lying heavy upon us ; zeal decaying, and iniquity abounding ; and the like. O how can I get mounted up under such discouragements. As to all which, I shall only say, you have the more need to mount up to heaven, that you see things so far wrong here below.

OBJECT. 2. *But, Oh ! say you, there is another thing that hinders me from mounting ; I have a STONE in my heart that bears me down ; the dead weight of corruption that draws me downward ; how can I mount with such a rock on my back, such a heavy stony heart in my breast.*

ANSW. O believer, that art groaning under the sense of your heart-evils, will you go to God with your stony heart ; none can cure the spiritual gravel but God himself ; he can cut the stone out of the hard-hearted sinner, and he hath promised to do it, Ezek. xxxvi. 26. *I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh.* O Sirs, go and tell him, that it bears you down when you would mount up to heaven, and seek to have the stony heart softened in the blood of Christ ; for Christ's blood is a heart-softening blood ; *Look to him whom you have pierced and mourn* : if you but mount up with your eye to him, it will melt your stony heart ; and then the melted heart will be a mounting heart. Alas ! say you, I have a worm at my heart, *Iniquity prevails against me*, and this is a heavy thing that bears me down, sorely, down ; and, I think, it will wear me down to hell : mine iniquities are a burden ; they sink me down, ter-
ribly,

ribly, down into the mire. But what shall I do, I will never win up, I think, from under this burden ; Poor soul, cast your burden upon Christ ; *God laid on him the iniquity of us all. Cast thy burden on the Lord, and he will sustain thee.* Doth the guilt of sin burden you ? Look to him who is made of God to you *righteousness*. Doth the power of sin burden you ? Look to him who is made of God to you *sanctification*. *Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

OBJECT. 3. *Oh ! say some, there is another thing that hinders me from mounting up ; the DEVIL steps in between me and heaven, between Christ and me, and so I cannot get mounted ; he assaults me sore with many sad temptations, he scars me from duty, and tempts me to sin.*

ANSW. Poor believer, be comforted ; it seems you are not on Satan's side ; it seems you are come out of his camp ; and therefore he assaults you so sore : meantime, O endeavour to mount up notwithstanding of all temptations ; for, within a little, *God shall bruise Satan under your feet*, Rom. xvi. 20. The believing eagle shall get day about with the devil, and tread upon this old serpent. Again, tell me, hast thou not wings to fight against the devil, as they say the eagle doth ? when any come to take her young, then she fights with her wings. So do you fight with the wing of faith, that is the shield that *quenches the fiery darts of the devil*. The devil's darts cannot pierce the believer's wing of faith. Fight with the wing of love ; love is a strong wing, like coals of fire, it hath a most vehement flame ; this fire of love will burn the devil's darts that he throws at you ; the love of Christ will constrain you to resist him boldly, *But, alas ! say you, for all that, I cannot fight ; my faith is feeble, and my love is faint ;* Then I only say to you, O poor soul, go to Christ ; Christ is like the old eagle that helps the young ones ; yea, Christ takes the young eagles on his wings, Deut. xxxii. 11, 12. *As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings,*

wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings : so the Lord alone did lead him ; and there was no strange god with him. Exodus xix. 4. I bare you on eagles wings, and brought you to myself. Christ will carry you on his wings ; and for your encouragement, know that he hath fought with the devil already, and overcome him, he hath overcome principalities and powers ; yea, by death he hath destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.

OBJECT. 4. And lastly, *Alas ! say you, there is another thing yet that hinders me from mounting ; I would not think much of the common enemies of my salvation, sin, Satan, and the world ; I know they will do their utmost to keep me out of heaven : but, oh ! GOD himself is pressing me down, and that is saddest of all, he doth not give the wonted communication of his grace, nor strength to mount : though I had habitual grace that will not do, I must have auxiliary grace.*

ANSW. It may be, when you got additional grace at the last communion, you have sinned it away ; and no wonder, when you turn the grace of God into wantonness, that the Lord make you go empty-handed — But again, he may do this to let you see, that habitual grace is not sufficient, in order to your mounting up to heaven, without actual grace ; *It is not in him that willeth, nor in him that runneth, but in God that sheweth mercy.*—However, know that God is a sovereign God, and he will let you know that he is so, by giving you new supplies of grace, and withdrawing them again when he pleases ; but wait on him, and you shall renew your strength.

OBJECT. “ But, oh ! how can I mount, when he “ not only denies his grace, but HIDES his face from “ me ? The eagle mounts towards the body of the sun, “ but my sun is covered with a cloud, and I go mourning without the Sun. A day bird cannot fly in the “ night ; and, alas ! how should I mount in the dark “ night of desertion ? ”

ANSW. It may be you have hid your face from God, and that makes him hide his face from you : you have sinned away his presence, by turning away

from his presence ; or, perhaps, God doth this for the trial of your faith, love, and patience. However it be, you must exercise your wings of faith and love, and mount up notwithstanding that you be in the dark ; *Who is among you that feareth the Lord, and obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darknes, and hath no light ? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself upon his God, Isaiah l. 10.* The spouse was busy even when Christ was gone, *Saw ye him whom my soul loveth ?*

OBJECT. “ Oh ! but how can I mount, when he “ is not only an absent, but an *angry* God ; I see no- “ thing but furlly looks in his countenance ; and he is “ shooting arrows against me ; yea, *His arrows stick “ fast in me, and his hand presses me sore ;* when I mount “ up he shoots me down with his arrows ; *For the ar- “ rows of the Almighty are within me :* and when my “ wings are wounded, down I fall.”

ANSW. God may do so to humble you ; you must be humbled ; and the more humble and low you are, the higher you shall be advanced, and mount up the higher after your humiliation : never was the believer highest than after he was lowest, James iv. 10. *Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up ;* and remember how you may meet with barbed arrows, poisoned arrows of God’s anger, and yet all in love : *In a little wrath have I hid myself from thee for a moment ; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy upon thee. Isaiah liv. 10. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee.* You shall at last find all these things well ordered. What think you, when you shall come to heaven, and Christ say to you, Welcome, believer, when I hid my face, did I not deal kindly with you ? When I shot the arrows into your heart, did I not deal kindly with you ? And the believer will then say, Indeed, Lord, thou hast *done all things well :* all is well that ends well.

OBJECT. “ Alas ! but I think the Lord will *kill* “ me with his arrows ; and will I fly to heaven, if he “ kill me ?”

ANSW.

ANSW. There is no fear that your kind Lord will kill you ; but though he should, yet make use of your wings, and fly to him, as Job, *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.* I read of a sparrow, that when pursued by a hawk, flew into Xenocrates' bosom, his words were, *Non oportet supplicem prodere ;* " It were " barbarous to betray a poor suppliant." If you fly to God's bosom, no fear that he kill you ; when his wrath pursues you, he is but chasing you into his bosom : therefore let nothing hinder you from mounting.

The Lord himself engage you to wait on him, that you may *renew your strength*, and *mount up on wings as eagles.*

S E R M O N XCVII.

The RIVER of LIFE, proceeding out of the
THRONE of GOD, and of the LAMB*.

REVEL. xxii. 1.

And he shewed me a pure river of water clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb.

AT the last sacramental action, that fell to my share here, I took occasion to speak of our Lord Jesus Christ as *the Lamb in the midst of the throne*, Revel. vii. 17 †. And now I would speak a little, as the Lord may assist, of the *great blessings* that proceed from that throne, to the everlasting salvation and consolation of all the redeemed.

Some understand all that is said in the two last chapters of this book, of the *state of the church* even here on *earth*, in the glory of the latter days. Others view it as a representation of the perfect and *triumphant state* of the church in *heaven*. I reckon it safest to exclude neither of these; and apprehend it takes in the heavenly state of the church, and the happiness thereof, commenced in time here, and consummate through eternity hereafter.—That glorious state begins here, since grace is the beginning of glory, and glory the perfection of grace. Now, this happy state is described here, in allusion to the earthly paradise, that was lost by the sin of the first Adam, as another, a better paradise, restored by the righteousness of the second Adam.

* This sermon was preached immediately before the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, at Dunfermline, July 6. 1735. It hath undergone six impressions.

† See this Sermon, printed above, Vol. V. Sermon, LXXXIV.

In this verse you see a revelation made to John of the *river* of paradise; and by this river I understand the *Spirit*, and all *spiritual blessings*: for so I find the Spirit frequently in scripture represented, as a river, or a flood of water; *Isaiah xlv. 3. I will pour water on him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground.*—What is that? Even *my Spirit*, and *my blessing*; as it is explained in the words immediately following.—But then, you have the *quality* of this river; it is a *PURE river of water of life*, *CLEAR as crystal*. All the streams of earthly comforts are muddy and polluted, and polluting; but these are pure, clear, healing, and refreshing; giving life, and preserving life for ever to them that drink thereof.—You have the *rise* of this river, or whence it flows and proceeds, namely, *Out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb*. The Spirit, and all the blessings and comforts of grace and glory, proceed from a God in Christ. As the Spirit, with reference to his personal property, proceeds from the Father and the Son; so, with reference to his office in the œconomy or redemption, he, as a Spirit of all grace and comfort, proceeds like *a pure crystal river out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb*; the Spirit, and all spiritual blessings being from God, thro' the mediation of the Lamb. But I shall further explain the words upon the prosecution of the following doctrine.

OBSERV. *That the living Spirit of God, communicating all the blessings of everlasting life, graciously here, and gloriously hereafter, proceeds, like a pure crystal river, out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb.*

And here I shall, as the Lord may please to assist, essay to do the following things.

- I. Offer some *remarks* for clearing and confirming the doctrine.
- II. Observe the *property* and *quality* of the water of this river.
- III. Shew what may be *imported* in its being said to *proceed out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb*.

IV. En-

IV. Enquire whence it is, or assign the *reasons* why this river of life is said to *proceed* out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb.

V. Deduce some inference for the *application*.

I. We are to offer some *remarks* for clearing, confirming, and illustrating the doctrine.

Remark 1. “That *communion* with God in Christ, in “his blessings and comforts at his table, whether above or below, is by his Spirit.” For, as *through Christ we have access to the Father by one Spirit*, Eph. ii. 18.; so all the blessings and comforts of the new covenant are communicated from the Father, through the Son, by the Holy Ghost : and hence we enjoy the *grace of the Lord Jesus Christ*, and the *love of God*, through him, in the *communion of the Holy Ghost*, 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

Remark 2. “That all spiritual blessings, thus communicated, are *everlasting*.” They are the blessings of everlasting life, begun in grace here, and consummate in glory hereafter. God himself, the prime and principal blessing, is the everlasting God; and the everlasting light, the everlasting life, the everlasting heaven and happiness of his people. And all the streams of blessings that flow from this fountain of living waters are everlasting. For example, is *peace* a stream of this river? Rom. v. 1. *Being justified by faith, we have peace with God*. This peace is everlasting : and hence departed saints are said to *enter into peace* whenever they die, Isa. lvii. 2. Peace here enters into them, and there they enter into peace.—Is *pardon of sin* a stream of this river? Yea, *We have redemption thro’ his blood, even the forgiveness of sin*, Eph. i. 7.; and this pardon is everlasting : and it is said of the inhabitants of heaven, *The people that dwell there, shall be forgiven their iniquity*, Isa. xxxiii. 24. Here they are pardoned, and there the pardon is lengthened out to eternity.—Is *sanctification* and *holiness* a stream? Yea, *Beholding his glory, we are changed into the same image*. Well, it is an everlasting blessing, for in heaven it is perfected ; *We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he*

he is, 1 John iii. 2.—Again, Is the *life of comfort* here a stream? Yea, we joy in God through Christ. This blessing is everlasting, and therefore called *everlasting consolation*, 2 Thess. ii. 16. And hence the Comforter is said to *abide in us for ever*, John xvi. 25. Even when the sensible comfort is withdrawn, yet the Comforter abideth for ever.—Again, Is the begun life of *communion with God* a stream of this river of the water of life? What is this fellowship with the Father and the Son, but the beginning of everlasting communion?—In a word, Is *grace* a stream of this river of the water of life? What is the life of grace here, but the beginning of the life of glory, which is everlasting, and commenced whenever the soul believes in Christ? *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.*—Thus you may see what I mean by the blessings of everlasting life, to be enjoyed graciously here, and gloriously hereafter, called *the water of life* in the text. And so far I have here designedly prevented myself the necessity of explaining much further this *water of life*, or the *streams* of this river.

Remark 3. “That the Spirit of God, as the great blessing of the covenant, and all the other spiritual blessings of everlasting life, are compared frequently to *water* in scripture, John iv. 14. and 10. verse compared.” There Christ is said to give us *living water*; and again, *The water that I shall give him that drinketh it, shall be in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life*, And John vii. 37. *If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly, out of his very heart and soul, shall flow rivers of living water.* This he speaks of the spirit. But I insist not on all the instances I might offer; only the Spirit and his influences, graces, comforts, and blessings, may be on many accounts compared to water. I insist not upon the parallel; only, as water is for quenching of thirst, washing of stains, cooling of heats, healing of wounds, softening of hard earth, and fructifying of barren earth;

so the Spirit, in his various influences and operations, is of manifold such like use to the souls of all his people.

Remark 4. “ That this river of water of life, that
 “ waters the church, militant and triumphant, with
 “ all spiritual and everlasting blessings, *proceeds* out of
 “ the throne of God, and of the Lamb : I mean, the
 “ Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son.” Not
 only doth he so, as he is the third person of the glorious
 Trinity, and that by an eternal and ineffable procession;
 but also, as he is clothed with the peculiar and glorious
 office of applying the purchased redemption. He comes
 forth from the Father and the Son by a voluntary sub-
 ordination.—This is plain from several scriptures,
 particularly, John xiv. 16. *I will pray the Father, and
 he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide
 with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth.* John xv.
 26. *When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto
 you from the Father, which proceedeth from the Fa-
 ther, he shall testify of me.* John xiv. 26. *But the Com-
 forter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will
 send in my name, he shall teach you all things.* And a-
 gain, John xvi. 7,—14. *If I go not away, the Comfor-
 ter will not come ; but if I depart I will send him unto
 you. And when he is come, he will convince the world
 of sin, righteousness, and judgment. He will guide you
 into all truth. He shall glorify me, for he shall receive
 of mine, and shall shew it unto you.* Whence then shall
 we have a good communion with God this day ?—
 Whence shall we have the Spirit, or any spiritual bles-
 sing and comfort ? It is from the throne of God and
 of the Lamb : it is from the Father and the Son.—
 This water is from God, through the mediation of
 the Lamb.

II. The *second* thing proposed was, To point out
 some of the *qualities* of this great blessing, comprehend-
 ing all other blessings of everlasting life. The text
 calls it a *pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal* ;
 where the water is described four ways, namely, from
 the

the *plenty*, the *purity*, the *virtue*, and the *splendor* of it.

1. It is described from the *plenty*, or great store of it, and therefore it is called a *RIVER*. This is that *river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God*, Psal. xlv. 4. No pleasures are like these that flow from the Spirit of God. *The fruit of the Spirit is peace and joy* : but here it is only the streams of this river that we enjoy ; but in heaven the river itself will be enjoyed. The holy Spirit is a river, not a cistern, to shew his infinite plenitude and fulness, and the great abundance of heavenly blessings that flow from him. Our Lord Jesus hath received of this river above measure, and yet the river is as full as ever. All believers, in all ages, from the beginning of the world, thousands and ten thousands, have drawn out of it ; yet it is still an overflowing river. O let us bring all our empty pitchers here ! For there is enough here for every son of Adam, if he would come ; enough for time, and enough for eternity : the river is flowing by our door ; O may we *draw water out of this well of salvation* !

2. It is described from its *purity*, it is a *PURE river*. The Spirit of God is a pure and holy Spirit : and all his blessings and comforts are pure and holy, purifying and sanctifying blessings. A pool or a standing water may be impure ; but a river though it should run thro' a loathsome ditch, will carry away the pollution of it : no man's heart, be it never so polluted, like a stinking ditch, but if a stream of this river be let into it, and have a free passage, it will carry away all the filth and pollution thereof. And why is it said of heaven, Revel. xxii. 27. that *there shall in no-wise enter into it any thing that defileth* ? Because there is the river ever running. Here we have only the streams running some times, but there is the river itself ; the pure river, continually running. O let impure polluted souls come now to the streams of this pure and purifying river, as they are running from Christ in a gospel-dispensation ; and never rest till they win to the river of perfect purity.

3. It is described from the *quickenings* virtue of it : it is a *pure river of water of LIFE*. This river of water is the living Spirit of God ; the Spirit of life, that quickens whom he will : he hath life in himself, and by him dead souls are quickened, and made to live for ever. All earthly elementary waters have a beginning ; but this river, the Spirit of God, is from everlasting to everlasting, without beginning, and without end. Other rivers are fed by springs and fountains ; but this river of the Spirit is himself the *fountain of living waters*, as well as a river. This river proceeds from God, and yet the river is God himself ; *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit, and these three are One*. Though God hath provided a channel of ordinances to convey some of the water of this river to us, for quickening and refreshing us ; yet the river cannot be circumscribed or limited as it is in itself. O let dead souls conceive hope of life ! here is the living and life-giving Spirit of God, to give the life of grace, the life of peace and pardon, the life of holiness and sanctification, the life of joy and consolation, the life of communion and fellowship with God, which are all the beginning and commencement of everlasting life, as I have already shewed.

4. This river of water is described from the *brightness, splendor, and glory* of it : it is *CLEAR as crystal*. This, I think, may point out both the pleasure and perspicuity of the river. What a pleasant river is the Spirit, in the everlasting emanation and flow of his influences and comforts ! How sweetly do the redeemed drink of this *river of pleasure*, Psal xxxvi. 8. *In the presence of God there is fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore*, Psal. xvi. 11. And what a perspicuous river is that of the Spirit, *clear as crystal* ? The Spirit as a *Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of Christ*, makes clear discoveries as a crystal glass, or a crystalline transparent river. It is by the Spirit we behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, 2 Cor. iii. 18. It is the Spirit that glorifieth Christ, by shewing the things of Christ ; he giveth clear discoveries of the glory of Christ, and the glory of God's perfections in him

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The Spirit of life is the Spirit of light, that giveth the fiducial vision here, and the beatifical vision hereafter.

III. The next thing proposed was, To shew what may be *imported* in this river being said to *proceed out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.*

1. It imports, that God and the Lamb have but *one* and the *same throne*, from whence the river of the Spirit, and all spiritual blessings do proceed. Here are good news to us this day, when we are to commemorate the sufferings of the Lamb of God ; that, as the Lamb that was slain upon the cross is now sitting upon the throne, so that God and the Lamb have not two thrones, but one and the same throne. The throne of God is the throne of the Lamb, and the throne of the Lamb is the throne of God, Rev. iii. 21. *I am set down with my Father in his throne. He is the Lamb in the midst of the throne of God :* but of this I have formerly treated.

2. It imports, that God and the Lamb have but *one* and the *same Spirit.* The river *proceeds from the throne of God and of the Lamb.* The Spirit of God is the Spirit of the Lamb ; and the Spirit of the Lamb is the Spirit of God. Happy they that have the Spirit of Christ in them, for the Spirit of Christ, is the Spirit of God. He is the Spirit of both of the Father and of the Son ? *All things that the Father hath are mine,* says Christ, John xvi. 15. And particularly, the Father's Spirit is the Son's ; hence it is said, Gal. iv. 6. *Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, ABBA, Father.* This river proceeds not out of the throne of God, or the Father's throne only ; but out of the throne of the Lamb also, the Son's throne. The Spirit of life, for quickening dead souls into everlasting life, proceeds not out of the throne of God as an absolute God, but as a God in Christ ; and therefore is said to *proceed out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.*

3. It imports, that the fulness of the Godhead, that is in Christ, is a *communicative* fulness ; and hence the river is said to *issue from the throne of God and of the*

Lamb. The everlasting spring of the river is within the throne of God, where the Lamb sits : and the Lamb is anointed with the Spirit above measure ; for *the Father giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him*, John iii. 34. And this ocean of divine fulness that is in him is not shut up within the throne, but proceeds like a river out of it, that we, *out of his fulness, may receive and grace for grace*, John i. 16. This communication is free, as free as the run of a stream out of a spring. And as the river proceeds freely out of the throne, so we may as freely come and drink of the water of life that runs out towards us. But again it imports,

4. That the giving out of the Spirit, and of all spiritual blessings, is a part of the *royalty* of Christ, and the fruit of his mounting the throne of heaven after he had finished his work upon earth : and hence, *When he ascended up on high, leading captivity captive, he received gifts for men, even for the rebellious*, Psal. lxxviii. 18. The giving out of the Spirit in the most plentiful manner was deferred till the Lamb that was slain should be in the midst of the throne. It is said, John vii. 39. *The Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified* ; but, whenever he is glorified, then the river, in a plentiful manner, was to proceed out of the throne of God and of the Lamb : *If I go not away, the Comforter will not come : but if I depart I will send him unto you*. Whenever I am glorified upon the throne, then I will shew the river of the water of life proceeding out of the throne. The giving then of the Spirit of life is a part of the Mediator's royalty. Christ, as a King, hath the giving of the Spirit ; this belongs to his administration, as the Lamb now upon the throne : hence says Christ, John xiv. 26. *The Father will send him in my name*, even in my name and authority, as the crowned King of Zion ; and, John xvi. 7. *I will send him*. Thus God and the Lamb agree from the imperial throne, to send from thence the river, the Spirit of life, as an evidence of the Mediator's exaltation, and of his glorious kingdom and royalty. Our Lord Jesus Christ sways his sceptre of grace, and erects and maintains his kingdom, by
sending

sending his Spirit. The Lamb was sacrificed to purchase eternal redemption, and is enthroned to give the Spirit ; and, O but the Spirit is a royal blessing ! As Christ is a Priest upon the throne, so these that share of his Spirit are a *royal priesthood* ; and, having the Spirit, they are *kings and priests to their God*. Let us wait this day about the throne for this glorious fruit and effect of his royal bounty.

IV. The *fourth* thing proposed was, To enquire into the *reasons*, or whence it is that this river of life, for quickening dead souls to everlasting life, *proceeds out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb*,

1. It is to shew, that as the grace of God towards sinners is *reigning* grace, *enthroned* grace ; so it *reigns through the righteousness of Christ to eternal life*, Rom. v. 21. And that no life, no spiritual life, by the word and Spirit of God, is to be expected, but as it runs in this channel. No life by the law or covenant of works is now to be expected. God and Adam are now separate ; and the channel of the communication of life, or of living waters, by his covenant with the first Adam, is quite cut off : but, behold, God and the Lamb are joined together in an everlasting covenant, and sit together on an heavenly throne. The fulness of the Godhead is gone in to the second Adam, the fulness of the Spirit of life is given to the Lamb *above measure*, John iii. 34. And now the Lamb, being *the Lord our righteousness*, is exalted to the Father's throne ; a throne enriched with the river of life.—Grace reigns on that throne, through the righteousness of Christ, to the communication of all the blessings of everlasting life. Mercy vents through the blood of Christ, through the blood of the Lamb, once hanging upon the cross, and now reigning upon the throne.

2. This river of life is discovered as proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, to shew the *distinct æconomy* of the glorious Trinity in this business of our redemption, and of the eternal salvation of lost sinners. God the Father, the first person in the order of subsistence, sits upon the throne of his sovereign grace ;

grace ; God the Son, the Lamb that was the purchaser of life on the cross, is made the administrator thereof upon the throne ; God the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is the great Applier, bringing home the blessings purchased to all the redeemed in a perpetual egress and flow of divine communications : and hence all the store of divine things and blessings, that the Spirit communicates, are said to be the things of God the Father, and Christ the Son, discovered and dispensed by the Holy Ghost ; *He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine and shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine ; therefore said I, He shall take of mine and shew it unto you,* John xvi. 14, 15. And hence also believers are said to receive the Spirit which is of God, that they may know the things that are freely given them of God, 1 Cor. ii. 21.—Thus we see the distinct œconomy of each person of the glorious Trinity in this matter, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God in three persons ; and how we are equally indebted to each of them for the benefit of redemption.

3. This river of life is discovered as proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, to shew the essential unity and glorious harmony of the ever-blessed Trinity, notwithstanding of their personal distinction ; according to 1 John v. 7. *There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost ; and these three are one.* And this essential unity or natural oneness is, I think, pointed out in our text, where the throne being called *the throne of God, and of the Lamb*, declares what Christ himself declared, John x. 30. *I and my Father are one.* And if the Spirit were not the fountain of living water, equally and essentially one with the Father and the Son, how could he proceed like a river out of the throne of God and of the Lamb ? So that, as in this clear glass of the gospel we see the distinct œconomy of the glorious Trinity, in the work of redemption, and their personal distinction, so we may see their essential unity or natural oneness : *These three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.* And in the same light we see their

their glorious harmony in our redemption-work. As it is said of the *three that bear witness on earth, the Spirit, the water, and the blood*, that, as *these three are one*, one in nature ; so they agree in one, in one great and glorious work and design towards the salvation of poor sinners. There is a perfect harmony and agreement between God and the Lamb upon the same throne : and how doth the Spirit agree with the Father and the Son proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb like a pure crystalline river ? And thus shewing, that everlasting life is from God in Christ, by the Spirit. Again, another reason is,

4. To shew the *excellent firmness* and *stability* of the new-covenant blessings, and on what a sure ground and bottom the eternal life and happiness of the church militant and triumphant is built.—These blessings are equally secured with the throne of God, and of the Lamb, and the perpetual flow of the river or the water of life that proceeds therefrom. The everlasting life of the redeemed is some-way interwoven with the personal properties of the glorious Trinity : for, as the Spirit, personally considered, proceeds from the Father and the Son ; so he proceeds communicatively out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb, to water all the redeemed, as an everflowing and overflowing river of everlasting life. A glorious Trinity may be seen in every spiritual blessing : hence may a believer say, This pardon, for example, is a divine blessing, it is from the throne of God ; it is a purchased blessing, it is from the throne of the Lamb ; it is a sealed blessing, by the Spirit, as a river running from the throne of God and of the Lamb, so as the happiness of the redeemed cannot fail, nor the river cease to run out to their everlasting life, no more than God can cease to be God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one everlasting God, in three persons. The stream of grace here, and glory hereafter, proceeds from a fountain that can never be drained ; here they will drink, and bathe, and swim for ever, if we may be allowed the expression. The throne of God will still be the throne of the Lamb ; he

will

will still be a God in Christ : and the throne of the Lamb will still be the throne of God ; for to him the Father says, *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.* And the throne of God and of the Lamb will still be a throne whence the everlasting Spirit will proceed like a pure crystal river ; for he will never cease to be a free Spirit, a free fountain of living waters.—O glorious and blessed security.

V. The *fifth* thing proposed was, To deduce some *inferences* for the *application*. Is it so, *That the living Spirit of God, communicating all the blessings, of everlasting life graciously here, and gloriously hereafter, proceeds like a pure crystal river out of the throne of God and of the Lamb?* Then,

1. Hence see the *harmony* between the church militant and triumphant ; they drink of the same river : only here we have but drops, but there they have the ocean, and drink at the fountain-head : the utmost here is a *staying us with flaggons*, but there the redeemed swim in the river of life. The saints in glory, as well as believers on earth, hold their title unto everlasting life of Christ : their everlasting happiness is grounded upon the blood of the Lamb, and flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb. Christ will be the glass, even in heaven, wherein the glory of God will be seen through the pure river of the water of life clear as crystal.

2. Hence see the *happiness* of every believer who have got but one saving drop of this river poured out upon his heart ; for this Spirit of God and of the Lamb will be *in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life*, John iv. 14. ; and that because this water proceeds from the throne of God and of the Lamb.—It is a royal blessing from the divine throne ; and the blessings of the throne are the best blessings. Many are content with the blessings of the footstool, and hunt only after these, saying, *Who will shew us any earthly good?* But, blessed are these that cannot be satisfied with any thing less than throne-blessings ; *Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me : then shall I have*

I have more gladness than the wicked world, in the time that their corn and wine increase, Psalm iv. 6. O see what a royal gift it is to get the Spirit; Christ ascended up on high, and led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, Psalm lxxviii. 18.

3. Hence see the *glory* of God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, shining in the work of redemption thro' Jesus, and in the way of our salvation thro' his blood and righteousness. Here, as in a glass, we may see the glory of God the Father sitting on the same throne with Christ, that is, appearing as a God in Christ; the glory of Christ the Son, our Redeemer, exalted to the Father's throne, after he had finished his work; and the glory of the Holy Ghost in his breathings and blessings, graces and comforts, proceeding like a pure crystal river out of the throne of God and of the Lamb: and also the glory of all the divine attributes; their honour is secured in this throne of grace, from whence grace and mercy vents, to the credit and honour of justice and truth, through the justice-satisfying blood of the Lamb; therefore it is said, *Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne.*

4. Hence see how glorious the *gospel* is, and how powerful, while it is in the channel wherein the Spirit of life, the river of the water of life runs from the throne of God and of the Lamb; *Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?* Gal. iii. 2. It is by the *hearing of faith*; and hence the Spirit and the word are put together in a promise to Christ, and in him to all his seed; *This is my covenant with them, saith the Lord, My Spirit which is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever, Isaiah lix. 21.*—This river of life, for quickening dead souls, runs always in the channel of the word of grace and promise; and the gospel is the *ministration of the Spirit* in the hands of his sent servants: and this ought to be highly prized by all that are followers of the Lamb, and would enjoy the witness of his Spirit from the throne. There

are, indeed, in our day, many that are but ministers of the letter ; these ought to be discouraged and discountenanced : but there are some evidently ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the Spirit ; these ought to be highly encouraged and countenanced ; for, though *the letter kills, the Spirit gives life*, 2 Cor. iii. 6.—It is dangerous to desert a ministry wherein the Spirit of life run ; this were to run away from the river that proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

This, by the bye, may shew us a rule for our conduct in this day of division, when many of the Lord's own children are ready to run to some dangerous extremes with reference to their countenancing this or the other minister. Why, if they are ministers of the letter, that have nothing of a gospel-spirit, or of the Spirit of faith or faithfulness in preaching or managing ; and, if this be evident, why not ? Let us testify duly against them : but, if we have to do with ministers of the Spirit, let us remember, that some of these are appointed of God for such a work ; and some for another work ; and some of them have a greater measure of the Spirit of faith and zeal than others ; and some of them have a lesser measure given them of God, according to the work he hath for them : but, if they have any measure of a gospel-spirit, and of the Spirit of faith and faithfulness in their station, though they come not up to the same measure and degree with others, nor be set upon the same ground, beware of slighting and despising them ; for the great river of the city of God runs out in many streams, some greater and some lesser, and to despise the least stream is to despise the river ; *He that despiseth you despiseth me.*

5. Hence see what it is that would make *good and happy days* in the church militant ; namely, the running out of this river more plentifully : *Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness*

teousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever, Isaiah xxxii. 15,—17. O when may we expect such a day! Indeed, such is the universal corruption of church and state, and such hath been our perjury, covenant-breaking and blood-shed, unrepented of; and such is the profanity, error, and blasphemy of the day we live in, that in all appearance, before the happy day of the outpouring of the Spirit, we may expect a terrible day of the outpouring of blood. Our national bloody sins are crying for bloody vengeance; and many see it hastening on. But, Sirs, what is it that will wash away Scotland's bloody guilt and bloody gore at once? What but a flood from heaven; even a flow of the pure river, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb! Whatever sad days may come before it, yet this is the happy day you ought to seek, for Zion's sake, and for the sake of the rising generations in Scotland, and of future ages.

6. Hence see what would make a *heartsome communion solemnity* among us this day, amidst all the sad signs of the times, namely, the running down of this river. And see, at the same time, what ground we have to expect this river of life to run out; the ground of hope is, because the Lamb is enthroned. The time was that the Spirit, the Holy Ghost, was not given plentifully, *Because Jesus was not yet glorified*, John vii. 39. But now Jesus was glorified, the Lamb is sitting on his Father's throne; therefore we may seek and expect that the Spirit may be poured out. Let faith act, for supplies of this water, upon Christ's exaltation to the Father's right-hand to give repentance and remission of sins; exalted to give the Spirit of faith and repentance, to give the Spirit of holiness and comfort; exalted to the well-watered throne to let out the river plentifully. Again,

7. To raise our hope and experience, let us from this doctrine see, that the throne of God and of the Lamb is no *penurious* throne, that hath little to spare; as in our *Father's house there is bread enough and to spare*, so about our Father's throne, the throne of God and

of the Lamb, there is water enough and to spare, the pure river of the water of life fully and freely proceeding out of it. The *seven Spirits* are said to be *before the throne*, Rev. i. 4 ; that is, the one eternal Spirit of God, as a river flowing out in all his various streams of gifts, influences, operations, breathings, blessings, and comforts : this river is before the throne. Which says, by the bye, that it is good to go boldly and frequently to the throne of grace ; for this quickening river will meet us by the way ; and whenever our feet touch the river, then, like a flood, it will carry us off our own feet, and bear us up towards the throne, as the water did the ark to the top of Ararat.

3. Hence see how we may attain *communion* with God at a communion-table, and how we are to go there : you ought to go with as great awe and reverence as if you were going to the throne of God, for his throne is at the head of the table. But then, how shall we go to the throne of God, who is an infinitely holy and just God, whereas we are guilty, guilty sinners ? Why, we cannot go to the throne of God but through Jesus Christ ; and through him we ought to go boldly, because it is not only the throne of God, but of the Lamb, by whose blood we have boldness to enter into the holiest. But again, if you think, how shall we go thus to the throne of God and of the Lamb, having no life or power to do any thing ? Why, indeed, we cannot win to it but, as it were, swimming in the river that is before the throne, the river of the Spirit's influences and graces, that proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. That which brings us to the throne must proceed out of the throne ; therefore we are to go believingly and dependently, being strong only in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, the grace that is in the throne of grace to be freely communicate from it.

9. Hence we may see the *marks* and *characters* of right and *worthy communicants*. They are such as have got a discovery of what is here shewed unto John : *He shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb.—*

I do not mean, that every true believer gets such an extraordinary discovery as John here got the revelation of; but there is something of the mystery thereof in some degree that, I think, every believer gets some view of, particularly in these three things, by which you may examine yourself.

(1.) Have you got a view of the *throne of God*; I mean, of God himself, in his infinite holiness and justice? For God sits upon the throne of his holiness, justice, and other glorious attributes; and to see the throne of God, is to see and know him to be Majesty itself; for a throne points out majesty. Have you ever apprehended the majesty of his holiness and justice, and that the throne of iniquity cannot have fellowship with him; that *he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*; that he is a God *that will by no means clear the guilty*? And hath ever the view of this made you tremble and quake, and fear, lest you should never have fellowship with him, because you are nothing but a mass of sin and guilt?

(2.) Have you ever, upon the back of this, got a view of the throne of God as the *throne of the Lamb*, so as the terrible majesty of the throne hath been allayed by the apprehension of divine mercy, venting thro' the blood of the Lamb that was slain; slain *virtually* from the foundation of the world; slain *actually* on the cross at Jerusalem, and now sitting gloriously upon his Father's throne? In this light have you seen infinite holiness honoured and vindicated by the obedience of the Lamb, and infinite justice pleased and satisfied by the death and blood of the Lamb? And hath the view of this turned the throne of God from a terrible to an amiable throne in your eye? The throne of God and of the Lamb is nothing else but a God in Christ reconciling the world to himself; a God declaring himself well-pleased in Jesus Christ.—Hath the view of this turned your fear to hope, and your terror to triumph?

(3.) Have you ever hereupon seen and felt, to your experience, *living waters* proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb? Have you seen the fulness

of the Spirit to be in Christ, as anointed therewith above measure? And have you ever found this living water gushing from the throne, as it were, in a sweet flood of influences? When you was pouring out your heart before the Lord, he was pouring out this flood upon you, and making you, as it were, swim in this river.—Believer, know you not something less or more about this? Well, what was the quality of the water which you was then baptized with? Perhaps you came to the throne *empty* and *destitute*, and like dry ground; but, before you went away, you was filled as with the fulness of a river gushing out upon you.—Possibly you came to the throne very *dead* and *lifeless*, saying, Oh! is it possible that these dry bones can live? But your soul was quickened, and brought to life and liveliness, so as you found the river to be indeed a river of the water of life; of life to your dead soul.—May be you came *polluted* and *unclean*, crying out, *Behold, I am vile!* Will ever such a vile beast have access to God, or be washed from stains? Yet, behold, you found your soul surrounded with purifying waters, with the pure river of the water of life, inasmuch that, perhaps, at that time, though it was a mistake, yet you joyfully imagined, that all pollution, corruption, and impurity, was washed away with the happy flood that sweetly overwhelmed you, and drowned all your lusts? Was not the river then in your view as a pure and purifying river?—Again, perhaps, you came to the throne under many *doubts* and *fears*, and *dark clouds*; but, say you, before I went away, I got a clear view of the mercy of God in Christ, a clear view of his everlasting love, a clear view of the door of hope open to me; or, at least, that there was hope in Israel even for me. You thus found the *pure river of the water of life* to be *clear as crystal*, when a gush of that water was able to clear your eye, when it was dim; to clear your mind, when it was dark and confused; to clear your conscience, when it was black with guilt: the streams of the river, clear as crystal, running thro' your heart, made all clear before it.

Have

Have you ever got any view and experience of these things in some measure, however small the degree be? Then you have the mark and character of such as have a right to the communion-table: but, if you never got a view of the *throne of God*, or of the majesty of God, so as to fear his wrath because of your sinfulness; and if you never got a view of the *throne of the Lamb*, or of the mercy of God in Christ, so as to hope in his mercy, as venting through the blood of the Lamb; and if you never felt any drop of this pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of that throne; if you never found one gush of that river of the Spirit's influences, either filling your empty soul, quickening your dead soul, purifying your polluted soul, or clearing your dark mind; then surely you have no right to the communion-table, as being a stranger to communion and fellowship with a God in Christ, by the Spirit.

It may be some poor weak believer will tell me, "Sir, I think, indeed, I am no utter stranger to what you have been saying: there was such a time, and such a time, wherein I thought I got a view of these things; but, alas! all is now gone! the throne of God and of the Lamb is out of view, and the gush of influences from the throne, that I was watered with, is all dried up, and I am nothing but like a piece of parched ground." Well, it may be so; but here is good news; the throne of God and of the Lamb still remains; the pure river of the water of life is still subsisting; and the throne of God and of the Lamb, is still the fountain of living waters, that can never be dried up or drained, but is as full as ever. Therefore, wait about the throne for the pouring out of the Spirit, as *waters upon the thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground*.

10. Hence see the *duty* of all that hear this gospel, namely, to *come and take of the water of life freely*; to come to Christ, and drink of the river that proceeds out of the throne. This inference is drawn from this doctrine, in the 17th verse of the same chapter; *The Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that is athirst come,*

come ; and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely. Isa. lv. 1. Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters. John vii. 37, 38, 39. On the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink : for he that believeth on me, out of his belly, out of his heart and bowels, shall flow rivers of living water. This he speaks of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive.

He who then stood and cried in this manner before he ascended to the throne, he appointed us to be criers in his name, with this encouragement, *Lo, I am with you always to the end of the world.* Indeed, if it were not for this encouragement, in vain would we cry to you, but, O regard the cry of the Son of God, saying, *If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink of this pure river of living water.* I cannot offer you the sacrament safely, till I offer Christ to you, the substance of it ; and you cannot take the sacrament honestly, till you accept of the offer, otherwise you will eat and drink unworthily. Let me therefore press this *exhortation* on you, before I close, with a few considerations ; and, O look up for power to accompany them. I shall go no further than my text and context.

(1.) Consider the *authority* by which you are called to come to Christ, and drink of these living waters. It is a divine authority ; the orders are issued from the throne of God ; *This is his commandment, that ye should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ,* 1 John iii. 23. Are orders from an earthly throne to be regarded, coming in the name and authority of the prince ? O what infinitely more regard is to be had to the throne of God ! to the divine authority ! If a poor man only were calling you to come to Christ, you might safely sit the call, and say, *By what authority do you these things ?* But all the authority of the throne of God and of the Lamb is here interposed ; and you cannot sit the call, without trampling on the authority of God.

(2.) Consider the *glory* of that Jesus, who invites you to come to him and share of this living water, and drink of this pure crystal river. O that in this clear stream

stream of the Spirit's illumination, you could see the glory of Christ, who says, *He shall glorify me!* There is a twofold glory of Christ here: he presents, 1. His imperial throne; 2. His glorious mediatorial fulness. —His *glorious throne*: how glorious soever the throne of God is, so glorious is the throne of the Lamb; for here you see the throne of the Lamb is the throne of God: and though he be the Lamb that was slain, yet he is God equal with the Father, *and thinks it no robbery to be equal with God*: and the Father thinks it no disparagement to him to set the Lamb in the midst of his throne. O glorious Jesus! His blood was the blood of God; his righteousness the righteousness of God; his wisdom is the wisdom of God; his power is the power of God; and his throne is the throne of God. Angels and archangels worship with reverence before his throne.—His *glorious fulness* is here also presented, *all the fulness of the Godhead is in him*; all the Father's fulness is in him, and all the Spirit's fulness is in him. The fulness of the Spirit, that ever any mere creature had, is but like the fulness of a vessel; but the fulness of the Spirit that is in Christ, the Lamb of God, is the fulness of a fountain: and hence it is that the Spirit, and all spiritual blessings, proceed like a *pure river of water of life out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb*.

(3.) Consider the *qualities* of these waters which Jesus calls you to come to him for. They are such as, whatever be your sad natural state, or your miserable present case, there is suitable relief presented therein.

[1.] Are you *destitute* and *empty* of all good, empty of all grace? O let that be no hinderance, but a reason to move you to come to Christ, and look to the Lamb that is on the Father's throne; for here is a full fountain, a flowing river: he calls you not to come and *give*, but to come and take what you need. O bring all your empty vessels here; this river comprehends no less than God himself, and all his perfections; Christ himself, and all his fulness; the Spirit himself, and all his graces, blessings, and comforts.

[2.] Are you *dead in law*, and *dead in sin*, dead in state, and heart, and frame? Let that be no hindrance, but a reason to move you to come to Jesus for a drink of this river; because it is the river of the water of life. Christ's great complaint is, *Ye will not come to me, that you might have life*: the life of absolution from the sentence of the law condemning you to eternal death; together with the life of grace here, and glory hereafter: life to your dead souls; present life, future life, everlasting life.

[3.] Are you *polluted* with the nastiness of hell about you, and altogether filthy and unclean? This is another reason why you must come to Jesus, and share of this pure river, and purifying water. This is the quality of the river to which you are invited to come: the streams of this pure river will wash and cleanse your impure heart, and wash you *from all filthiness of the flesh and of the Spirit*.

[4.] In a word, Are you *dark and ignorant*, and *unclean* in your mind about the knowledge of God, and the things of God; and in your conscience about peace with God? Why, here is no bar, but a motive to come to Christ and take of the *water of life freely*; for another quality of the waters is, that they are *clear as crystal*. And how shall you get either the mind cleared from darkness, or the conscience cleared of guilt, but by looking, as it were, through this crystal flood that proceeds out of the throne; I mean, the clear glass of the Spirit's illumination, to see by this means that the throne of God is the throne of the Lamb; that is, that God is a God in Christ, whom, to see and know, is life eternal; there is clearing to the mind. And to see also, that the Lamb upon the throne of God now, is the Lamb that was slain to be a sacrifice to satisfy justice and expiate guilt; there is clearing for the conscience, when discerned, that, being justified by faith, you may have peace with God. Consider then the quality of these waters which the Lord Jesus calls you to come and take, to come and drink; they can answer every case.

(4.) Consider what is the *quality* of those that are invited to come to these waters, and upon what *terms* you may have a drink here, and live for ever : why, the exhortation here says, *Let him that is athirst come ; and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely*, ver. 17. Here is the quality, *Let him that is athirst come*. Who is the *thirsty* person ? I answer, It is the man that stands in need of a drink. If you need a drink of this water ; if you need Christ ; then you are invited to come and drink. Why, say you, we all need Christ ; then say I, you are all welcome for to come to Christ ; and I dare seek no other qualification of you.

“ But pray, Sir, say you, tell us plainly what you mean by this *thirst* : for I thought I would have been excluded by this qualification, because perhaps I have not a right thirst ? ” Why, man, I dare not, upon my peril, add any thing to this word, only, *Let him that is athirst come ;* because of the word that follows that text, ver. 18. *If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book*. Now, if I should add any thing to this word, *Let him that is athirst come*, by saying, The call is only to you that thirst rightly, to you that thirst greatly, to you that thirst vehemently, to you that thirst spiritually, to you that thirst after nothing else but this water of life, then I would run the terrible hazard of adding to God’s word, and also the hazard of scarring you from coming to Christ, saying, I fear I want this and that qualification. God hath set down the word *universally*, without qualifying what kind of a thirst it is, that so the call may be widely extended to all that thirst under heaven : therefore says Christ again, John vii. 37. *If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink*. *If any man*, that is, any man or woman under heaven ; for God created man male and female : if any man, any person of Adam’s race, needs a drink of these waters of life, let him come. But some are thirsting after the world, after their vile lusts ; are not these excluded ? No, no : the Spirit of God comments upon this thirst, and invites even these by name, as persons that

stand much in need of Christ, Isaiah lv. 1, 2. *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters, &c. Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?* That is, All ye that are seeking and thirsting after satisfaction in the muddy waters of the world, and in the filthy water of your lusts, come to me, and you will get better water for nothing, even the pure river of the water of life; and so it is all thirsters under heaven that hear this gospel, even all that need a drink of this water. And why doth Christ, think you, offer himself to you all, and every one of you? Not only because you all need him, but because his Father gives him to you, as he says, John vi. 32. *My Father gives you the true bread from heaven:* Even so, which is the same thing, his Father gives you the true water of life, everlasting life is given in the word; *This is his record, that God hath given you eternal life, and this life is in his Son.* You have a right to it, and a right to take what God gives. Say not, If he be given to *me*, there needs no more, I am happy: Why, man, you might die of thirst, tho' one gave you a cup of water, if you would not take and drink what is given you; so you may die and perish for ever, though Christ, and the water of everlasting life be given you, in this word, if you do not take and welcome the gift of God to your heart; and you perish fearfully if you reject and neglect what was thus given you. If you ask, What is the *least* qualification required, in order to come to the throne of God and of the Lamb for this river of the water of life? Indeed, I cannot tell you what is the least: for, let us seek from you never so little a qualification, Christ will seek less; let us go never so low, Christ will go lower. He that came down as low as hell to make the purchase, will come down as low as hell to make the application. Therefore, sinner, though you be in a deep hell of sin and misery, out of the belly of hell look to him and be saved. If you need Christ, and think he can do you any good, it is qualification enough. For God's sake, shut not the door of hope against yourself, when God is opening it to you. Though your thirst be no other than

than like that of the dry ground, that needs a shower, O come to him that says, *Isaiah xlv. 3. I will pour water on the thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground.*—God is at pains to find out words to fit your condition, and to shut all back-doors, that your unbelief may have no excuse, and that none here may have it to say, The offer was not made to me.

If these considerations and arguments were duly pondered, they might have weight : but, alas ; no argument will do but an argument of power ; no motive will do, if God be not the mover. You remain dead carcases, dead souls, notwithstanding all the words that can be said concerning these living waters that issue from the throne of God and of the Lamb. But, O ! since it is life eternal to know God and the Lamb. I must tell you, that this moment, that spiritual life, which is and will be eternal, will begin to stir in your heart and soul, be it never so dead ; if this moment you begin to know, that this God that sits upon the throne with the Lamb, is the living God ; and that this Lamb that sits upon the throne of God, is the Lamb that was dead and is alive, and lives for evermore ; and that this river, that proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, is the river of the water of life, the living Spirit of God and of the Lamb : *They that know his name, will put their trust in him.* If you know the name of this living God, though you were never so dead, the life of faith, and hope, and trust in him, will begin. And there are two parts of his name, that, I think, I am commissioned to declare among a company of dead souls here, which you shall no sooner savingly know, but you shall instantly live.

One part of his name is, *Exod. iii. 4. I AM THAT I AM.* And, I think, he, whose name is, *I am*, hath sent me to tell you, that this is his name ; the God of beings, who hath life and being in himself : He is being itself, and none can say, *I am* but himself. All the creatures in heaven and earth are nothing before him : He brought them out of nothing, and they are reducible to nothing if he pleases,

Another

Another part of his name is, Rom. iv. 17. *The God that quickens the dead, and calls the things that are not as though they were.* Now, O dead and lifeless soul ! if you have but ears to hear this gospel, do you know that this is the name of God ? I ask not, if you *think* and *fancy* so ; but do you *know* and *believe* that he is *the God that quickens the dead*, and quickens whom he will, and is able to quicken you ? Do you know and believe that he is the God that *calls things that are not, as though they were* : who with his bare word can give a being to that which is nothing, and create light and life, where there was nothing but darkness and death, saying, *Let there be light : let there be life ?* Now, if you know your own name to be darkness and death ; and if you know this name of the Lord to be *The Lord of light and life ; the God that quickens the dead*, then I know there will be some stirring among the dead and dry bones and hearts here : *Ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, and shall put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live,* Ezekiel xxxviii. 13, 14.

There is no room then for any to object, Why is the minister calling us all to come to Christ, and take of this water of life ? How can one come to Christ for life, that hath no life enabling him to come ? Indeed, I could not well answer that, if it were only the word of the minister that was calling : but he calls you who hath the words of eternal life, and whose word creates life, whose word recovers life, whose word maintains life, whose word perfects life, quickening whom he will to everlasting life, and whose words are Spirit and life ; insomuch, that one drop of this river of the water of life, mixed with this word, will make it a life-giving word : Therefore, in his great name, who says, *I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live ;* in his name and authority, we say, O dead and dry bones, rise and live ; for, *the God that quickens the dead calls you.* O lame and diseased souls that cannot stir, rise and come, for the Lord of life calls you. O dead sinner, dead Lazarus, that hath been so long rotting

rotting in the grave of sin and sloth, come forth, come forth ; for he that is the resurrection and the life calls you. However long or short time you have been dead in sins and trespasses, and stinking in that filthy sepulchre, yet if there be any stream of the water of life running from the throne this moment, any motion of the living Spirit about your heart, then a quickening voice from the throne of God and of the Lamb is calling you. Words without power will not do with you ; the words of men and angels cannot give you the least degree of life, nor quicken that dead heart of yours ; but, *where the word of a king is, there is power.* Rise then, dying, drooping soul, the Master calls you. The King of glory that sits upon the Father's throne is speaking to you, and saying, "*Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away :* however foul and filthy, black and ugly in thyself. Lo ! *The winter is past, and the rain is over and gone ;* the storm of divine wrath, that should have fallen on thee for ever, is over thy head, and hath fallen on my head, when I swate in the garden, and hang upon the cross ; and now I have mounted my Father's throne, to draw thee up to me, and to send down my Spirit as the river of life, to run into thy heart, and quicken thee to hear my voice, and answer my call. Come then, though you see yourself black like hell, and like a devil ; *Rise my love, my fair one, and come away. Come with me from Lebanon ; from the lions dens, and mountains of leopards.* Come away from this vain world, this vile world, this venomous and viperous world ; come and share of my grace in time, and my glory for ever after time." Blessed are they that hear his voice, and open to him. If the river of life that proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb be running through any heart here, the work is done, life is begun, and open doors are made for the King of glory : if it be otherwise, I have no more to say, but, glory to God and the Lamb, that *as many as were ordained to eternal life shall believe,* and live for ever.

S E R M O N XCVIII.

The COMER's CONFLICT; or, the BEGINNER'S BATTLE WITH THE DEVIL, when endeavouring to come to CHRIST by Faith*.

LUKE ix. 42.

And as he was yet a coming, the Devil threw him down and tare him.—

HERE is the history of Christ's healing a lunatic child, whose father came to the disciples, and they could not cure him; and now he cometh to Christ. As we ought to come to Christ ourselves for healing, so we ought to bring our children to him; and when servants and other means can do us no good, we ought to go to the master, and look over the head of all ministers and servants. After Christ had reproached the disciples for their unbelief, he gives the poor man an encouraging word concerning his son; *Bring thy son hither*, ver. 41. Bring him to me. We ought to bring our sons and our daughters to Christ; to bring our diseases and all our various cases to Christ. But after this encouragement, follows a trial in the text: *As he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down and tare him.*

In which words we have three things observable, namely,

* This Subject was handled in two Discourses. The first was delivered at an evening exercise, on Saturday, July 19. 1735. before the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, at Kinglassie on the 20th. The second was preached on the Monday, after the administration of that ordinance.——It hath undergone five impressions.

1. An excellent *duty* ; that is, *coming* to Christ.
2. An eminent *trial* and heavy *dispensation* that beset the comer ; *The devil threw him down and tare him.*
3. The *time* and *juncture* when this heavy trial and great affliction beset him, namely, *As he was yet a coming.*

Hence we may observe the three following particulars.

(1.) The *best course* that any can take for relief from whatever afflicts them, is to come to Jesus the Saviour.

(2.) They who come to Christ for help will be an *eye-sore* to hell and the devil ; he will be sure to fly upon them.

(3.) They who come to Christ for help and healing, though they may be sure he will help and heal them, yet they may find their case *worse* before the relief come ; they may be thrown down, and torn, as it were, to pieces by the way. Or thus, Christ may undertake to deliver people, and yet their distress may grow upon their hand before their deliverance come. Here is Christ's undertaking, *Bring him hither to me.* Here is the person coming with hope of deliverance, *he is on his way coming to Jesus* ; and yet, behold, here is a dreadful dash, a mighty trial to faith and hope, both in the father and son : yea, after he was come to the physician, and the healing word spoken, as you see, Mark ix. 25, 26. where this same history is recorded, with other circumstances, *The spirit cried, and rent him sore before he came out of him, and so he was as one dead, insomuch, that many said, He is dead.*

Well then, the doctrinal observation, we would incline briefly to prosecute from these words, may be framed as follows.

DOCTR. *That people, who come to Christ, and whom he undertakes to heal and help, may have their distress growing on their hand, before the deliverance come, which yet will certainly come.*

It is in this case, as it was with Israel in Egypt, *God saw their affliction*, and undertook to come and save them; and yet, behold, before their deliverance comes, their bondage becomes heavier than before. The darkest time of the night may be before day break. Thus it was with Israel, in returning from Babylon, to rebuild the temple in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. — The king gives commandment to go and build; God stirs up the civil authority to give encouragement to them: but quickly the haters of Zion, misrepresenting the work, procure an order to cause them desist from it. This doctrine then is verified both with relation to God's public work towards a church, and his particular work on the souls of his people, as you see it was with the ruler of the synagogue, Mark v. 23. that applied to Christ in behalf of his daughter at the point of death, that he might come and heal her. Christ went with him: but see what sad news he gets from his house, *Trouble not the Master, for your daughter is dead*, ver. 35. And now they looked upon the matter as hopeless, tho' yet Christ was on his way to save her.

The method we would lay down, for the farther prosecuting this subject, through supernatural aid, shall be the following.

- I. We will speak a little of *coming* to Christ.
- II. Enquire in what *respects* matters may grow *worse* with people, even when they are thus coming to Christ.
- III. Enquire into the *reasons* whence it is that people who come to Christ for help, and whom he undertakes to help, may find their *distresses* grow before their *deliverance* come.
- IV. Make some *application* of the whole.

I. We are to speak a little of *coming* to Christ — There are only two things I would observe here.

i. Coming to Christ imports a view that *vain is the help of man*; vain is the help of the creatures; vain is the help of ministers, means, and ordinances of themselves. Thus it was here with the father of the child;

I be-

I besought thy disciples to cast him out, but they could not, ver. 40. So they who come to Christ find *all other refuges fail them*, Psalm cxlii. 4. ; other physicians were of no value. None come to Christ till they can do no better ; yet he is content with such comers that see there is no other shift for them.

2. This coming to Christ imports a putting the *work in his hand* ; *Master, I beseech thee look upon my son* : he prays, and he brings him to Christ at the Lord's call. They that truly come to Christ for help, they put the work in his hand, and give him employment in his saving offices, looking on him as able, and willing, and ready to save : the disease is half cured when it is laid at Christ's feet. Happy they that come thus to him, and intrust him with their souls, and trust with their cases : *Commit thy way unto the Lord ; trust also in him, and he will bring it to pass*, Psalm xxxvii. 5.

II. The second head proposed was, to enquire in what *respects* may matters *grow worse* with people, even when they are thus coming to Christ. Here two things are recorded ; 1. Satan's assault, *The devil threw him down.* 2. How he used him, *And he tare him.*

1. They who come to Christ, before they get the deliverance which is insured to them, they may meet with *down-casting* providences ; *The devil threw him down.* They may be cast down with discouragement and despondency for a while ; cast down with fears and doubts ; cast down with jealous apprehensions and unbelieving thoughts. Believing souls, after their coming to Christ, much more as they are coming at first, may be greatly cast down ; *O my God, my soul is cast down within me*, Psalm xlii. 6. They may be cast down with a multitude of perplexing thoughts, despairing thoughts, and manifold objections and scruples, their mind raises, or rather unbelief frames within them.

2. They may not only be thrown down, but *torn* by the way ; *The devil threw him down and tare him.* Whenever a man begins to come to Christ, and the devil begins to fear he shall lose his possession, then he

rages against that man, and would tear him to pieces. Therefore think not strange that beginners in religion and such as are coming, or but lately come to Christ, or even these who have come formerly, and are coming again to him, may be mightily assaulted and attacked by all the powers of hell. So long as people remain at a distance from Christ, the devil does not meddle with them; *He keeps the house, and the goods are at peace*; but in coming to Christ they may lay their account to be torn by torments, torn by terrors, and blasphemous suggestions; they may lay their account with fiery darts. When we expect the Lord is about to remove one burden, he may lay on another, that he may have the more mercy on us.

III. The next thing proposed was, to enquire into the *reasons* whence it is that people, who coming to Christ for help, and whom he undertakes to help, may find their *distress* grow before their *deliverance* come. Whatever malicious hand the devil hath in this matter, God hath a holy hand in permitting it.

1. God's design in it is to shew his *wisdom* and *power*.

(1.) It is to manifest his *wisdom*: how he can advance his work, by the stops in the way of it; and enrich his people, by impoverishing them; enlarge them, by imprisoning them: and *give them meat out of the eater, and sweet out of the strong*.

(2.) It is to evince his *power*; how he can support them under, and deliver them from their distresses, which would not appear so much, if their distress came not to a height. He suffers them to be dejected and torn, that his wisdom and power may appear the more evidently in lifting them up and healing them.

2. It is to *check the unbelief* that attends our faith in coming to Christ. Sometimes when we commit our case to him by faith, we do not exercise this faith to a *patient waiting for the Lord*. Christ's *first* word to his people is, *Come to me*, Matth. xi. 28.; and his *last* word is, *Abide in me*, John xv. 4. It is well done to come, but, alas! we do not abide; and therefore, to
check

check our unbelief in coming, as it were, but one step, and going back the next step, he shews the need of going forward, by letting loose the enemy, and suffering matters to grow worse with us.

3. It is to raise the *worth* and *esteem* of his mercies in the hearts of these who come to him. We usually do not know the worth of mercy, till we be deprived of it; nor the worth of deliverance, till the distress be extremely great: help is then highly esteemed, when we can say, *I was brought low, and he helped me.*

4. It is to try our *faith*, whether or not it be such as will not only come to Christ, but also abide with him till he work the deliverance; and if we can keep our eye upon the deliverer, when the deliverance is delayed; our eye upon the promise, when cross providences appear; and can hope against hope. He designs the trial of faith for the present, and a more glorious issue thereafter.

IV. The last general head proposed was, To make some *application*. Is it so, *That people who come to Christ, and whom he undertakes to heal and help, may have their distresses growing on their hand, before the deliverance come, which yet will certainly come?* Hence we may see,

1. What a *cruel enemy* the devil is to immortal souls, and their eternal salvation: for, whenever a soul begins to mind religion in earnest, and to come to Christ for help and deliverance, then that soul becomes the object of the devil's spite and malice. As long as people remain graceless, and Christless, and formal, the devil will let them enjoy themselves, and hugs them asleep in their security; but as soon as they begin to come to Christ, then he will attempt to cast them down and tear them, and stirs up all his wicked instruments, either to discourage and ridicule them, or to tear their name and reputation to pieces, and to persecute them with tongue or hand, or to raise a hue and cry against them, as if they were turned distracted, and out of their wits. As they are coming, *the devil throws them down and tears them.*

2. Hence

2. Hence see the *reason* of all the *melancholly moods*, *heavy damps*, and *great discouragements* of many beginners, that are setting on in the Lord's way; though *wisdom's ways be ways of pleasantness*, yet Satan, who is a *liar from the beginning*, would make the world believe, that it is a bitter and unpleasant way; and that the beginning of religion is but the *beginning of sorrows*.

3. Hence see the difference between the *conviction of the Spirit* and the *temptation of Satan*; and the difference between the distress of soul, that arises from a law-work before conversion, and that which arises from the assault of the enemy of our salvation; whenever conviction begins, and the soul comes to be troubled for sin, and under fear of hell and wrath, Satan indeed fishes in the muddy water, and mixes his temptations with the Spirit's convictions; and if he can bring all convictions to nothing, either by force or fraud, he will do it, that the convinced soul may never come to Christ for a cure: *Satan will stand at his right hand to resist him*. But the difference between them is,

(1.) The *conviction of the Spirit* are BEFORE a man come to Christ, and tend as a severe *school-master to lead him to Christ*, Gal. iii. 24. But the *temptations of the devil* are especially when a man is COMING to Christ, in order to keep him from coming.—If the Spirit of God, by a law-work, seem as it were, to cast down the man, and tear him to pieces, the design is to *oblige* him to go to Christ for help and healing; and to provoke him to come to the Saviour, and fly to the city of refuge. But the design of the devil's temptations, when he throws down and tears the soul, is, when he is coming, or as he is coming to Christ, in order to *detain* him from coming, or discourage him in coming.

(2.) The *convictions of the Spirit* are *humbling*, tending to make the soul despair of help in himself, or in God out of Christ. The *temptations of the enemy* are *terrifying*, tending to make the soul despair of help in Christ, or in God through him: the former shuts the door

door of hope by the law ; but the devil would shut the door of hope by the gospel.

4. Hence see there is no ground to *blame religion* and *religious duties*, notwithstanding discouragements and downcasting trials in the way of duty : though matters grow worse with you in the way of duty, and in the way of coming to Christ, blame not yourself for coming to Christ, because the devil attacks you by the way. You have enough to charge yourself with, though you charge not yourself foolishly. It would be far worse with you if the devil and your own wicked heart prevail to take you off from the use of promising means. When, like Peter, you cast yourself upon the water to come to Christ, be not terrified, though the devil raise a storm ; the Lord Jesus *sits upon the floods, and is mightier than the noise of many waters*, Psalm xciii. 4.—Never think the worse of Christ, though matters seem to grow worse with you, when you come to him for rest, and yet find trouble ; for it is the devil and the ill heart that breeds all the trouble : keep honourable thoughts of the Lord Jesus ; believe he can do for you, and wait till you find that he will do. Bring wind from all cross providences to hasten you nearer to your resting place ; for all that comes to him shall find rest in spite of the devil : some begun rest here in time, however disturbed by the devil from time to time, and by unbelief, until rest be perfected in heaven.

5. Hence see an *evidence* of a *true believer* and *comer* to Christ : if the devil be no enemy to your faith, you may know it is a false faith. Many have a faith that the devil is well enough pleased with ; and therefore he never troubles them nor it : but if you have saving faith, it will be the eye-sore of hell ; or if you be truly coming to Christ, you may expect the devil to be upon your top. No sooner doth true faith begin, but the fight of faith begins. Some may bless themselves they were never assaulted by the devil, and yet they are but sleeping, as it were, in the devil's cradle ; he is rocking them. Try your faith ; if it be from heaven it will meet with opposition from hell : *We wrestle not*
against

against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places, Ephes. vi. 12. Therefore we are called, as part of the Christian armour, to take *the shield of Faith, whereby we shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked, verse 16.* The devil may let you peaceably go about duty; read, and pray, and communicate, because you may do these things carnally and formally, and go to hell when all is done: but if once you begin to come to Christ, or to go about any duty believingly, then you are on the way to heaven, and if the devil can, he will draw you back, and throw you down with discouragements, and tear you with temptations, either as you are coming, or after you are come. But it is always the *best* faith that is most opposed by the devil.

This doctrine may be applied by way of *address*,
 1. To these who never yet came to Christ for help and salvation. 2. To these who are coming in obedience to his call.

1. To you who *never yet came to Christ* for help and salvation. Oh! stay not away from him for fear of the devil, lest he throw you down and tear you. Better be thrown down by the way in coming to Christ, than thrown down to hell, with the devil at last, by the hand of God, who will throw you and the devil down to hell if you do not come to Christ. Better that the devil tear you to pieces, when there is a Deliverer, even Jesus, at hand to deliver you from him, than that God himself tear you to pieces when there shall be none to deliver: *Consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver, Psalm l. 22.* Come, otherwise you remain slaves to the devil and your lusts. O be sensible of your slavery and malady! Know none can save you but our Lord Jesus Christ; he is a mighty Saviour, and a merciful one: *No name is given under heaven, whereby a sinner can be saved, but the name of Jesus.* Put the work in his hand; put your soul in his hand. *Bring him here to me, says*
 Christ

Christ, to the man here. O come and bring your children with you ; hear him saying, Bring your son to me, bring your daughter to me, bring your soul and your case to me ; O bring your diseale to me, bring your hard heart to me, and I will soften it ; bring your filthy heart to me, and I will cleanse it ; bring your heart possessed of the devil to me, and I will cast out the devil ; bring your seven devils to me, and I will cast them out.

2. We address ourselves to you who are *coming* in answer to his call. O be not dismayed, though the devil throw you down and tear you as you are coming. Here is a Saviour ready to lift up, whom the devil throws down ; ready to heal, whom the devil tears ; ready to help all that are hurt by the old serpent. It is his trade to *destroy the works of the devil*. You may be always sure that it is an evil spirit that is dealing with you, that would mar and hinder you in your coming to Christ ; for the voice of the Spirit of God is, *Come ; The Spirit and the bride say, Come*. The Spirit of God, as a Spirit of bondage, may cast down the soul before it come to Christ, and in order to its coming ; but it is not the Spirit of God that casts down the coming believer ; no, *We have not received the spirit of bondage again unto fear*, Rom. viii 15. After coming to Christ, and believing in him, it is only the devil that casts down and tears you. Fear not the lion of hell : here is the Lion of the tribe of Judah to defend you : it is unbelief and departing from Christ, that may bring you to the greatest danger ; therefore, *Fear not, only believe* *.

* This ends what was delivered on the saturday evening, In the first edition of this discourse, we are acquainted, that the Author enlarged the application, in some other inferences, upon the Sabbath-day ; but the notes of that discourse were not written. What follows, we are told, was delivered upon the Monday, after the sacrament.

S E R M O N XCIX.

LUKE ix. 42.

And as he was yet a coming, the Devil threw him down and tare him.—

[The second Sermon on this Text.]

THIS doctrine may be applied, at the time, in an *exhortation* or *advice* particularly to these that are *tempted* and *torn* of the devil, when they essay to come to the Lord Jesus. In order to your being fortified, through grace, against his assaults and fiery darts, there are only six sorts of temptations, I would, at present, endeavour to fortify you against, 1. With reference to *heart-blasphemy*. 2. With reference to *heart-wandering*. 3. With reference to the *commission* of sin. 4. With reference to the *omission* of duty. 5. With reference to *unworthy apprehensions* of God. 6. With reference to *self-murder*. There are temptations with reference to all these that you need to be fortified against ; while you are coming to Christ, Satan may attempt to throw you down, and tear you in all these, and many other respects ; but I shall touch a little at each of these.

1st, There are temptations of Satan with reference to *blasphemy*, whereby he would throw down and tear in pieces, as it were, the souls of these that come to the Lord Jesus Christ. They may be tempted to dreadful blasphemous thoughts, which are not to be named, they are so detestable and abominable ; they are fearful injections upon the mind, and very terrifying to a weak believer that is coming to the Lord Jesus Christ. In order to your being fortified against these, I would offer you the following advices.

I. Be

1. Be not *terrified* with them, since they harm you more by their horror, than by their guilt. It is true, the guilt of them is so great, that it is unpardonable to whom it belongs. These are Satan's sins, and not thine; and he shall answer for them, and not thou. Though he lay these blasphemous thoughts at your door, he is the father of them. Such thoughts are like lightnings cast into a room, they have a great deal of horror; but as the lightning springs not from any cause in the room, so these thoughts proceed not from any thing in thee; not properly from thy corruptions, for unregenerate men themselves abhor them; and though the seed of all sin be in our nature, yet scarce, if ever, doth this sin spring up even in reprobates; nay, the devil himself doth not think of God that which these thoughts signify. Since thou dost not actually, nor did originally in Adam, give consent to these thoughts, they are not thy sins. Suppose some villain should meet a chaste virgin in a field and ravish her, if she struggles and cries, she is innocent by the law of God; this is his her affliction, not her sin. She may mourn for her suffering, not her guilt; especially she doing nothing to provoke him. It may be the villain finds her at prayer, as the devil doth find thee, when he injects these thoughts. Therefore, be of good comfort, thou art more afraid than hurt: for a careless wandering thought in prayer, hath more guilt in it than these have. If one attempt suddenly to strike our eye, though we know he doth not intend to strike it, yet it cannot but wink; so we can scarce choose but be terrified with these thoughts; but we must resist and conquer such fears. I say not, we should not abhor such thoughts, for then we should be worse than heathens; but we should not be terrified out of our faith, or duties, or comforts thereby.

2. Do not *give over your duties* for these blasphemous thoughts and injections; for, tho' these thoughts are not thy sin, yet they may be the cause of thy sinning, if they cause thee to abstain from prayer, reading the word, attending upon the ordinances, and the like duties. You may, perhaps, think it better not to pray

than to have these thoughts : but thy prayers may do thee more good than these can do thee harm : and how wilt thou conquer if thou cast away thy weapons ? Neither hasten from duty ; for thus you do the devil too much homage ; his temptations should make you pray the more, not feldomer, or shorter.

3. *Think not over those thoughts again*, even when thou goest to God to complain of Satan and his dreadful assaults ; for, if thou yield not unto the tempter, these blasphemies are not the matter of confession, but rather of complaint ; as a woman that is ravished doth not confess, but lament her affliction. Neither speak them over, when you go to a Minister or Christian friend for advice or comfort ; but only mention in general, that horrid thoughts and blasphemies trouble you : they will understand what you mean ; but, perhaps they had as good Satan should inject such thoughts, as to hear you name them.

4. *Pray much against these blasphemies*, and thus study to be gainers by them, and to be avenged upon Satan, which you may, if you do as they did, Acts xix. when they heard that some would speak against their goddess Diana, they cried out for the space of two hours, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians*, ver. 28, 34. ; so that whosoever should go about to speak against Diana could not be heard. Do thou likewise ; when Satan throws in blasphemous thoughts, break thou forth into blessing and praising of God ; and if thou canst not do so, try to read or sing some psalm full of praises, as Psal. ciii. cv. cxvi. cxlv. &c. : and if thou art private enough, read or sing them with a loud voice, and when Satan shall see that thou art the gainer by his temptations, he will be weary of tempting thee. These blasphemies are Satan's railings and revilings against the God of heaven ; therefore you are to do with them as Hezekiah did with Rabshakeh's railing letter, Isa. xxxvi. 21. he went and *spread the blasphemy before the Lord*. He did not so much as read over the letter, but spread it before the Lord : so, without naming over that blasphemy, you should pray against it,

it, that God would suppress this smoke that ascends out of the bottomless pit.

You may lawfully dispute and argue with Satan against some of his blasphemies ; as when he tempts you to question the being of a God, and the truth of divine revelation, as the archangel disputed with the devil about the body of Moses ; so when you are tempted, for example, to doubt if the scripture be the word of God, you may consider the plain arguments that prove it, and ask Satan, Why dost thou fly before it ? If the ark were not the ark of God, why doth Dagon fall before it ? If it were not the word of God, why doth Satan tempt me not to believe it ? But do not depend upon thy arguing ; Satan is too strong for reasoning ; betake thyself to the Lord Jesus by prayer. Though Satan may stand out against thy arguments, he will not be able to stand against the prayer of faith. The archangel said, *The Lord rebuke thee.* Though he will not fly at thy rebuke, yet he will and must at the rebuke of God. And by the way, see the excellency of Christ above the archangel : Christ rebukes Satan by his own power and authority ; for he said not, *The Lord rebuke thee* ; but, *Get thee behind me, Satan.*

2dly, There are temptations of Satan with reference to *heart-wanderings* in duty. Satan knows, that if he can get these flies to come and rest in this precious ointment, they will putrify it.—He knows, if the thoughts wander, God regards not what the tongue says ; and if he can spoil your prayers, he fears not any ordinance what good it can do thee. If your thoughts be earthly, he cares not how heavenly your words are.—Herein Satan gets assistance from the *evil heart* ; *Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts*, Mat. xv. 19. They arise out of the heart as sparks out of a furnace ; they stay not in the heart, but are active, and ascend up to the head : and they come out of the heart, not as sparks out of a flint, by concussion and violence, forced out ; but they *proceed* out of it, says Christ ; they come out of themselves, and they proceed always in a continued act.—Satan's temptations

to heart-wandering in duty, are also furthered by a *multitude of business*, and that two ways.

(1.) If we *come from* a multitude of business; for our hearts are like the troubled sea, it must have some considerable time before it be composed, though the winds that raised the storms cease; so when we come from business, there must be some time after our business is ended before our hearts can be sedate and quiet, and fit for prayer; nay, in this our hearts are worse than the sea, because,

(2.) *Future* business will distract us before it comes. The sea is not tumultuous before the wind blow, but the business we have to do will trouble us before it comes to be done. It is a hard thing to keep business out of our thoughts when we pray, and make it stay till our prayer be ended,

Now, to fortify against these, I offer the following four advices shortly.

1. O study to *mortify the love of the world*: where our love is, there will our thoughts be. To set your love on the world, and your thoughts on God, you will find altogether impossible; *He that loveth the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* O seek to mortify this.

2. Lay up your *treasure in heaven*; *For, where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*, Matth. vi. 21. The heart of the Jews *went after their covetousness*, Ezek. xxxiii. 31.; when they were hearing the word they could not keep their hearts where their bodies were, but they would be where their love was, and where their treasure was.

3. Let not the *world be your familiar friend*, for familiar friends come in without knocking or asking leave; therefore be thou a *stranger in this present world*, Heb. xi. 13. They were not strangers in this or that part of the earth, but in the whole earth: be a stranger to the world, and the world will not visit you in prayer.

4. Make *prayer your delight*, not your task. Children are subject to look off their books, because they delight not in them; but when they are playing, they are

are eager and earnest. The bird flutters in the cage; but sits quietly on the tree, and sings there: *I will go to God*, says David, *to God my exceeding joy*, Psal xliii. 4. When our thoughts find satisfaction, they set up their habitation and wander not.

3dly, There are temptations of Satan with reference to *omission of duty*: as for example, he represents to them the difficulty that there is therein. O I cannot pray nor hear aright, I cannot meditate nor mortify aright; therefore I may let it alone. Now, in order to fortify against these temptations, consider,

1. That this is *necessary*; you must be *exercised unto godliness*; exercised in *keeping a conscience void of offence towards God and man*; and be *stedfast and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*, 1 Corinth. xv. 58. As for the wicked, who are otherwise disposed, having no heart nor will to the Lord's service at all, what can they expect at his hand, but this, *Take these mine enemies, that would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither, and slay them before me*: Yea, *he will come in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel*. It is therefore absolutely necessary.

2. Consider, that it is *possible* to serve the Lord acceptably by his grace. Though duty be difficult to nature; yet, if you get the Spirit of God to help you, you will do well enough; and God hath promised his help, Isaiah xl. 29,—31. *He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength, &c. They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength.*—Hence all the saints of old, and of late too, have tried the Lord's way, and found that the way of the Lord was *strength to them*; yea, *that wisdom's ways are pleasantness*: their *delight was in the law of the Lord*; in *keeping of his commands there is a great reward*. One smile of God's countenance is worth all your pains, tho' you were at a hundred times more. There is always some thing favourable and sweet in religion that accompany the sedulous exercise thereof. Tho' the soul hath nothing to claim on the account of its own works

or duties ; yet the Lord is graciously pleased to own and countenance his own way, when the soul is found in it, beside the glorious and gracious reward that abides it in heaven.

Therefore, let faith batter down this temptation of Satan, saying, What though Satan present difficulties in the way, Christ underwent greater difficulties : He hath borne the burden and the heat of the day. I am not called to go and *satisfy justice* ; Christ hath done that to my hand : I am not called to go and *fulfil the law as a covenant of works* ; Christ hath done that to my hand ; I am not called to *work for life*, but to work for love to him that *worketh all my works in me, and for me* ; and who, as he calleth me to this work of love, so promiseth to *work in me both to will and to do* : and therefore, in his name and strength, I will go forward, *making mention of his righteousness, and his only* ; and, in his name, I will encounter and grapple with the devil himself, for Christ hath conquered him to my hand.

4thly, There are temptations of Satan with reference to the *commission of sin* : he will suggest to them that it is but a little sin, and God will not be angry for a little sin ; such as a lye in a droll, an idle word, &c. Can such a little sin endanger the soul ? Now, to guard you against this temptation, consider,

1. That the *first sin* which brought all mankind into a miserable state, was, in appearance, but a *small and little* sin : it was but eating a little forbidden fruit, the tasting of an apple ; yet, had it not been for Christ's satisfaction, it would have destroyed irrecoverably all the posterity of Adam. There was a man, Sirs, that gathered a few sticks upon the Sabbath-day ; you would have thought that was but a little sin, yet God's thoughts are not your thoughts, for God thought that sin worthy of death, Numbers xv. 32, 33. Uzziah's putting his hand to the ark, and touching it when it uttered, seemed to be but a small sin, and yet you know he was smitten instantly with death for it, 2 Sam. vi. 7. It is dangerous to give even a little wrong touch to a tottering ark.

2. Consider the *nature* of every sin ; though some
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are comparatively small, and others greater ; that is, by reason of several aggravations, more hainous in the sight of God than others ; yet, in themselves, none are small. The least sin is against an infinite God, and infinite authority ; and so, objectively considered, an infinite evil ; and therefore cannot be expiated without infinite satisfaction : and it is not little promises, or little threatenings that your little sins do slight ; yea, there is no little ingratitude towards God in little sins : there is great unkindness to God in little sins. To displease God, your best friend, for a little sin, O ungrateful thing ! *Is this your kindness to your friend ? The wages of every sin is death eternal.* It is not little misery that every sin doth expose you to. Will you make light of the wrath of the infinite God ? Then do not make light of little sins. In a word, remember that boldness in little sins will be an encouragement to greater. Sin is of an encroaching and bewitching nature ; a little theft may open the way to a greater. The devil tempts people to go from one degree to another ; he tempts them to the reverse of the *blessed man*, mentioned Psalm i. 1. He tempts them to *walk in the council of the ungodly* ; having taken a walk with them, he tempts them next to *stand in the way of sinners*, which is more ; and then having stood a while with them, he tempts them last of all to *sit in the seat of the scornful*, even to the height of wickedness. The devil first makes you sit down with the drunkard, then to drink with him, and at last to be drunk. Thus he leads people from unclean thoughts to unclean looks, words, and actions : therefore, let faith resist this temptation, and set you upon your watch against that which you call a little sin. No man that ever saw sin can truly call any sin little or small, nor can it ever be, till there be a little law to break, a little God to offend, a little guilt to contract, a little wrath to incur ; all which are impossible to be, blasphemy to wish, and madness to expect.

5thly, There are temptations of Satan with reference to *unworthy apprehensions of God*. Satan may suggest very strange thoughts of God, very base thoughts of

God, most unsuitable apprehensions of him, such as are not to be spoken of; and the prince of this world hath much in us, who are so ignorant of God, to further these mishapen thoughts of God. And to fortify you against these assaults, there are these two directions I would offer concerning the way how we are to conceive of God.

(1.) We are to conceive of him as *inconceivable*: for the thoughts we are to have of him are overwhelming thoughts. As long as we are merely active, and are able to master our thoughts of God, they are utterly unworthy of him. Whatsoever we know, comprehensively, I mean, except we see it to be infinitely beyond us, that is not God, nor to be adored. I have read a dialogue between a Christian and a Gentile: the Gentile seeing the Christian very fervent in prayer, and seeing no image before him, asked him, "whom he worshipped:" he answered, *I know not*. "Why then do you worship him?" *I therefore worship him*, says he, *because I cannot know him*. "It seems strange," said the Gentile, to see one so seriously worship that "he knoweth not." *More strange it is for one*, said the Christian, *to worship that which we can comprehend*. If we are not lost in our thoughts of God, our thoughts of God are lost. When we throw a stone into a pond, it makes circles larger and larger, and quickly they come to the shore: but if one should throw a millstone into the midst of the calm ocean, though it would make larger and larger circles, yet it would not reach the shore, because the strength would be spent long before it come the length: So, when we think on the creature, we easily enlarge our thoughts so as to see an end of their perfection, and to be more than comprehensive of their excellency; but when we think of God, we can never know him to *perfection*, Psalm cxix. 96.—Here our knowledge must end in admiration, and our love in extasy. Nay, we must conceive of God as above all words, above all knowledge, and above all admiration; above all love, and above all extasy. But let us go to scripture, God knows best how to speak of himself, and we may safely acquiesce in scripture expressions;

pressions, Neh. ix. 5. *Thy name is exalted above all praise, above the praise of men and angels* ; this is a very high expression ; but doth this reach him ? Nay, if it did, God should not be exalted above all praise, since this would reach him.

(2.) We are to conceive of God in *Christ* ; Christ must be eyed in our addressees and acts of worship. All the former considerations set us but at a greater distance from God, and make us afraid of God, and fly from him, if we go no further ; and, indeed, human reason can go no further. The utmost it can do, is but to think of mercy without a promise, which is a very arbitrary thing : and we see that God hath not shown mercy to fallen angels ; for never was any devil converted ; therefore we must necessarily have thoughts of Christ : *We are to honour the Son as we honour the Father* ; and to honour him,

1. As a *King*. God hath exalted Christ *far above all heavens* ; and hath commanded us to do all in his name ; *And whatsoever you do in word, or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus*, Col. iii. 17. He orders that *all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father*, John v. 23. I shall relate a history to this purpose ; it is this, Theodosius the emperor having made an edict for the giving liberty for the Arians to preach ; Amphilocheus took this course for prevailing with the emperor to recal that edict. Theodosius having made Arcadius co-emperor and Cæsar with him, several bishops came to salute the emperor, to congratulate Arcadius, and to signify their consent to Theodosius his act, and by their respect and honour done to Arcadius, to shew that they took him for the successor of Theodosius in the empire ; among others came this Amphilocheus, bishop of Iconium, who, after he had done obeysance very submissively to Theodosius, was going away without shewing any respect to Arcadius, though he sat by Theodosius in all his royal robes ; Theodosius therefore called to Amphilocheus, saying, “ Know you not that I have made Arcadius, my son, emperor with me ? ” Upon which Amphilocheus went to Arcadius, and striking him on the head, said,

He was a very hopeful boy. Theodosius being very angry at this indignity done his son, commanded him to prison. Amphilochius, after he had gone a little way, turned back, saying, "O Theodosius, you are angry that I give not your son the same honour I give you, since you have made him equal in majesty to yourself; and think you God will be well-pleased that you suffer the Arians to abuse Christ, whom he hath *set at his right-hand* in glory, and *will have all men honour the Son, as they honour the Father.*" Upon which the edict was reversed.—I may say, Can you think that God will accept your worship to him, be it never so great; if you take no notice of Christ; be sure God will reject you and your services. But then again,

2. As God will have Christ to have the glory of his kingly office, so also of his *priestly*. Thus, suppose some great monarch, his son consenting, should lay upon his son the punishment due to some rebellious subjects, intending the son's honour as well as their pardon; the king sends forth a proclamation to them, to let them know that his son had satisfied justice, and procured a pardon: but many of them not trusting to this, would not come in, but would send the king gifts and presents to gain his favour: the emperor scorns their gifts upon that account; especially they thus robbing his son of the honour of making their peace, and thereby also plainly shewing, that they thought their crime was not so great, but a small matter would make it up, such as their gifts. Surely, if gifts would have done the business, his son had greater gifts than theirs; so that he needed not have died or suffered. The reddition of this simile may be easily made: God abhors our prayers, alms, and all our services, if we bring them as satisfactory to his justice, and sprinkle our puddly waters, our tears, upon the mercy-seat, and fill the holy place with the stinking savour, the stinking vapours of our prayers, which are unperfumed with the incense of Christ's righteousness, or that are no better than the reeking steams of a dunghill, the
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noxious vapours of an hollow cavern, or the smoke of some sulphurous vulcano ; I say, go to the holy place with these, instead of the incense of Christ's merit and intercession, is not to make atonement, but a provocation. This makes popish austerities to be acts of pride, instead of being acts of mortification.

3. God will have him get the honour also of his *prophetical* office ; for it is by his Spirit that he instructs and teaches us how to pray as well as perform. By his merit we have acceptance, and by his Spirit assistance. If a child should write some excellent tract in the mathematics in Greek, we would infallibly conclude some did learn him, or dictate to him ; so when you pray in the Spirit, and spiritually, for such or such spiritual blessings, who do you think dictates to you ? This is not your mother-tongue ; doubtless it is the Spirit of Christ that helps your infirmities. In a word, Christ by his active and passive obedience, whereby he hath satisfied justice, hath a wonderful interest with God, more than all the angels of heaven, inasmuch, that God delights to pardon the greatest of sinners for Christ's sake : therefore, in prayer, conceive of God as a great, an infinitely great God, and as a God in Christ. Look on God through Christ, keeping the humbling sense of your own distance and provocation ; look upon God as through Christ the most compassionate fondest Father in the world ; if he give thee not every thing thou thus askest, it proceeds not from his unwillingness to give, but thine unfitness to receive.

6thly, There are temptations with reference to *self-murder* : Satan many times tempts people, particularly these that are coming to Christ, he throws them down and tears them, urging them to tear themselves to pieces, to make away themselves, and cut off the thread of their own life. This is a subject I seldom or never took occasion to speak in this manner upon ; but now, I think it the more necessary that we are living in a time, wherein we are compassed about with awful instances of professors being left under the power, and swallowed up with the violence of this temptation ;
yea,

yea, such instances thereof, as have perhaps made the hearts of many here present to tremble. And since what hath been, may be, and not knowing but in such a great company as is here, some one or other may be under such temptations, I would offer these following advices shortly, to fortify you against these assaults.

1. Consider that self-murder is a sin against the very *light of nature*, and the very *letter of the law of God*, Exodus xx. 13. *Thou shalt not kill*. And you may be sure, that no thought of this sort that enters into your heart, can be from God; for it hath the very image of the devil upon it; *He was a murderer from the beginning*.

2. *Yield not to the tempter*; for, though this is a temptation incident to God's people, insomuch that, perhaps, there are few of them that have not been thus tempted, as our Lord Jesus Christ himself was, to whom the devil said, *Cast thyself down from the pinnacle of the temple*; yet we read of no saint in scripture that yielded to the tempter. We are therein told of none but wicked wretches that destroyed themselves, such as Saul, Achitophel, and Judas; and sure you would not desire to be like them.

3. Consider the *contrary practice of the saints in scripture*, both in their *best* and *worst* time.—Old Simeon got an armful of Christ, and did he now attempt to cut off his own life, that he might win away to heaven? No; he wishes to be away, but he puts himself in God's will; *Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace*. Paul is wrapt up to the third heaven, and his desire of death must have been very great; yet he is content to stay till he was *dissolved*.—Again, on the other hand, if pains of body, and terrors of mind, might contribute to strengthen such a temptation, Job did not want his share of both; yet, instead of putting a period to his own days, though indeed *he cursed the day of his birth*, and *wished for the day of his death*, yet he says, *All the days of my appointed time, will I wait till my change come*, Job. xiv. 14.

4. Consider, that by such horrid suggestions as these you are tempted to assume to yourself a *prerogative that belongs to God only*. It is he that lives for ever and ever that says, *I kill, and I make alive ; I wound, and I heal*, Deut. xxxii. 39. Your life is not your own to dispose of ; and as you cannot lengthen your life, so you may not shorten it. Therefore,

5. When you are thus tempted, *keep not the devil's counsels*, nor be thou his *secretary* : go to some faithful minister, or experienced Christian, and tell them how you are tempted ; for this temptation is partly conquered, when it is revealed.

6. These who think they shall be *damned*, and go to hell when they die, it is the *greatest madness* in the world for them to hasten their death. That the fear of hell should make them leap into hell, is so contrary to all common sense, that it is a wonder that any one should so much cease to be a man, not to say a Christian, as to do a thing so contrary to nature, let be to grace. Let me ask you, Can you endure to be among blasphemers ? Can you endure to blaspheme God yourself for a year together, or an hour, and to spend it all in cursing and blaspheming ? If your soul abhor this, why will you leap into hell, a place of everlasting blasphemy ? I read of one, who having been a long time tempted to make away herself, at last resolved to do it, for the thoughts of the torments of hell were not prevalent enough to deter her ; but as she was going to destroy herself, it was brought to her mind, that in hell she should blaspheme God for ever ; which she abhorring to do, upon that very account forbore the wicked action. If you were to be only in a state of horror and torment, it were sad enough ; but for to put thyself into a state of blasphemy, how canst thou endure to think of it ?

7. Take heed of fighting against Satan with *human reason*, for this Leviathan laughs at the shaking of this *spear* : his scales are too close to be pierced by it : but take the *sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*, which *divides between the joints and the marrow* ; say to Satan, *It is written, Thou shalt not kill*.

8. *Pray,*

8. *Pray, pray much ; for the sword of the Spirit must be wielded by the skilful arm of the Spirit. If thou goest out in confidence of thy being able to manage scripture by thy own strength and skill, it will fare with thee, as it did with these, Acts xix. 15, 16. They thought to cast out devils by the name of Jesus, but the devil rent them and wounded them, and made them to fly, saying, Jesus I know, and Paul I know ; but who are ye ?*

The great argument that the devil uses to persuade thee to self-murder, is by persuading thee that thou art a reprobate ; but thou mayest consider that Satan cannot know that thou art a reprobate : Was Satan, think you, on God's council, when he made his eternal decrees ? Satan, who is not so much as one of God's hired servants, but a slave and a malefactor kept in chains, he is so far from being of God's council, that he is not so much as one of his family. If thou sayest thy conscience tells thee that thou art a reprobate ; know, that no man living can tell who are reprobates ; nor can any man know himself to be a reprobate, except he hath committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, which no man hath committed, that is sorry to think he hath committed it ; *For it is impossible that such a man should be renewed, either by or to repentance, Heb. vi. 6.*

Ye that walk in darkness and see no light, that are haunted with these temptations, consider what a God we have to do with ; we serve such a great Lord, that all the monarchs of the world are beggars to him : and such a gracious Father is our God, that the tenderest parents in the world, and your dearest friends, are tyrants, yea, wolves and tygers compared to him. And if we should provoke them, as we provoke him, and they could as easily crush us as God can, we would quickly find that their tenderest mercies are cruelty ; whereas the several providences of God will be to thee, not like the *gall of asps*, bitter and deadly, but like God's rubarb and aloes, by which thine iniquity shall be purged, *and all the fruit of it shall be to take away thy sin ; and though for the present the afflicting hand of God*

God upon thee, is not joyous, but grievous, yet if thou art exercised thereby, it will bring forth in thee the quiet fruit of righteousness. Lay aside therefore your fears of hell, and hard thoughts of God.

But now, to add no more particulars, let me *exhort* you and all that hear me, to come to our Lord Jesus Christ, whatever opposition from hell stands in your way; and though the devil should throw you down and tear you as you are coming: yet Christ will lift you up, and heal you. Oh! what offends the world at our Lord Jesus? Will you tell me, sinner, what ails you at Christ? What disoblige you at his *person*? Is he not the *brightness of the Father's glory, and the chief among ten thousand*? Is he not the *rose of paradise*, the heart of heaven?—What ails you at his *offices*? Is he not a Prophet, that can teach you; a Priest, that can atone for you; a King, that can conquer for you?—What ails you at his *relations*? Is he not a Shepherd, to feed you; a Physician, to heal you; a Father, to pity you; a Husband, to cherish you?—What ails you at his *doing*, to fulfil the law for you; or his *dying*, to satisfy justice for you?—What ails you at his *yoke*? Is not his *yoke easy and his burden light*? his *ways pleasantness and his paths peace*?—What ails you at his *grace and glory*?

What ails you at him, Sirs? O! is he not worth your while, though you should run through hell to come to him? Is there not a heart in all this company that would fain be at him? Alas! would you rather go to the devil than come to Christ? That a comely Jesus cannot get two or three hearts in all this company, O pity, pity! and a thousand pities that the beauty of the Godhead cannot get a lover! Will you all be so mad as to run by Christ to other lovers, while he begs your love, as if he were upon his knees, and sends us to pray you in his stead to be reconciled with him, and come to him?

And therefore, Sirs, in his blessed name I pray you, go not by him. I beg it as the best favour you can do to my Master and me, that you come to him; I beseech you, by the *mercies of God*, and by the *benefits of*

Christ, that you come to him. He will welcome the worst of you that will come to him ; and if you but endeavour to stretch out the withered hand, or put out the withered heart toward him, he will help you to it, and embrace you with hand and heart both. He is content to come to you on any terms ; and, will you not come to him ? He stands at the door of your heart, and waits that you will but allow him to come in, and let him have access. Have you a *hard* heart ? He would be in to soften it : Are you pleased ? Have you a *filthy* heart ? He would be in to wash it : Are you content ? Have you a *wicked* heart ? He would be in to renew it : Are you satisfied ?

If you will not come to him, will you let him come to you, that he may make you willing ? Consider what is a-coming. O Sirs, is not a day of *calamity* coming ? And why will you not come to Christ ? Is not a day of *death* coming ? And why will you not come to him ? Is not a day of *judgment* coming ? And why will you not come to him ? Or, why come you to any thing else ? Why come you to *ordinances*, if you will not come to Christ, for he is the life of ordinances ? Why come you to *sermons*, if you come not to Christ, who is the substance of all sermons ? Why come you to a *communion-table*, if you will not come to Christ ; for he is the heart of the communion ? Why do you hope for heaven, if you will not come to Christ, for he is the all of heaven, the heaven of heavens ? A thousand heavens are lighter than a feather when laid in the balance with him. Had I the tongue of a seraphim, I could not commend him enough to you ; but, O may he commend himself to your heart, and cause you to throw your immortal soul into his saving arms, notwithstanding all the down-casting temptations of Satan, and whatever objections and oppositions stand in the way of your coming to him.

S E R M O N C*.

DARK PROVIDENCES cleared in *due Time*.

JOHN xiii. 7.

—*What I do, thou knowest not now ; but thou shalt know hereafter.*

MY friends, the invisible God acts like himself, even amidst all the visible and sensible tokens he gives of his presence ; such as he hath been giving you at this occasion : for, amidst all his ways and workings that are seen and felt, yet still his way is invisible, unsearchable, and mysterious. How small a portion do we know of him ! What is said of his presence and absence, or of his coming and going sometimes, may be said also of his doing : his coming near once to Jacob was dark to him ; therefore he said, *Surely the Lord was in this place, and I knew it not.*—His going away from Samson was dark to him ; therefore it is said, *He wist not that the Lord was departed from him.* And what is thus said of his coming and going, may be said of his doing, and perhaps of his doings among us at this occasion ; *What I do, thou knowest not now ; but thou shalt know hereafter.*

We have here, in this chapter, the remarkable history of our Lord Jesus, his washing his disciples feet while he was at supper with them. It was great condescension to sup with them ; and yet greater to wash their feet. How far Christ will stoop down to the necessities of his people, is amazing ! It is observed, ver. 3.

* This sermon was preached at Dunfermline, on Monday, July 2. 1736. after the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper there. It hath undergone six impressions.

that *Jesus knowing that the Father had committed all things into his hand, and that he was come from God, and went to God: he rises from supper, and laid aside his garments, and took a towel and girded himself, and poured water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples feet, ver. 4, 5.* All power and sovereignty was committed to him, yet the knowledge of his excellency did not hinder his condescension; in the view he had of his greatest glory, he evidenced the greatest humility. Neither the greatest sufferings he was just now to endure, nor the greatest honour he was advanced unto, could make him forget his poor people; his heart was set upon them as much as either upon his sufferings or his glory: why? for them he suffered, and for them he was to be glorified. And as the thoughts of his glory formerly did not hinder his condescension; so the possession of his glory now doth not hinder his stooping down to serve, yea, to wash, and save them. And the higher the Father hath exalted him, the more hath he fitted him for doing service to us in our low case and condition.

Now, we have here Peter's amazement, *Lord, dost thou wash my feet?* verie 6. What! might he say, Thou, the Lord and Ruler of the world, dost thou stoop to do this for me, a worthless worm, a sinful man? Here is a paradox I cannot understand. O! but Christ's condescensions, wherein we find ourselves taken notice of by his grace, are justly matter of admiration. *Is this the manner of man? What are we, and what is our father's house?* It well becomes us, and the best of the sons and daughters of Adam to sit down at his feet and wash them with tears, and wipe them with the hairs of our head. But, O! what is this! dost thou wash my feet, Lord; O *King of kings, and Lord of lords?* Christ's abasing himself, and stooping so low to us, ought not to obscure his majesty, or make us think the less of him, as if he did what was too mean and unbecoming his grandeur; nay, if we have *faith as a grain of mustard seed*, the lower that he stoops towards us, the more will we honour him, and the higher thoughts will we have of him,

The text is an answer to Peter's amazement, *What I do*, says Christ, *thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter*. Where he tells him two things. 1. That the *design* of this work was at present hid from him. 2. That it should be afterwards *revealed* to him. So ignorant was Peter of this work, which was afterwards explained to him, as signifying another inward washing, and giving to us a copy of humility, and of humble service one towards another; so ignorant was he hereof, that his sinful modesty makes him refuse this act of kindness and condescension; as you see in the following verse. Though it be commendable to *fear the Lord and his goodness*, and to be amazed at his condescending grace and mercy; yet it is sinful to run to that extreme of fear and trembling, as to shun, decline, and refuse it: and though our Lord's stooping down be a great abasement; yet it is the great error of the saints to think he will not reckon it his glory and honour to serve them. It is a part of their ignorance and error, when he stoops down to them with his blessing, to think that he hath forgot himself in his condescension, and that it is not possible he means such favour to them.

In the general, we may learn from the words in their connexion with the text,

1. That when we *refuse* any favour at Christ's hand, or shun any act of his condescending grace, as if unbecoming his greatness to grant it, or our meanness to receive it; we but discover our great ignorance and error.

2. Christ may be very *near* to his people, and doing great things to them in steps of gracious condescension; and yet they may be very ignorant of him, and of his acting; *What I do, thou knowest not*.

3. Every work of Christ towards his people carries something more *great* and *precious* in the bosom of it, than we are capable, at the time, to understand; it is more loaden with wisdom, power, goodness, grace, and faithfulness, than for the present we can apprehend: *What I do, thou knowest not now*.

4. Though

4. Though we cannot *dive* into the depths of Christ's counsel in his doing towards us ; yet we ought to *re-verence* and adore him therein, and to yield implicate obedience to his will, without quarrelling his way, or censuring his proceeding, while through darkness and ignorance we are such incompetent judges thereof ; thus did Abraham, Heb. xi. 8. *By faith, when he was called to go out into a place which he should afterwards receive for an inheritance, obeyed ; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.*

5. Our Lord Jesus doth not *explain his mind* to his people at the first ; what he intends by such a work, and such a promise, and such a providence, until afterwards, that subsequent works explain preceding works and subsequent providences explain preceding ones.

6. Learn that we are therefore to *wait* upon him till he see fit to explain what may now be dark and hidden unto us ; and we shall afterwards know and see what was the tendency of events that seemed most cross and strange. We must let Christ take his own way both in ordinances and providences : and we will find, in the issue, that it is indeed the best way. *What I do, thou knowest not now ; but thou shalt know hereafter.*

But passing all these, the point of doctrine I would speak to is this.

OBSERV. *That the works of Christ towards his people may be very dark and mysterious, hidden and unknown to them, till afterwards he make them manifest.*

What I do, thou knowest not now, Peter ; but thou shalt know hereafter ; what need thou hast of being washed, when thou shalt be guilty of the hainous crime of denying me thrice ; or, when thou shalt, in the discharge of thy office, be employed as an instrument to wash away the sinful defilements of others.

But

But this doctrine may be verified from many instances.—Joseph's dreams, as well as Jacob's being bereft of him, was dark and mysterious, till afterwards it was manifested in the course of providence.—Abraham's call, to go and offer up his son, as well as his being ordered to go, *not knowing whither he went*, was very dark and mysterious till afterwards.—Esther's marriage with Ahasuerus was a kindly providence, but the design of it was not manifested till afterwards, to break Haman's cruel project. Christ manifested his glory to Peter, James, and John, upon the mount ; but what he did they knew not the design of, till afterwards it appeared what eminent duties and trials was preparing them for.—Moses little knew what was the mystery of the manifestation he got of God, when he saw him in a flame of fire out of the bush, and the bush burned, and was not consumed ; and when God spake to him, saying, *I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob* : Moses hid his face, and was afraid to look upon God, till the Lord thereafter shewed what was the design of this appearance, and what service he was calling him to.—Little did Israel know, when brought through the Red sea, and singing triumphantly at the shore over all their drowned enemies, that this glorious appearance of God was to usher in a forty years weary travel through the wilderness ; and that what the Lord did then, by the hand of Moses, was but typical of the great salvation through Jesus Christ.—Little did Paul, our apostle, while he was yet Saul the persecutor, know what the Lord did when he appeared to him in his road to Damascus, till afterwards that the Lord shewed him what he was to do and *suffer for the name of Jesus* —His ways, even of grace and mercy, are dark and unknown ; therefore says the psalmist, Psal. lxxvii. 13, 19. *Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary ; thy way is in the seas, thy paths in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known.* Psalm xxxvi. 6. *Thy righteousness is like the great mountains ; thy judgments are a great deep.* Psal. cxi. 2. *The works of the Lord are great ; sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.*

The Lord works and carries on his gracious work, according to his rule of divine policy, that every one cannot penetrate thereinto. As great politicians carry on their designs in a way that ordinary onlookers cannot understand ; so, much more doth infinite wisdom work, as it were, by a holy and majestic stratagem, and carries on his work in the dark, and in a way much hidden and unknown to us ; for, *clouds and darkneſs are round about him* ; and hence ſays the apoſtle, Rom. xi. 23. *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 !* Whatever then God hath been doing or ſaying to you at this occaſion, think not that you are wiſe enough now, or that you know all that he hath been doing or deſigning by this work. *What I do, thou knoweſt not now : but thou ſhalt know hereafter.*

Having thus confirmed the doctrine, the method for the farther proſecution of the ſubject, may be the following.

- I. To ſpeak to ſome things the Lord doth towards his church and people, that are *dark and myſterious, hidden and unknown.*
- II. To ſhew in what *reſpects* theſe things that he is doing for them may be hid and unknown to them.
- III. Shew for what *reaſon* the Lord takes this way of doing, ſo hid, dark, and myſterious, that what he doth they *know not.*
- IV. Obſerve ſome of the *ſeaſons* when it is that he makes them know what now they are in the dark about, according to his word here, *Thou ſhalt know hereafter.*
- V. Deduce ſome *inferences* for the application of the whole.

I. We are to ſpeak of ſome of theſe things the Lord doth towards his people that are *dark, myſterious, hidden, and unknown.*

Here we might, to view it more distinctly, mention some *common* steps of his dealing with his people, that for a long time, may be dark and unknown to them ; such as, what he doth with respect to their *outward state* in the world : what he doth by ordering such and such circumstances of prosperity or adversity in the world : what he doth with respect to their birth and education ; his design in their being born of gracious, or of graceless parents ; his design in ordering the bounds of their habitation, in such a spot of the world ; his design in bringing them under such and such a ministry ; to such a sermon, and such a sacrament, and such a table ; why he casts such a book in their way : all may be hid and unknown to them till afterwards, that the Lord discovers what good and great designs he had thereby ; what he doth by such a mercy, and such a judgment ; such a word, and such a rod.

Again, we might condescend on what he doth with respect to their *inward spiritual state* : they may be greatly in the dark, as to what he is doing, when, on the one hand, he is convincing and awakening them ; when he is humbling and breaking them ; when he is deserting and forsaking them to their sense ; when he suffers them to be tempted of Satan, and conquered by their lusts ; and leaves them under the power of their enemies ; denying their requests ; refusing to help them in prayer, and to hear them ; and seeming to reject and cast them off : what he thus doth, they know not till afterwards that he return.

And then, on the other hand, his *way and work* may be hid and unknown, even when he *returns*, so as they know not what he is doing : when he washes their feet, or condescends to give them some tokens of his pardoning and purifying grace, they may expect fair weather and clean way, or a prosperous journey, all their life-time afterwards ; while yet he may be preparing them for a new storm.—They may little know what he doth when he is manifesting himself anew to them ; they may reckon it is a preparatory for more glorious displays immediately : but they may be mistaken, and may find themselves tumbling down the

hill into a mire, or ever they are aware. They may little know what he doth, when, at a communion solemnity, he comes to loose their bonds; and when he is comforting, strengthening, or sealing them, and speaking in to their hearts, they may be thinking now that their *mountain stands strong*, they shall *never be moved*, never be what they have been, nor doubt as they have done; yet quickly they may be at that with it, *Thou didst hide thy face and I was troubled*. They may little know, when he brings them *to the banquetting house*, and makes them sit down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to their taste, what is he doing and designing; they may think now this is for my present comfort, now my cup runs over, and I hope it will continue running; while yet he may be feeding them for the hunger to come, victualling them for a voyage, laying in provision for a siege, preparing them for a battle, or perhaps anointing them for a burial. *What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter*.

But here I shall mention some of the special works of God, that are covered with a cloud of majesty, that his people seldom know what he is doing with them. As,

1. When his word and his work, his promise and his providence seem to *clash* and *contradict* one another; this is a dark and hidden rod. *What he doth, we know not then*, when his dispensations seem, to human reason, to be driving on a design to defeat the promise; we cannot see through the cloud without an eagle-eye of faith, nor pry into the depths of his infinite wisdom. Thus Moses was sent to deliver Israel out of Egypt, and to tell them the good news, that now the Lord was to deliver them from their bondage; but behold their bondage is increased, their slavery is doubled, they are filled with anguish, Exodus v. 21. Moses himself could not well see thro' this dark cloud; and therefore complains to God of it, ver. 22, 23.—When things like this fall out to the church of God, or a child of God, that here is a promise, but where is the accomplishment, when the quite contrary appears?

Then

Then we are to think on his word, *What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.*

2. When his dealings and dispensations are so dark and unintelligible, that his people know not whether they speak *mercy* or *wrath*; thus it was with Job, when he said, *Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me?* Job x. 2.; intimating, how utterly ignorant he was, as to what the Lord was intending by that strange dispensation: in such a case he is saying, *What I do, thou knowest not now.*

3. When the Lord comes with salvation in a *surprising* way; or, while his people are quite out of *frame* and *fitness* for it; as when it is said, Isa. lviii. 17. *For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him; I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on forwardly in the way of his heart;* and yet it follows, *I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts to him, and to his mourners.* O what is this! will he shew himself a God of love to me, when I have been shewing my self a devil of enmity against him! Or, while he surprises them with a mercy that they were never hoping nor waiting for; as Israel, when the Lord returned their captivity, were like them that dream.—His stately march this way is so hid from their eyes, that *what* he doth they *know not*; it is above their capacity to understand his sovereign way.

4. When salvation comes, not only in a way of merciful surprize, but notwithstanding all *appearance to the contrary*; when enemies are strong and invincible, by them prevalent, and victorious over them; and when his *people's strength is quite gone*, Deuter. xxxii. 36.—And when their *hope is gone*, and they are *cut off for their parts*, Ezek. xxxvii. 11. When in such a point of extremity he steps in and saves; and saves, perhaps, by very unlikely means; as by the blowing of rams horns he throws down the walls of Jericho; or, by the stripling David, he kills the great Goliath, and defeats the army of the Philistines; in these ways there is much hidden majesty. *What I do, thou knowest not.*

4. When hopeful beginnings of relief and salvation meet with *unexpected stops and hinderances* ; and when the building of the spiritual temple, after the foundation is laid, comes to be retarded, and the work seems to go back rather than forward, as in the building of the material temple in the days of Ezra. How little do we understand what that means, when the Lord says, by Jeremiah to Baruch, Jer. xlv. 4. *Behold, that which I have built, will I break down ?* When he suffers enemies to prevail, and *break down his carved work*, as *with axes and hammers*, who can see through such a dispensation, when it befalls a church in general, as to the work of reformation ; or a child of God in particular, as to the work of grace in the soul ? *What he doth, we know not now.*

6. When the Lord's way towards the godly and the ungodly seems *unsuitable* to their different state, as if he frowned on his friends and favoured his enemies ; how dark and hidden is his work herein ? The prosperity of the wicked, and adversity of the godly was for a time a great mystery to Asaph, Psalm lxxiii. Yea more, sometimes the godly are left to be great a stumbling block to others ; as when the Lord left Aaron to make the golden calf in the wilderness, that brought so much sin and wrath upon the people. I might instance David, Solomon, Peter, and others : how dark is this, and the like dispensations ! And when, on the other hand, he employs the wicked themselves to carry on his work, and makes their wicked designs contribute to advance his holy end and glorious design ; as he did make the treason of Judas, the sentence of Pilate, the malice of the Jews to contribute for the work of our redemption. Surely, *what he doth, we know not* ; his glorious works are hidden and unknown. He can necessitate enemies, contrary to their will, to do that which is a manifest forwarding of his work, as when the Philistines were constrained to send home the ark of Israel, 1 Sam. vi.

7. In a word, how dark and hid is his work, when he *cuts off instruments* that seem to be most fitted for it ; and that either before their work be begun, as David, that

that prepared materials for building of the temple, but was not employed therein ; or before their work be ended, as Moses that brought Israel through the wilderness, but is taken away then, and not employed to end the work of bringing them in to the promised land, which he would gladly have done !—How dark and unknown is his work, when he calls them to believe what seems contradictory to *carnal sense* and *reason* ; as that Abraham should have a son, when his body and Sarah's womb were both dead, who *yet believed in God, who quickens the dead, and calls things that are not, as though they were* ? Or when he calls them to do that which seems expressly against his own *revealed will* ; as when Abraham was called to go and sacrifice his son ; this was a command of trial, and by faith, Abraham went all the length therein that was designed !—How dark is the providence and trial, when *duty* is seemingly set *against duty*, as when churchmen and prophets set upon Nehemiah, and press him to that as duty which was no duty ; as you see the history, Neh. vi. 10,—14. ? And when prophets are set against prophets, not only Baal's prophets against the prophets of God, but prophets of the Lord against prophets of the Lord ; as in the case of the old prophet, pretending angelical information, and deceiving the man of God, 1 Kings xiii. ?—Finally, how dark and unintelligible is his work, when he *lifts us* with the one hand, and *casts down* with the other ; when he *heals* with the one, and *wounds* with the other.—Thus the child, Mark ix. 19,—26. that Christ took in hand to cure, grew worse ; for, *The devil threw him down and tare him*. The ruler of the synagogue got Christ engaged to go along with him, and heal his daughter ; but, behold what a wound is given, one coming from his house, saying, *Thy daughter is dead, trouble not the Master* !—In these and the like works he says, *What I do, thou knowest not now ; but thou shalt know hereafter*.

II. The *second* thing proposed was, To shew in what *respects* we may be ignorant, and in the *dark* about the Lord's doing towards us. And,

I. What

1. What he doth, as to the very *matter* of his work, may be hid and unknown, whether it be a common or a saving work; whether it be a merciful or a wrathful work, such as what Manoah and his wife met with, Judges xiii. 22, 23. He and she differed in their judgment about what they say; *Manoah said, Surely we shall die, because we have seen God. But his wife, on the contrary, said, If the Lord were pleased to kill us, would he have received a burnt-offering and a meat-offering at our hand? Or, would he have shewed us all these things?*

2. What he doth may be hid and unknown to them, as to the *manner* and method of his doing. His way of bringing about his purpose is very strange and unperceivable; for he is the God that *quickens the dead, and calls things that are not, as though they were*, Rom. iv. 17. He brings things of nothing, and one contrary out of another, 2 Cor. iv. 6. *Light out of darkness, life out of death, strength out of weakness, Meat out of the cater, and sweet out of the strong.* How unknowable then to us is his work, who makes death the way of life, and wounding the way to healing, breaking down the way to building up, and losing the way to gain.

3. What he doth may be hid and unknown, as to the *causes* of his working. There may be reasons of state that we are ignorant of: the reason why he doth doth so and so now; and why he desists at another time; why Zion is filled with judgment: why he shines on the counsel of the wicked, that pray not to him; and why the just and upright man is laughed to scorn. Surely touching *the Almighty we cannot find him out: for who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor?* Rom. xi. 34.

4. What he doth may be hid and unknown, as to the *beauty* of his work; *Lord, dost thou wash my feet?* Where is the beauty and glory of this work? Is it becoming for thee to do so? We may be ignorant of the glory of divine wisdom that shines in his dealings; the glory of his holiness, grace, love, and mercy that shines therein, till afterwards he make his work appear.

appear. There is a beautiful connexion between what he hath done, what he is doing, and what he will do afterwards, that may be greatly hid, and the beautiful *season* of his doing ; he hath made every thing beautiful in his time. O ! there is a lustre in the very time of his coming, when he makes our time of need his time of love, our extremity his opportunity ; yet for a time this beauty may be hid.

5. What he doth may be hid and unknown, as to the *excellency* and greatness of his work ; it may appear little, and low, and mean, as Peter thought when he said, *Lord, dost thou wash my feet ?* Yet in due time, it may appear to be a very great and excellent work. His greatness and grandeur is not hereby diminished, but more and more displayed. *When the Lord turned back the captivity of Zion, they were like them that dreamed*, did not see or consider the greatness of the work, till afterwards they see and say, *The Lord hath done great things for us*, Psalm cxxvi.

1, 3.

6. What he doth may be hid and unknown, for a time, as the *necessity* of the work, and the *usefulness* of it : part of Peter's meaning here, when he said, *Lord, dost thou wash my feet ?* was, Lord, what is the need of thy washing my feet ? And therefore he ignorantly says in the following verse, *Thou shalt never wash my feet* ; whereupon Christ opens up to him the absolute necessity of what he now did, and designed by this work : *If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me.*—There is a great need for all that Christ doth to us, though we be in the dark about it ; and we ought to see a *need be* in every thing he doth ; *If need be, you are in heaviness through manifold temptations for a season* ; and if need be he will give a more joyful and heartsome season ; he knows best what you need, tho' you do not know.

7. What he doth may be hid as to the *variety* of his work, and the *changes* that befall us through the various changes and turns of his hand in working ; tho' his heart and mind, his love and covenant, be unchangeable.

geable. Sometimes he will let his people ask what they will, and he will give them to the *half*, yea, to the *whole of his kingdom* ; and at other times they may cry and shout, and he shut out their prayers. Sometimes he will let them hold him, and not let him go, yea, and command him, as it were, *Concerning my sons and my daughters, command ye me* : thus he let Moses ask, and he said, *Shew me thy glory* ; and God says, *I will make all my goodness pass before thee* ; and yet behold, at other times, he will condescend to nothing, and seem inexorable ; *Though Moses, Daniel, and Job were to make intercession in the matter*. Who can understand this variety of his doing, and the secret reasons of the vicissitudes and changes, that hereupon befall his people in their inward frame and outward lot ?

8. What he doth may be hid and unknown, as to the *end* and *design* of his doing, as to the *upshot* and *issue* thereof ; and what he is to bring out of that which now he doth. What he did in washing the disciples feet, was not known in the design of it till afterwards. Many things he hath done the meaning whereof was not known till afterwards. What he did, when he became man, when he became a *worm*, and *no man* ; what he did, when he lived our life ; what he did, when he laid down his life, and hang upon the cross between two thieves, were not understood till afterwards : and then it appeared that it *behoved him*, Heb. ii. 17. And what he doth at this communion, we know not now. The way that he takes may seem to be far about, and yet afterwards appear to be the only right way : and when he leads his people in a *way they know not*, and in *paths which they have not known*, may afterwards appear to be the best way for his glory, and for their good. And no wonder that we be in the dark, if we consider that the worker of these works is *wonderful in counsel*, and *excellent in working*, Isa. xxviii. 29. ; infinitely beyond all worldly politicians, whose projects and purposes are often hid from us, and much more may the infinitely deep counsels of God.

III. The *third* thing proposed was, To offer some *reasons*, why the Lord takes such a hid mysterious and unknown way of doing with his people; that *what he doth, they know not now*. And,

1. It is to discover *himself* in a way suitable to himself and his own glorious perfections; and to shew that his *thoughts are not our thoughts, as his ways are not our ways*. If he should work according to our thoughts and imaginations, and in a way not transcending our apprehensions, how would it appear that he is JEHOVAH, a sovereign God that acts like himself, whose will is a law to us, and a rule to himself; and whose *way is in the deep waters, so as his footsteps cannot be seen*.—Herein he shews his *wisdom* to be hidden wisdom, while his own people are apt to think that he is about to destroy his work in them and in his church, when he is upon his way to raise them up, and to bring down the enemy.—Herein he shews his *truth* and *faithfulness* miraculously when he comes with salvation, after he had wrought so long under ground, and out of sight, and all hope was gone, but when it shines out from behind the dark cloud, then it appears with a more than ordinary glance and lustre. O then, they see his *mercy is in the heavens, and his truth reaches to the clouds, and his faithfulness to all generations*, Psalm cxix. 90. So that no changes or vicissitudes here below can alter, no length of time can change his mind.

2. It is to discover his *enemies*, that they may appear to be what they are: what he doth for his people, they do not know themselves; far less do hypocrites and false-hearted professors know what he is doing for them, and what good he is doing for them. If the Lord were appearing visibly for his children, whenever they are in a strait, many false friends would take part with them, and seem to love and favour them; but that their enmity may be discovered, and they may be made manifest, he comes to his people in unknown ways, and hides his work; and then enemies shew themselves openly to be enemies to God's people, while God doth not shew himself openly to be their friend. He may hide himself and his work from his friends to

discourage his enemies, and harden them in his righteous judgment; for, *whom he will he hardens*, Rom. ix. 18. by leaving them to themselves.

3. It is to discover the *drofs* and *corruption* of his *own people*, that lies at the bottom of their heart unseen; for, while he keeps his work hid from them, how does then their *unbelief* appear, in many doubts and scruples that rise in their souls about his design? How doth their *impatience* appear, while he delays to clear up matters to them? Thus he shews them their sin, and humbles them under a sense of their ignorance. Such a discovery the psalmist got when he went to the sanctuary, and reflected on the mistake he was under about what the Lord was doing: *So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a beast before thee*. He makes them thus to know what is in them.

4. It is to discover their *graces* also, and to try and exercise them: thus he tries their *faith*, when they are to believe, though they do not know how his word shall be accomplished, as he did the faith of Abraham, Romans iv.—Thus he tries their *patience*, when they are to wait upon him, and they know not how long, Psal. xiii. 1. *How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord, forever? How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?*—Thus he tries their *hope*, when all human appearances and probabilities fail, and they can see no ground of hope from without; for, *that which is seen is no hope*.—Thus he tries their *submission* to him, and their *obedience* to him, while he calls to stoop to his will, even when he hides his design, and gives not account of any of his matters; that we may be *still and know that he is God*.

5. In a word, he takes this hid and unknown way, that we may learn to *reverence* and *fear* him, and to wait upon him, till he teach us what we know not, and expound to us what we do not understand: *He is a God of judgment, and blessed are all they that wait for him*.—In this way he curbs the *curiosity*, and checks the *pride* of poor man, who, when he is done, must go to school again, and learn over what he learned before, and learn better.—In this way he stirs up to *prayer*,
that

that they may take every piece of his work back again to him, that so he may make them know the secrets of his counsels, and the depth of his government ; and that they may put no sense on what he doth but his own, which they are very ready to do, without waiting till he give them his own mind ; that we darken not *counsel without knowledge*.—In this way he teaches us to be *modest* in our *minds*, and *sober* in our *sentiments* about what he doth, till once he hath done out his work, and told out all his mind ; and that, in a sense of our ignorance, we may daily be learning to read and speak, to read his mind distinctly, and to speak of his actings knowingly ; otherwise we cannot *order our speech by reason of darkness*.—In this way he not only quickens his people to prayer, but gives great matter of *praise* in the issue, when *what we know not now, he makes known afterward*, and brings *light out of darkness, yea, and makes darkness light before us*. How doth it accent their praise, when the dark clouds give way to the bright sun ? The issue of his dealing is the more glorious, when afterwards his gracious and glorious design shall be made known —But this leads me to the next thing proposed, namely,

IV. The *fourth* head, which was to point out some of the *seasons* when he makes them know afterwards, what now they are, or may be in the dark about : *What I do, thou knowest not now ; but thou shalt know hereafter*.

1st, In general, this hath a reference to the *partial discovery* he gives of his mind in *this world*, and the *perfect and full discovery* he makes of himself in the *world to come*. Here he sometimes discovers what was dark and mysterious formerly in his work and dealing ; but still it is only a partial display ; *For now we know but in part, we prophesy in part : And now we see but through a glass darkly*, 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 12. But in the world to come, *that which is perfect shall come, and that which is in part shall be done away ; and then we shall see no more through a glass, but face to face*. Now I know

in part, says the apostle ; *but then shall I know, even as also I am known. At that day ye shall know*, says Christ, *that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you*, John xiv. 20. Here we know him but as he is NOT, but then *positively* ; for, *we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is*, 1 John iii. 2. Ye shall know hereafter perfectly. But then,

2dly, In particular, it hath a reference to some *special seasons*, wherein, even in this world, he gives his people to know afterwards what he doth, which at present they do not know or understand ; and I shall touch at some of these seasons.

1. Sometimes the season of making known what he doth, is very *soon*, very *quickly* after the work is done, and so it was here ; for, after Christ had washed his disciples feet, he explains what he designed by it, and that first to Peter, by shewing what washing he especially intended ; so that without it, they could have no portion in the son of Jesse : *If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me.* And then afterwards to all the disciples he said, *Know you what I have done to you ;* and so explains it further to them.—And as sometimes he very quickly explains his work ; so he doth his *word* that was dark and unknown. Christ had said, John xvi. 17. *A little while, and ye shall not see me : and again, A little while, and ye shall see me ; because I go to the Father :* They were puzzled and perplexed about it, verse 18. ; and hereupon, before Christ was done with speaking to them, he explains it to them, ver. 19,—28. ; whereupon they say, ver. 29, 30. *Lo now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. Now are we sure thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee : by this we believe that thou camest forth from God.* Yet this knowledge that now they got was but imperfect, as Christ's following answer shews.

2. Sometimes the season of making known afterwards what he now doth, is very *long after* the work is done, or the word spoken, which they are in the dark about——Our Lord may do great things, and speak gracious words to his people, and yet they may
be

be in great darkness as to the meaning and design thereof for a long time. God met with Jacob at Bethel, and gave him a glorious manifestation of himself, and a sweet promise of his presence and blessing, and it was to him *the house of God, and the gate of heaven*, Gen. xxviii. 17. But Jacob knew not what a feast this was to be unto him twenty years afterwards, when God gave him a new meal upon this old experience; saying, *I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me*, Genesis xxxi. 13. He knew not that it was to be a preface to twenty years servitude; and that the new remembrance and reflection upon it was to be a pledge of a new visit of the like nature: that the recognition of an old Bethel, was to be a preface to a new Peniel. What do I know but it will take twenty or thirty years to explain what some have met with at this occasion in Dunfermline. *What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter*. But whether it be in a short time, or after a long time that he opens up the mystery of what he does, he is sure to chuse the fit time, the appointed time, the best time; best for reaching the great ends of his glory and our good: *The vision is for an appointed time, at the end it will speak, and not lye; though it tarry, wait for it: because it will surely come, it will not tarry*, beyond the due time, Hab. ii. 3.

Again, there are some *circumstances of time*, wherein the Lord thinks fit to communicate the knowledge of what was dark and mysterious, hidden and unknown in his work and doing to his people.—Sometimes after he hath hid himself in the dark from them in *private*, he meets with them in *public*, and tells them all his mind: when David went to the sanctuary, Psal. lxxiii. he got a resolution of his cloudy case, and found, that even at the time *his feet was almost gone, and his steps had well nigh slipt*; that even then the Lord was holding him by his right-hand. They have seen his *power and glory in the sanctuary*.—Sometimes he hides himself in *public*, and gives them more of his
mind

mind in a *secret* corner: *When the disciples were alone, he expounded all things to them*, Mark iv. 34. What they hear, and yet do not know in public, he clears it up when he and they are alone. Hence the church affects retirement, Song vii. 11, 12. *Come, my Beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages; let us go up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, &c.; there will I give thee my loves: sweet and sensible communion is sometimes reserved for a corner.*—Again, sometimes what he doth, he makes them know after a black and long night of *desertion*, when he surprises them with a new visit, and makes them say, *The voice of my Beloved! behold, he cometh, leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.*—Sometimes he explains his mind more clearly to them, after he hath tried their *faith* and *patience* for a while, and brought them into great tribulation. John, in the Revelation, never had so much of Christ's mind, even when he leaned upon Christ's bosom, as when he was persecuted and banished into the isle of Patmos. Thus it was with Ezekiel, when he was among the captives by the river of Chebar, then was the heavens opened, and he saw the visions of God.—Sometimes it is after *deep humiliation* and *fervent supplication*; such as that of Daniel, chap. ix. 20, 21. Then he is informed by the angel Gabriel of some great things he was in the dark about before.—Sometimes the Lord hath remarkably countenanced his people with great and glorious discoveries of his mind, when they have set days apart for *prayer* and *confession*, afflicting themselves before him. But, Oh! where are the Christians of former generations, some of whom would have shut themselves up in their closets for many days, and got their meat shut in to them at the window, and holes of the door!—Again, sometimes he reserves the discovery of what he is doing, till the time that he gives a more full and plentiful *out-pouring of the Spirit*. *What I do*, says Christ here to Peter, *you know not now, but you shall know* partly, just now after I am done with washing your feet; I will explain it, but you shall know afterwards more clearly and distinctly in the day

of Pentecost, when the Spirit shall be poured out ; and hence see Acts ii. how Peter then preached and published the doing, dying, and rising of Jesus : What he did was then no more a mystery to him. And you see John xvi. 26. the Spirit, the Comforter is promised for this very end, to *teach us all things, and to bring all things to remembrance, whatsoever Christ hath said unto us.* And when the Spirit is more plentifully afterwards communicate, then he brings Christ's words and works to remembrance, in such a manner, as to tell us what he intended by such a word and such a work ; what he said and did at such and such a time.

Again, sometimes he doth it a little *before their death* ; he sometimes has anointed them before their death with eye-salve, and let them see farther than ever they saw ; as it was with old Jacob, when his natural eyes were dim, he saw Shiloh coming, to whom the gathering of the people should be ; he saw a little farther, then, I think, than he did either at Bethel or Peniel, and something more concerning Christ was then explained to him than he knew before. Thus it was also with old Simeon before his death ; he had got a believing sight of Christ before, but now he got an arm-full of Christ, and a more sensible sight than before ; *Now, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace ; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.* I have known some get very clear manifestations of Christ before their death.

In a word, sometimes at *death itself* ; though some of the Lord's servants and saints have died in much darkness, yet others have got Christ's doings explained at death, that have been hid from them all their days before. Death may make a breach among forty or fifty experiences, and bring them down to two or three perhaps. But death to some has multiplied their experiences, and made them go *through the valley of the shadow of death*, triumphing in God's everlasting love. I read of Adolphus Clarebachius, who had been all his lifetime kept under much bondage ; when he became a martyr, and went to the stake to

be burnt, he then said, “ I have lived a most melancholy and dejected life till this day ; but now I believe there is not a merrier heart in the world than mine.” What the Lord did, by ordering his former dejection he knew not, till now that it appeared the Lord’s design by his grievous and heavy life, was to be a lane and avenue to that glorious and joyful death. Some have gone thro’ the dark trance between time and eternity with more light and knowledge of the Lord’s mind and works than ever they had. Jacob never had a brighter view of his old Bethel-visit than when he was upon his death-bed, and had all his children about him, and some of his children’s children : he now saw more clearly what God had done, and what he was further to bring out of the Bethel-promise, with reference to his numerous issue, and their future possession of the land of Canaan ; and therefore he begins his dying words with what past between God and him at Bethel, Genesis xlviii. 3, 4. *God Almighty appeared to me at Luz, in the land of Canaan, and blessed me ; and said, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee ; and I will make of thee a multitude of people, and will give this land to thy seed after thee, for an everlasting possession.* Then might he say, I had neither wife nor children ; but now I see my children, and my children’s children ; and I see what God is about to do with them : and so he prophesies of their future increase and various circumstances and appearances they were to make in after-ages. Thus his Bethel-blessing was extended, and explained more clearly to him in his dying moments. What you met with, believer, in such a place, and what you have met with in Dunfermline, what he hath been doing at former occasions, or at this occasion, may be, you do not see through at present, perhaps the further explication of it is reserved for a death-bed feast unto you, when he shines upon his former words and works, and makes you sing of his salvation, and say, “ O ! I remember what he said to me in such a place, and what he did to me at another. What he designed by it was dark and unknown.”

“known to me, but now I see more of his mind; I see
 “he hath been as good as his word, and that *he hath*
 “*done all things well.*” *What I do, thou knowest not now;*
but thou shalt know hereafter, perhaps sooner or later,
 even before you go into eternity.

V. The *fifth* and *last* thing proposed was, To deduce some *inferences* for the *application* of the whole. Is it so, *That the works of God, the doings of Christ Jesus, towards his people may be so dark and mysterious, hid and unknown, till afterwards he make them known?* Hence,

1. See that we have great cause to be *humble* and *sober*: whatever the Lord hath been doing among us at this occasion, let us not think that we know all that he hath done, since he is saying, *What I do, thou knowest not now.* Let that great question humble us under a sense of our own ignorance, Job xi. 7. *Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? It is higher than heaven, what canst thou do? Deeper than hell, what canst thou know?* Think not you have learned your lesson perfectly; the greatest believers on earth are but scholars as long as they are in the body. Divine light shines gradually more and more to the perfect day of glory; therefore, whatever they see they need to see more clearly; whatever they are taught they need to be taught over again more perfectly:—What a small portion of God do we know?

2. Hence see, what reason believers have to *long for heaven*, since clouds and darkness will never be altogether dispelled till the beatifical vision of God and of the Lamb. *That city hath no need of the sun, nor the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God doth enlighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. I saw no temple there; for the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple of it,* Rev. xxi. 22, 23. It may be said of all the great works of God that at present he doth, *What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter,* when time shall discover it, even the Lord’s time, the fit time; and even when that time hath made the disco-

very of what he was doing formerly, it may be also said of that discovery, *What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter*; when eternity shall discover it, and heaven make it manifest in another and more glorious manner; then all his dealings with his people will be conspicuous; and all his designs appear, that before were dark and mysterious.

3. Hence see, that the church and children of God, while in this world, must not think of being *exempted from clouds and darkness*, even when they have the Lord near to them; for, *Clouds and darkness are round about him*, Psal. xcvi. 2. And he makes the *clouds his chariots* wherein he rides towards his people. It is true, the clouds that surround him have sometimes a dark side, and sometimes a bright side; yet even at the brightest, it is but a cloud, wherein he appears, and they know not how far he is to ride upon it, how soon it will disappear, and what weather it prognosticates. The Lord designs to give his people, while here, a proof of his promised care, Isa. xlii. 16. In leading *the blind in a way they know not, in paths they have not known: making darkness light before them, and crooked things straight*. And hence they are mostly kept in the dark; sometimes about providences befalling the *church*, while heavy clouds hang over it: sometimes in the dark about *duty* relating to the cause of God, in the day wherein they live, and the *word of his patience*; sometimes in the dark about their *state*, and their assured interest in Christ; sometimes in the dark, as to *comfort*, when destitute of that necessary consolation their heavy case may require; sometimes in darkness about the *word* of God, when a vail is drawn over it; sometimes about the *work* of God, and what he is doing, when they cannot see his steps, nor hear his voice, nor read his mercy and loving kindness by reason of darkness.

4. Hence see, that the Lord's time of *doing* is not always his time of *showing* what he doth. He takes his own time of working, and his own time of showing his work. He may *wash his disciples feet*, and not let them understand what he is doing, till a more proper time, where in

wherein he will shew the glory of his work which was hid. Hence prays the church, Psalm xc 16. *Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children.* And his time of shewing himself and his work is ordinarily very surprizing and unexpected; may be, it is when their night is at the darkest, and their darkness at the blackest, then, according to his promise, *To the upright there arises light in darkness,* Psal. cxii. 4. *He makes darkness light before them; When I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light unto me.*— Sometimes indeed he manifests his work to them, when they are longing and hoping: *For he satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry with good things,* Psalm cvii. 9. — And yet sometimes he doth it, when they have lost hope, as it were, and are least looking for it; *For the needy shall not always be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever,* Psalm ix. 18. Intimating, that they may be forgotten for a long time, but they shall not always be forgotten; their hope and expectation may seem to perish for a long time, but they shall not be forgotten for ever: when it is just at the perishing, he pities poor perishing hope.— Sometimes to shew his regard to holiness and strictness of walk, he makes his glory appear to them, when they are exercised in practical piety towards God and man. Hence, *To the upright there arises light in darkness,* Psal. cxii. 4. And, *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and manifest myself unto him,* John xiv. 21, 22. And it is in this way we are to expect his coming to manifest himself and his work.— Yet sometimes, to shew the sovereignty of his grace, he manifests himself and his gracious work, when their religion is at a low ebb; their praying frame is gone; yea, and their backslidings multiplied, and their rebellion increased; Isa. xliii. 22. *Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; thou hast been weary of me, O Israel;* yet upon the back of the challenge, that he may melt their hearts with his surprizing grace, he says, verse 25. *I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for my name's sake, and will not remember thy sins.*

Isaiah lvii. 17, 18. *For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him: And I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him, and to his mourners.* Some think even this is the season the text hath a relation to, *What I am doing, by washing thy feet, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.* When after thou hast denied me thrice, I will give thee a look, and thou shalt go out, and weep bitterly. When, upon the crowing of the cock, thou shalt run away to a corner, and reflect upon thy grievous sins, and my gracious look, then shalt thou, with a melting heart, see more into the mystery of this washing, *What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.*—Again,

5. Hence see ground of enquiry, what the Lord hath been *doing*, and what you know thereof, and if it be hid and unknown to you or not.

[1.] Enquire what hath the Lord *been doing*, or what *is he doing* towards you at this occasion; hath he been stooping down to wash your feet?

QUEST. *When may Christ be said, in a spiritual sense, to stoop down and wash his disciples feet?*

ANSW. (1.) Then he may be said to wash their feet, when he shews them their *foul* feet. O Sirs, hath the Lord been shewing to you, by his convincing grace, what *foul* feet, what filthy affections you have, what a filthy heart, and what a filthy walk and conversation you have had? Hath he made *the iniquity of your heels to compass you about?* as it is, Psalm xlix. 5. Hath he been making you say, with shame and sorrow, *Iniquities prevail against me? O wretched man that I am!* How have I grieved his Spirit, and defiled my feet, by running into the mire? O was there ever such *foul* feet as mine, that carried any to a communion-table.

(2.) Then he may be said to wash their feet, when he makes them *dip* their *foul* feet into the *fountain of his blood, opened for sin and for uncleanness.* Hath he been shewing you the fountain of sin and wickedness
that

that is in you, and the fountain of cleansing and purification that is in Jesus; and making you, by faith, to run in to this fountain of the Lamb's blood, that *cleanseth from all sin*? If thus he hath sprinkled his blood upon your heart and conscience, and intimate peace and pardon in his blood, and made it precious to you, not only as pardoning, but also purifying blood, then he hath indeed been washing your feet.

(3.) Then he may be said to wash their feet, when he makes them, with the woman, Luke vii. 38. that *stood behind him weeping, to wash his feet with tears, and to wipe them with the hair of your head*. Have you been admitted to such nearness to him, that with humble boldness you have laid yourself down at his feet; the woman was ashamed to look Christ in the face, but came behind him *weeping*? Have you been filled with holy humble shame, and confusion of face before him because of your sinfulness, and in the view and apprehension of his being *pacified towards you*, Ezekiel xvi. 63.

(4.) Then he may be said to wash their feet, when they are made to wash their feet in the *blood of his enemies*; as it is said of the righteous, *He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked, and rejoice when he sees the vengeance*, Psalm lviii. 10.: so we may say of believers, when Christ is washing their feet, they desire to see the heart-blood of their and his enemies, their unbelief, atheism, and all their lusts and idols: their joy would be to see the vengeance of God upon them; they are filled with holy *revenge* against them, 2 Cor. vii. 11. The reason of this being an evidence of his washing, is, because, when he washes them, he doth it according to that promise, Ezek. xxxvi. 25. *I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you*. Now, hath he thus been washing your feet?

[2.] Inquire what you know, with reference to his *work*: if you know that he hath been washing you, this is more than simple washing; and in such a case, he is saying to you in effect, *What I do, thou knowest, and thou shalt know more hereafter*. It is one thing to be

be washen, another to be assured of it ; and if he hath given you the assured knowledge of his work, surely somewhat of Peter's amazement will fill your heart, *Lord, dost thou wash my feet ?* O Sirs, wonder, wonder men and angels, that the Lord of glory should have stooped down so far below himself to such a filthy worm as to wash me in his blood ! *What shall I render to the Lord ? Is this the manner of man ?* But this is not every one's allowance. O be thankful and humble ; and whatever you know this way, remember you know but in part, and there is much more in what he doth than yet you know. There are other believers here, that perhaps know not all what Christ hath been doing with them ; *He hides his face, and they are troubled.* They cannot say he hath been washing their feet, but rather wounding their hearts, and frowning upon them ; standing at a distance, and keeping them at the back of the door ; the *Comforter that should relieve their souls being far away.* Well, as the believer, that is clear, knows not how soon he may be under a cloud : so the believer that is under a cloud, knows not how soon the sky may be cleared, and both these cases may be paving the way for what is a-coming, when the Lord's design breaks out : therefore, whatever be the case, let this word be still the consideration, *What I do, thou knowest not now ; but thou shalt know hereafter.*—Therefore,

6. Hence let us see the duty of all, both *saints* and *sinners* in this great meeting of people. It yields special instruction to all the saints and children of God, whatever their case be, and whatever the Lord is doing, especially if his way be hid and unknown, dark and mysterious in any respect to them ; and first to disciples.

(1.) It is your duty, O believer, to *mark* what the Lord is doing ; to *observe his stately steps and goings in the sanctuary*, though they be very hid and unknown ; yea, the rather that they are dark and mysterious, they are the more worthy to be known.—It is a mark of the graceless, they consider not the operations

tions of his hand. *But whoſo is wiſe, and will obſerve theſe things, even they ſhall underſtand the loving-kindneſs of the Lord.* This obſerving comprehends a believing that the Lord is carrying on his work, tho' clouds hide him from our ſight, and a paſſing a ſuitable judgment on what he is doing, conſtruing all for the beſt; this is to *conſider wiſely of his doing*, Pſalm lxxiv. 9. Believing that all is good, and for the good of his people, we ſhould conſider his work, till we obſerve his loving-kindneſs therein. Therefore,

(2.) It is your duty never to *judge harſhly* of his doings, however hid and unknown they may be; yea, however heavy and afflictive: will you meaſure God's love by outward diſpenſations, or even by inward deſertion? Though, indeed, it becomes you to weep when the bridegroom is away, as well as to rejoice when he is preſent; yet meaſure not his love by his providence, but by his promiſe. It is the fooliſh child that thinks the mother hath caſt him off every time ſhe is out of ſight, or has given him out of her arms; therefore, ſay not when he hides himſelf, "Oh! his heart is changed; his love is gone; all he did was but a deluſion; there is no hope; all is undone!" Whatever be his dealings, though you ſhould not be able to give an account of them; yet what you cannot believe by knowing, you muſt know by believing: we muſt believe when we cannot know: wink at providences, and open your eyes to promiſes.

(3.) Do not *quarrel* and *queſtion* what you do not know, but ſtoop down, and ſtand in awe; *Be ſtill, and know that he is God*, and will act like himſelf; ſet not *limits to the holy One of Iſrael*, by concluding that he will not come, becauſe he comes not in the time and way that you imagine. Be afraid to think that you could manage otherwiſe, and do better than infinite wiſdom ſees fit to do. What abominable pride is that! O entertain high thoughts of him, whoſe ways are ſo high above your reach, that what he doth you know not: and if his works are ſo high above you, how high and unſearchable are his counſels; yet, O ſtill remember, whatever clouds are, or may be in your ſky,

sky, he hath established a firm connexion between black dispensations and fair promises.

(4.) If you would know more of what the Lord is doing, you must study to be *practical Christians*, and to walk in the fear of the Lord; for, *The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him*, Psal. xxv. 14. The nearer you live to God, the more may you expect to know of his mind, and to be led by an unseen hand in a dark day; for, *The meek will he guide in judgment, the meek will he teach his ways*: study therefore, to walk humbly with your God; and *what he doth, tho' you know not now, you shall know hereafter*.

(5.) Be not *proud* and *lifted up*; if you know more than others, and if he be using you as friends, according to John xv. 15. *Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knows not what his Lord doth; but I have called you friends: for all that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you*. And, lest you be exalted above measure, think not strange though he should order a *thorn in the flesh* for you, and a cross to keep you down; remember how formerly the cross hath born down your pride, restrained your predominant, and put you to your prayers, and sent you groaning to a God in Christ. Be not proud of what you know; for, though you be in higher favour than some of your neighbours, you know not what weather is coming, nor what storms may blow upon you, or upon the church of Christ; or whether this be your last communion.

(6.) If what he doth be dark and unknown to you now; O wait upon him who says, *You shall know hereafter*.—O wait upon him *believingly*; when his work is dark and hid to you, it is the proper season for faith to bud and bring forth: *I will wait upon the Lord, that hides his face from the house of Jacob*, Isa. viii. 7. Even when promised things look like improbable and impossible things; yet, having the firm word of God that cannot lye nor change, there you are to rest as anchored upon that immoveable rock, and ride out all storms of carnal reasonings and corrupt suggestions.—Wait upon him *patiently*; *The Lord is a God of judgment, blessed*

sed are all they that wait for him. Psalm xl. 1, 2. *I waited patiently upon the Lord, and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me out of the horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings; and he put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God.* Whatever be his dispensations, though *he slay me, yet will I trust in him*; whatever dark clouds appear, either in his work, or his word. The poor woman of Canaan met with many discouraging things, even in her application to Christ: at first he answers her not a word; and when he speaks a word, the first thing he said, seeming to exclude her out of his commission; *I am not sent, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.* Alas! now might she say, *I need pray no more, I am a cast-away!* Nay, but she goes on, saying, *Lord, help me*: then he calls her a *dog*; yet still she waits, and then gets a merciful and marvellous hearing; *O woman, great is thy faith, be it unto thee, even as thou wilt.*—Go on thus, believer: O incredulous believer, give him trust, and give him time, and he will clear all to you in the issue, though it should be *through fire and water*, that *he brings you to the wealthy land.* You have his promise sealed with his precious blood, and his solemn oath, that when you go *through the fire and through the water, he will be with you*, whether you discern him or not. You know not now what he doth or designs; you know not what *deep steps* are before you in point of *trouble*; but with his promise in your hand, you may say as it is, Psal. lxxi. 20. *Thou which hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shall bring me up from the depths of the earth. Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side.*—You know not what *foul steps* are before you in point of *sin*. Now I am washing thy feet, might Jesus say to Peter, but thou knowest not that this is but a dark specimen of another sort of washing you will very soon need; *For before the cock crow twice, you will deny me thrice*, notwithstanding your present resolution, *That though all men forsake me, yet wilt not thou.* You know not now, that you will fearfully defile your feet, even after I have washed them.

O wonderful Jesus, that he should wash the feet he knows will be so soon in the puddle again ! But whatever should come about, though Satan, through his temptations should hurry you into the mire of sin ; yet beware of being hurried on the back of that into the depth of despair ; for that is what the devil drives at, that he may make you affront both the law and the gospel of God at once ; that having tempted you to dishonour his name, by breaking his commandments in the law, he may thereupon tempt you to discredit his grace, by despairing of any good from him by the promise of the gospel : therefore, O believer, see the need of waiting and watching every moment, and the need of the Lord's washing and watering every moment, according to the promise, *Isaiah xxvii. 3. I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment.* Think not that one washing or watering now will do your business ; though, through the Lord's shining upon you, you were in a heaven of joy and consolation this moment, you know not but, through his hiding and withdrawing, you may be in a hell of sin and sorrow the next moment ; and though our glorious Lord were washing your feet this moment, I cannot promise, but before the cock crow twice, your feet will be as dirty as ever they were : therefore, O wait and depend upon him for washing and watering you every moment.

O beware of *security* ; for you never got so much of his grace and fulness one moment, as shall allow you liberty to slacken your dependence upon him in the next. In this way of waiting upon him, though now you know not what he doth, *Yet you shall know hereafter*, and he will give you occasion to see him bring his work, though it should be through terrible ways, to an amiable issue, and give occasion to say, as *Psalms lxvi. 5, 6. Come and see the works of the Lord ; he is terrible in his doings towards the children of men ; he turned the sea into dry land, and there did we rejoice in him.* He turned a sea of tribulation into a dry land of consolation ; and verse 10. *Come and hear all ye that fear God, and I will tell what he hath done for my soul.* What he doth now, by all the blinks and showers, the vicif-

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vicissitudes and changes, the storms and calms of your case, the dark and mysterious ways he takes you thro', he will come, soon or late, afterwards and explain to you, saying, as it is Psalm lxxxi. 7. *Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee ; I answered thee in the secret place of thunder ; I proved thee at the waters of Meribah.* Isaiah xlv. 5. *I girded thee, though thou didst not know me. What I do, thou knowest not now ;* it may take some days or years to explain what he now doth : however little or much you know ; perhaps a day of approaching trial will make you know more ; a day of death may make you know it better ; but the day of glory best of all. *You shall know hereafter,* believer, partly on earth, and perfectly in heaven ; graciously in time, and gloriously through eternity.

I shall now conclude with a word to *enemies*, to *sinners*, that are yet utter strangers to our Saviour Jesus Christ. O ye that are despisers of the Lord of glory, though he hath been *set forth evidently crucified before you* at this occasion, What shall I say to you? May not I tell thee, O sinner, how this text may be applied to you? Christ is saying even to thee, *What I do, thou knowest not now ; but thou shalt know hereafter.* He hath been doing something *before your eyes*, at this occasion, and you know it not ; yea, he hath been doing something *to you* that you do not know and consider ; though he hath not been washing your feet, yet he hath been offering to wash you, and not your feet only, but your head and hands ; for the believer that is washed already by regenerating grace, needeth not, save to wash his feet ; but you need that your head and heart be washen, as well as your hands and feet. You need to be washen from the filthiness of your state, as well as from the filthiness of your ways : but whatever washing you need, he hath been offering it, and himself to be the doer of it, saying, *If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me.* And to this moment he is offering himself to you, saying, *Wilt thou be made clean ? wilt thou let me wash thy heart, and hands, and feet ?* No, no, says unbelief ; thou shalt never wash my feet, it

is too much for Christ the Son of God to do ; I will wash myself, and repent, and turn religious against some other time ; for the present, I am otherwise taken up. Will you resolve to put no employment in Christ's hand ? Is that the way you treat his kindly offer, when he opens the door of mercy to you, and calls you by this minister and that minister, and the other minister, all telling you, that you shall be welcome for all your sins, and saying, *Him that cometh, I will in no wise cast out ?* Be who you will, young or old sinner, behold the humble Jesus makes the most condescending offer to you, that ever men or angels heard. O filthy sinner, will you let me wash you ; *For, if I wash you not, you have no part in me, nor ever shall ?*

If you are so wedded to your filthy lusts, that you are not willing to be washen from them, I must tell you, that you know not what you are doing, and know not what Christ is doing ; *but you shall know hereafter*, either in a way of wrath, to your great confusion ; or in a way of mercy, to your deep remorse.

1. What he doth by this offer to wash you, *you shall know hereafter* to your confusion. Perhaps, when you are gasping for breath upon a death-bed, and conscience awaking, shall begin to say, O many a sweet offer of Christ and mercy did I get, and slighted, and this amongst the rest, when he offered to wash my feet, and I refused and rejected his offer ! *You shall know hereafter*, when you shall hear the awful doom pass against you, *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels ;* and when, with *weeping and gnashing of teeth, you shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, apostles, and followers of the Lamb in the kingdom of heaven, and yourself shut out ;* and when thou shalt think and say, “ O vile wretch that I was, I might have been yonder in glory ; but I was taken up with the vain world, and my vile lusts, and was unwilling to be washen from them, and now I must be lodged in hell among devils and damned reprobates for ever.” Oh ! think upon this before it be too late !

2. If mercy prevent you after this refusal : *What he now doth, you shall know hereafter to your bitter remorse.* If ever the Lord have mercy on you, and manifest himself to you, oh ! how will it go like a sword to your heart, and pierce you to the quick, when he shall say, *I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt ! I am Jesus your Saviour, whom you slighted ! I am he whose cries you contemned, and whose kind offers you disregarded : when I offered to wash your feet, you lifted up your heel against me ; and now, How shall I put thee among the children ?* How shall I deliver thee, that hast so undervalued my kindness, and trampled on my blood, wherein I offered to wash you ? What a knell will this be to your heart, if he have mercy upon you afterwards : and, O that the bitter remorse were begun in your bosom this moment, with a wo is me that I have slighted such an offer so long. O ! is he saying to the vilest sinner in this company, Come and let me wash you ! O then, were your heart saying, Lord, come, and welcome ! O come and wash my conscience from the guilt, and my heart from the filth of sin ; it were good. Are you cordially willing, and presently willing, and universally willing to be washed in his blood *from all your filthiness, and from all your idols ?* Why then ? I hope he is doing something upon your heart and will, which, though now you cannot understand, he will explain mercifully in due time ; for it is his own promise : *What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.*

S E R M O N C I*.

The GREAT TRUMPET of the *Everlasting Gospel*.

ISAIAH XXVII. 13.

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in his holy mount at Jerusalem,

MY friends, it is only the trumpet of common providence that hath, perhaps, gathered you together to this place, you hearing the news go thro' the country, that the sacramental feast was to be kept here, and so you have come along with the rest ; but it is the great trumpet of special powerful grace that can gather perishing sinners together to Christ, and make them come to him for life and salvation, liberty and redemption from their spiritual captivity. And, O may the sound of this trumpet be so heard, as many may come to Jesus at this occasion, that they may worship the Lord spiritually in his holy mountain !

These words are to be considered, first in their *literal*, and then in their *typical* and *spiritual* meaning, in order to deduce a suitable doctrine from them,

1st, As to the *literal* import of the words, they relate to the church of Israel that was scattered, their be-

* This sermon was preached at Abernethy, upon Saturday, July 24th, 1736. Being the preparation-day before the administration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper. It hath undergone six impressions.

ing gathered together and brought back to Jerusalem. Though the body of the people was abandoned as a people of *no understanding*, ver 11.; yet mercy was laid up in store for some that were to be gathered as the sheep of the flock, when the shepherds (the rulers in church and state) that scattered them should be reckoned with; *Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them. For thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day,* Ezek. xxxiv. 10,—12. Now, concerning these scattered Israelites you may observe these particulars.

1. From what *place* they were to be brought and gathered. We are told, the Lord should *beat them off*; that is, as fruit from a tree, which is carefully gathered for the use of men; and he should beat them off *from the channel of the river to the stream of Egypt*; that is, from the river Euphrates to the river Nilus, which were the two borders of the land of promise. —All the Israelites left in the land are here opposed to these of them that are dispersed into foreign parts, such as Assyria and Egypt: he shall find out his scattered people, and separate them from these with whom they seem to be incorporated; these that were driven to the land of Assyria, ready to perish for want of necessaries, and ready to despair of deliverance: and these that were outcasts in the land of Egypt, whither these that were left behind, after the captivity into Babylon, went, contrary to God's express command, Jer. xliii. 6, 7. and there lived as outcasts.

2. In what manner they were to be gathered; ver. 12. *They shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel*; pointing out either the smallness of the remnant
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of that numerous people, or rather God's exact and singular care of them, that not one of them should be lost. As God had mercy in store for perishing outcasts, and will make it appear that, though they are cast out, they are not cast off ; so he takes particular care of gathering them one by one ; not in multitudes, but first one, as it were, and then another. This, indeed, is the way of God's gathering his elect remnant : for ordinary they are but few : *And of Zion it is said, This man and that man is born there.*

3. By what *means* they shall be gathered, *The great trumpet shall be blown* ; that is, by the proclamation of liberty by king Cyrus to the captives, which awakened the Jews, that were asleep in their thralldom, to bestir themselves and return to Jerusalem and their own land ; of which proclamation you read, 2 Chronicles xxxvi. 22, 23. Ezra i. 2, 3, 4. This was like the sounding of the jubilee-trumpet, which published the year of release ; thus God was to summon them, as it were, by the sound of a trumpet from the remotest parts of the earth, by an eminent call or act of his providence in their behalf ; and particularly from Assyria, where the ten tribes were carried captive ; and from Egypt, where many of the Jews were.

4. For what *end* they should be gathered, namely, *To worship the Lord in the holy mountain at Jerusalem.* Though the holy temple was in ruins, yet they had the holy mount, the *place of the altar*, Gen. xiii. 4. Liberty to worship God in his instituted ordinances is a most valuable and desirable liberty.

2dly, As to the *typical* and *spiritual* meaning of these words. That they have a further view than what I have yet mentioned, will appear, if you consider, that as king Cyrus was an eminent type of our Lord Jesus Christ ; so the deliverance of Israel from the Babylonish captivity and Egyptian thralldom, by his means, was eminently typical of the redemption to be wrought for sinners through Jesus Christ, from their spiritual bondage. To this purpose you may read, Isa. xlv. 28. and xlv. 1,—4. In all this Cyrus was a type of Christ,

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who was made victorious over principalities and powers, and intrusted with *unsearchable riches*, for the use and benefit of God's servants his elect. When he ascended on high he led *captivity captive*, taking these captives who had taken others captive, and *opened the prison to them that were bound*.

Again, Cyrus' proclamation of liberty to the captive Israelites, which was here prophesied of, more than a hundred years before it came to pass, is compared to the *blowing of a great trumpet*, in allusion plainly to the silver trumpets which the priests were to use, Numb. x. 2. for assembling the Israelites : which signified how the ministers of Christ should *lift up their voice like a trumpet*, to shew people their sins, Isa. lviii. 1. ; and to call them home to Christ out of their captive state. To the same purpose, Lev. xxiii. 23. we read of the *feast of trumpets* ; a memorial of blowing of trumpets on the first day of the seventh month, the beginning of the year of jubilee. This was typical of the preaching of the gospel ; and in allusion to this, they are said to be *blessed that hear the joyful sound*, Psal. lxxxix. 15 ; that are invited to come to Christ, and to wait upon God in his public instituted ordinances. Mount Zion also here mentioned being an eminent type of the gospel-church, this text is not only applicable to the preaching of the gospel of Christ, for gathering sinners to him ; but the typical and spiritual sense of it is a prophetic declaration and promise of the conversion of the nations to the faith of Christ, by the blowing of the silver trumpet of the everlasting gospel.

Here then in the words you have these four things represented to you.

1. The *sad and miserable* case of sinners by nature, they are *outcasts, ready to perish*, under their spiritual captivity to sin, and Satan, and the wrath of God.

2. The *relief* provided and proclaimed in their ears, by the great trumpet of the gospel, which proclaims the *acceptable year of the Lord*, the year of liberty to perishing captives ; *The great trumpet shall be blown*.

3. The *power and efficacy* of this relief, thus proclaimed by sound of trumpet, for determining all the

chosen Israel of God, to betake themselves to the city of refuge ; *They shall come* ; the gospel of Christ shall be the power of God to their salvation : they shall come to Christ.

4. The *end* and *design* of their coming to Christ, namely, that they may *serve and worship the Lord in his holy mount*, and that they may have fellowship and communion with God in Christ ; and, being accepted in the Beloved, may offer acceptable service to him in his holy place.

Passing many doctrines that may be drawn from the words, I shall, as the Lord may assist, speak to this only.

OBSERV. *That as it is the duty of perishing sinners, who hear the gospel, to come to God in Christ as the only Saviour and glorious object of worship ; so it is an encouraging promise, that when the great trumpet of the gospel is blown, a number of outcast sinners, ready to perish, shall come, and shall worship and serve him acceptably in his holy mount.*

I might, at considerable length, prove every branch of this doctrine.

1. That it is the *duty of perishing sinners to come to Christ the Saviour* : this is plain from all the calls of the gospel : *Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely*, Rev. xxii. 17. *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters*, Isa. lv. 1. *Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*, Mat. xi. 28.

2. That they ought to come to him as *God the Saviour*, and *God the glorious object of worship*, by whom we are to worship God, and whom we are to worship as God ; Isa. xlv. 22. *Look to me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth ; for I am God, and there is none else*. John v. 23. *All men must honour the Son, even as they honour the Father* ; who therefore says, *This is my beloved Son, hear ye him*.

3. That it is the *great trumpet of the gospel* that is the means for gathering sinners to Christ, is plain, Rom.

xi. 17. *Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* For this end a gospel ministry is given, Eph. iv. 12 ; and therefore ministers are called to *preach the gospel to every creature*, Mark xvi. 15.

4. That a number of sinners, ready to perish, shall come at the blowing of this trumpet, and that it shall be powerful and effectual for bringing them, is also plain ; for, Romans i. 16. the gospel is *the power of God to their salvation : for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith.* The election shall obtain. And as many as were ordained to eternal life shall believe, Rom. xi. 7. Acts xvii. 48. His people shall be willing in the day of his power, Psal. cx. 3.

5. That, being thus brought back to God in Christ, they shall worship him acceptably in his holy mount, is also plain from these and the like promises, Psal. xxii. 27. *All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord ; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee ; for the kingdom is the Lords, and he is the governor among the nations.* Psal. lxxxvi. 9. *All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord ; and shall glorify thy name.* They will worship towards his holy temple, Psal. cxxxviii. 2. Hence says David, Psal. li. 18, 19. *Do good in thy good pleasure to Zion ; build thou the walls of Jerusalem. Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offerings, and whole burnt offerings ; then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.* When he sends forth his light and truth, then he brings them to his holy hill and to his tabernacle ; and then do they come to the altar of God, to God their exceeding joy, Psalm xlii. 3, 4. ; then they shall worship a God in Christ acceptably and joyfully, Isa. lvi. 6, 7.

Thus you may see the doctrine plain in every branch of it ; *That as it is the duty of perishing sinners, that hear the gospel, to come to God in Christ, as the only Saviour and glorious object of worship ; so it is an encouraging promise, that when the great trumpet of the gospel is blown, a number of outcast sinners, ready to perish, shall come, and shall worship and serve him acceptably in his holy mount.*

The method wherein I would speak to it, as the Lord may assist, is the following.

- I. To consider a little the *state and condition* of sinners by nature, as *outcasts, ready to perish*.
- II. The *duty* of sinners to come to Christ as the Saviour, the great Lord-deliverer, and glorious object of worship.
- III. Speak of the *means* by which the Lord gathers these sinners thus to him, namely, the *blowing of the great gospel trumpet*.
- IV. Touch at the *efficacy* of these means, and shew why it is promised *they shall come*.
- V. Speak of the *end* for which they shall come, their *worshipping* him in his holy mountain.
- VI. Deduce some *inferences* for the *application* of the whole.

I. We are to touch a little at the *sad state and circumstance of sinners by nature*. Now, there are two words here, by which, O sinner, your natural sad state is represented; 1. As *outcasts*, or sinners cast out. 2. As sinners *ready to perish*.

1. We are *outcasts*, as Israel in Egypt were designed; and this is the name several times given to sinners in scripture, in allusion to the outcast Israelites; Psal. cxlvii. 2. *The Lord shall build up Jerusalem, the Lord gathereth in the outcasts of Israel*. Isa. xi. 12. *He shall set up an ensign for the nations: he shall assemble the outcasts of Israel from the four corners of the earth*. The Lord seems to glory in this name of *gathering outcasts*; for I find him again taking it to himself; Isa. lvi. 8. *The Lord which gathers the outcasts of Israel, saith, Yet I will gather others to him, besides these that are gathered to him*. Now, if you enquire in what respect sinners are *outcasts*, (the consideration of this is necessary, in order to your coming to Christ, when the gospel-trumpet is blown in your ears; for, you will not prize the proclamation of mercy, if you do not see what a miserable outcast state you are in,) know then, O sinner, that

that by your sin and fall in the first Adam, you are cast out of God's *favour and fellowship*, being an *alien from the common-wealth of Israel, and a stranger to the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world*, Eph. ii. 12. Like the wretched infant, Ezek. xvi. 5. *cast out into the open field, to the lothing of thy person in the day that thou wast born ; having no eye to pity, or have compassion upon thee.* O sinners, you are such outcasts, that not only have you cast out yourselves, by sin in Adam, and in your own person, by original and actual sin, but you are cast out by the justice of God, executing the law-sentence against you. You are under the curse of the law, Gal. iii. 10. *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.* You are not only under the sentence of the law, the sentence of condemnation, but the sentence is partly executed ; the sentence is, *Thou shalt die, thou shalt surely die*, Genesis ii. 17. And behold, thou art dead, thou art *surely dead in sins and trespasses*. The sentence is passed on thee, thou art legally dead ; the sentence is executed in thee, thou art spiritually dead : Being legally dead, thou art condemned already ; and, being spiritually dead, the sentence of condemnation is partly executed already ; and there is nothing but the small hair of a mortal life between thee and the full execution of that sentence in thy eternal death.—Thus you are cast out of God's presence, cast out of his vineyard ; not only set out, or gone out, but by virtue of the law-wrath you are under, cast out like a dead dog cast over the wall of a city ; *For without are dogs*, Rev. xxii. 15.

In a word, O sinner, you are cast out to the *devil*, and led captive by him at his pleasure. The devil hath possession of you, he *works in the heart of the children of disobedience*. The devil is your god ; for he is *the god of this world, that blindeth your minds that believe not*, 2 Cor. iv. 4.

In these, and the like respects, you are outcasts, cast out of God's house, and cast out to the devil ;
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cast out into the mire, and wallowing in the mire of sin and lusts ; poor, vile, and miserable outcasts.

2. You are *ready to perish* in your outcast state, on the very brink of perishing for ever, if mercy interpose not ; ready to die both the first and second death. Ready to die the *first death* ; for your life is but a span, and the half of it is past already, and perhaps much more. Pray, where are your grandfather and grandmother ? Yea, may we not say to some here, Where are your fathers and mothers ? Is not their time past, and their acquaintance, whom you and your neighbours knew ? Is it not just a dream to think on the days of old ? Are they not all gone like a shadow, and the place where they were knows them no more ? Like a bird that flies through the air, leaving no vestige behind it ; or like a ship that cuts out its way in the sea, and immediately the water closes up behind it, and the place is not known through which it went. Is not your life perishing in that same manner ! And you cannot promise upon another year, nay, nor upon another month, nay, not upon another week, nay, not upon another day, nay, nor upon another hour, nay, not upon another minute, another moment.—You are ready to perish in your outcast state, ready to die ; and if you die in it, then you die for ever.

You are ready to die the *second death*, which you have described, Rev. xxi. 8. *But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars ; shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.* You have it described also, 2 Thess. i. 8. where it is said, *Christ will come in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power ; or by his powerful and wrathful presence, which they shall for ever have : and by being banished from his gracious and glorious presence which they shall for ever want ; for as heaven is a being for ever with the Lord ; so hell is a being for ever without him.* The wicked may think it an
easy

easy punishment to be without God now, while they know not his infinite excellency ; but beside the punishment of sense, and sensible pain for ever, the punishment of his loss will be found to be dreadful. Hunger puts no positive torment or pain upon a man ; yet his suffering, through hunger may be very great, when he can get nothing to ease it : now, the nature of perfection is such that whatever rational creature apprehends it, cannot but desire union with it, and be pained for the want of it. Now, if once God had unmasked his infinite glory and excellency (for there is no atheist in hell) they will see what infinite excellencies they are deprived the enjoyment of.—What unexpressible uneasiness and torment will it be, to be under a necessity of desiring that happiness which can never be granted ! A man may be deeply in love with a mortal, a piece of clay which God hath painted amiable and lovely in his sight, and that mortal perhaps slight his addresses, and he may suffer such torment by his being slighted as may pine him away to death : and if one bit of clay desired, and not granted, be so tormenting and uneasy to bear, let none have slight and light thoughts of the pain of loss that these will sustain, who are secluded the presence of the Lord, and his infinite beauty and excellency. Here then is the second death ; God's everlasting wrathful presence, and privation of his glorious presence for ever.—Thus you are ready to perish : O dismal case ! ready for hell, prepared for it, and ready every moment to be thrown into that place of perdition !

II. The *second* thing proposed was, To speak a little of the *duty* of outcast sinners, ready to perish ; and that is, to *come to Jesus* ; to come back to God, by this new and living way, that they perish not in their outcast state and miserable condition. I shall here consider a little what this coming *imports*, and in what *capacity* they are to come to him.

1. This coming to Christ, or to God in him, as it supposes that *natural, outcast, perishing* state and condition, which is a state of distance from God ; and a
sense

sense or conviction of this distant and dismal state, seeing the first step in God's way, is to see ourselves entirely out of the way, and that the devil and our lusts are driving us to hell : so it supposes, indeed, a *drawing power of divine grace*, making the soul willing to be saved in a way of free grace, both from sin and wrath, through the righteousness of Jesus Christ. It supposes one's hearing of the *way of relief* to be had in Jesus Christ, and a *weighty errand* that brings the soul to Jesus. Being sensible of blindness, he comes for light ; being sensible of guilt, and under fear of wrath, he comes for justification and reconciliation with God ; being sensible of the power of sin, and hell of corruption within him, he comes for sanctification and freedom from these massy chains of hell : being weak, they come for strength ; being weary, they come for rest ; being naked, they come for clothing ; being destitute of all good, they come for supply of all in him, who is *all in all*. And hence,

More particularly, this coming imports a *knowledge* of the person to whom we come ; for there is a *seeing of the Son* necessary to *believing in him*, John vi. 40. By the light of heaven the comer is made to see his absolute need of Christ, and the glorious excellency and suitableness of Christ. A man's coming to any place, supposes his knowledge where he is going. It imports *spiritual life and motion*, without which none can come or go any where in a spiritual sense ; no more than there can be any coming in a natural sense without natural life and motion. In the day of coming to Christ, the soul is quickened by the spirit of life, by the spirit of faith ; and quickened to a lively hope : for this coming imports a hope of coming speed, at least a *may-be* the merciful king of Israel will pity me. A poor man will not come for an alms to any person that he thinks hath nothing to give him ; the believing comer is persuaded there is fulness enough in Christ ; fulness of virtue, in his blood ; fulness of merit, in his death ; fulness of power, in his arm.—And hereupon chiefly this coming imports a *resolute outgoing of soul after Christ*, as offered in the gospel ; an actual closing with him, by a practical

practical assent of the understanding, a pleasant consent of the will, and a vigorous egress of the affection towards the Son of God. Seeing an absolute need, he ventures on an offered Christ for *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*, 1 Cor. i. 30.—But this leads to the next thing here to be considered, for I must not enlarge.

2. In what *capacity* we are to come. We are to come to him in a twofold capacity. 1. It is to him as the *Lord Redeemer*. 2. As the *LORD*, the glorious object of worship; *They shall come and worship*.

(1.) It is to Christ as the *Lord and Saviour, Redeemer and Deliverer*. Christ stands as a Saviour upon mount Zion, inviting all sorts of sinners to come to him; old sinners; young sinners, great sinners, gross sinners, the vilest and blackest outcasts, to come and get salvation; for it is his name to save; it is his nature, his delight, his office to save. We are to come as captives to a Redeemer, ready to deliver those who are ready to perish in their captivity to sin, Satan, justice, death, and hell; and hence his voice is, *Turn to your strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: come to me outcast sinners, ready to perish; here am I ready to save*.

(2.) It is to Christ as the *LORD JEHOVAH*, the glorious object of worship. This, I think, is also imported in the words, *They shall come and shall worship the Lord in his holy mount at Jerusalem*. Before men come to Jesus Christ, from their spiritual captivity, they are worshipping and serving the devil and their lusts; but, whenever they come to Jesus, they both worship him, and worship God in him: *He is thy Lord, worship thou him*, Psal. xlv. 11. *When they saw him, they worshipped him*, Mat. xxviii. 17. And then, and not till then, do they worship God acceptably, when they worship God in the Spirit, and by the Spirit of Christ; and worship the Father, in the Son, by the Spirit: for the Spirit is the way to Christ, *He shall testify of me*; and Christ the way to the Father, *No man cometh to the Father but by me*. Faith, in coming to Christ, takes him up both as God, the great JEHOVAH, the glo-

rious object of worship ; and as the CHRIST of God, the way to God : because he is both God and man ; IMMANUEL, *God with us*. Thus he is both the end and the way ; and so both the glorious object of worship, and the person in whom our worship is acceptable : *They shall worship the Lord in the holy mount.*— But of this more afterward.

III. The third thing proposed was, To speak of the *means* by which the Lord gathers outcast sinners, ready to perish, and makes them come to him and worship him, namely, by the *blowing of the great GOSPEL-TRUMPET* : *The great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come*. This as I have already shewed, is the preaching of the gospel of Christ, and the proclamation of the grace of God therein to poor outcast perishing sinners.

That I may speak a little of this the more distinctly, I shall shew, 1. Why, the preaching of the gospel is compared to the *sounding or blowing of a trumpet*. 2. Why it may be called a *great trumpet*. 3. What sort of a *sound* this great trumpet makes ; or what the meaning of it is, as to the *contents* of the proclamation made by it. 4. The *quality* of the sound when blown.

1st, Why the preaching of the gospel is compared to the *blowing of a trumpet*. I design not to stretch the metaphor beyond the design of the thing : I shall only mention these two or three particulars.

1. A trumpet is a *royal and majestic* sort of an instrument, and hence usually kings of the earth are crowned and proclaimed by their heralds with sound of trumpet : so the gospel is the royal and majestic trumpet of the great King of kings, and therein he discovers his glory and majesty, when he rides prosperously on the word of truth, meekness, and righteousness, Psal. xlv. 3, 4. Therein is Christ proclaimed king of Zion, and the royalties of his grace published.

2. A trumpet is a *high and loud sounding* instrument, and the sound of it heard at a considerable distance. Such a trumpet is the gospel ; and therefore it is said
of

of the heralds of the great King, that preached the gospel, *Their sound went into all the earth, and their words into the ends of the world*, Rom. x. 18. It is the loud voice of the Son of God by his ambassadors : and it is to be heard through all the earth before the end of time : *The gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations ; and then shall the end come*, Mat. xxiv. 14.

3. A trumpet is a *martial, warlike* instrument, and usually blown to proclaim peace or war : and thus the gospel is a proclamation of peace with God, and war with the devil. The first sound that ever this trumpet made was a sound of peace and war both : war with the devil, the destroyer of mankind ; *The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent ;* and peace on earth, upon this ground, because the God of peace was, in this way, *to bruise Satan under our feet*. The gospel is the great instrument, many ways useful in directing in the holy war.—Sometimes it is to found a gathering, a gathering of the people to Shiloh : the rendezvous under the standard of the Captain of salvation, calling all to come to him, and enlist with him.—Sometimes to blow an alarm ; *When ye blow an alarm, the camp shall go forward, and take their journey*, Numb. x. 5, 6.—Sometimes to found a march, to go forward to the battle against the enemy, in his name and strength, of whom it is said, Psal. lxxviii. 7, 11, 12. *He went forth before the people ; he marched through the wilderness. The Lord gave the word ; great was the company of those that published it : kings of great armies did fly apace.* It never sounds a retreat, nor a fift from war, except in so far as he himself sees fit to spare his enemies alive for necessary uses towards his people, saying, *Slay them not, lest my people forget.* But when they fight the good fight of faith, and fight lawfully and successfully, the trumpet sounds the victory and the triumph ; *Thanks be to God, which always causes us to triumph in Christ*, 2 Cor. ii. 14. *We are more than conquerors, thro' him that loved us*, Rom. viii. 37. *O death ! where is thy sting ? O grave ! where is thy victory ?* 2 Cor. xv. 55. *To him that overcometh will I give to sit with me*

on my throne, even as I overcame, and am set down with the Father on his throne, Rev. iii. 21.

4. The blowing of a trumpet requires *life, breath, and wisdom* also : even so, in order to the blowing of the gospel-trumpet, the spirit of life is necessary, and the breathing of the spirit of life. They who are not quickened by the Spirit of Christ, and do not enjoy the breathing of the Spirit of Christ, cannot blow the gospel-trumpet to any good purpose, at least, they are not God's ordinary instruments of quickening others : but, *who is sufficient for these things ? Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing as of ourselves ; but our sufficiency is of God, who hath made us able ministers of the new testament, not of the letter but of the spirit ; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life, 2 Cor. iii. 5, 6.* The gospel-trumpet will do little service, if the Spirit of God be not the breath that blows it. A great trumpet requires great breath ; and therefore, O Sirs, look to heaven for the great breathing of the Spirit to accompany the gospel. Yea, the blowing of the trumpet requires wisdom and skill ; one may have both life and breath, and yet want skill to blow a trumpet : even so, much spiritual wisdom is requisite in blowing the gospel-trumpet, that we *handle not the word of God deceitfully* : that we blow not a false alarm, or a false peace ; that we give not an *uncertain sound* ; for, as the apostle says, 1 Cor. xiv. 8. *If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle ?* If it be not precious truth, and pure gospel that is preached, we are not to regard it, though the trumpet were blown by the mouth of an angel ; *If we or an angel from heaven preach another gospel, let him be accursed, Gal. i. 6.*

2dly, I am here to enquire, why the gospel may be called a *great trumpet*. This I shall dispatch in a few words.

1. It is a great trumpet, because it is the trumpet of the *great God*, and of the great King, the great Saviour ; for so our Lord Jesus is called, Isa. xix. 20. *They shall cry unto the Lord because of the oppressors ;*
and

and he shall send them a Saviour and a great One, and he shall deliver them. O how great is this man, this God-man ! How great in his *person*, being the *brightness of the Father's glory*, and the *express image of his person* ; the *Prince of the kings of the earth* ; great in his *offices* : a great Prophet, a great High-priest, a great King : great in his *relations*, great in his *names* ; great in his *promises* ; great in his *purchase* ; great in his *victories* ; great in his *fulness* ; having all the *fulness of the God-head in him*.——It is the trumpet of the great King.

2. It is the trumpet of a *great salvation* : Hebrews ii. 3. *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation*, published by the gospel-trumpet ? The great Saviour comes with a commission under the great seal of heaven ; *For him hath God the Father sealed.* And he comes upon a great design, the salvation of great sinners, in such a way as the ultimate end thereof is the glory of God's great perfections, and the praise of his grace. It is salvation from the greatest moral evil, namely, sin ; and salvation from the greatest penal evil, *from the wrath to come*, that is proclaimed by this trumpet.

3. It is a great trumpet, in opposition to all other *earthly* trumpets, that are but little emblems of this great one. What are the trumpets of earthly kings and conquerors, when laid in the balance with the gospel-trumpet, sounding the triumph of our glorious Conqueror, and saying, *Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah ? This that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength ? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save ?* Isa. lxiii. 1.

4. It is a great trumpet, in respect of the *great consequence* of the sounding and blowing of it ; for, as the gospel is called the *everlasting gospel* ; so *everlasting life*, or *everlasting death* will be the consequence of your hearing thereof : *To some we are the favour of death unto death, and to others the favour of life unto life*, 2 Cor. ii. 16. Not that the gospel brings a sound of death and damnation to any of itself ; no, by no means, it is a word of salvation to sinners : but when this joyful

ful sound is slighted by final unbelief and impenitency, then it brings the greatest ruin and perdition. See and read to this purpose, Heb. x. 28, 29. and iii. 25. To slight the sound of this great trumpet, then, brings the greatest damnation, the hottest hell ; but in itself it is a merciful sound. Therefore,

3dly, I am here to consider what sort of a sound this great trumpet brings, and what sort of a proclamation is made by it. In general, When this great trumpet is blown, it gives a sound of grace and mercy to poor outcast sinners ready to perish. It is called, Titus ii. 11. *The grace of God, that bringeth salvation to all men*, as you may read in the margin. More particularly,

1. The sound of this great trumpet is a sound of life to dead sinners ; John x. 10. *I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.* John v. 25. *The hour cometh, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God ; and they that hear shall live.* John xi. 25. *I am the resurrection and the life : he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.* This trumpet is for rousing and awakening the dead ; and blessed are they that are awakened and quickened with the sound of it ; for the voice of it is, *Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light*, Eph. v. 4. No trumpet but that of the living and life-giving God can sound after this manner : and it is like himself ; for he is the *God that quickens the dead, and calls things that be not, as though they were*, Rom. iv. 17.

2. The sound of this great trumpet is a sound of liberty to captive sinners ; *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, for he hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek ; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted ; to proclaim liberty to the captives ; and the opening of the prison to them that are bound ; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God ; to comfort all that mourn*, Isa. lxi. 1, 2. O captive sinner, lying in the chains of sin and Satan, and in the chains of unbelief and enmity, would you have your chains loosed, and your soul set at liberty ? Hear the

the voice of the trumpet ; *The Lord looseth the prisoners*, Psal. cxlvi. 7. *Turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope*, Zech. ix. 12. *By the blood of thy covenant have I sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water*, ver. 11.

3. The sound of this great trumpet is a sound of *pardoning grace* to the *condemned sinner* ; it proclaims indemnity to all the guilty rebels against heaven that hear and welcome the sound of it ; *Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sin. And by him all that believe, are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses*, Acts xiii. 38, 39. It is free indemnity through Christ, to the praise of his glorious grace, that is proclaimed ; *In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace*, Eph. i. 7. O ! will any condemned sinner accept of pardon and indemnity upon these gracious terms ? The condition is already fulfilled ; the blood of Jesus Christ hath bought remission. This blessing of his blood comes therefore to you freely, that you may accept of it freely, and you have it. *Not for your sake, not for your sake doth he give it, but for his own name's sake* ; Isa. xliii. 25. *I, even I, am he that blotteth out your transgressions for mine own sake* ; for no other reason but that you may have the good of it, and I may have the glory of it.

4. The sound of this great trumpet is a sound of *purifying grace* to the *filthy sinner* ; *In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin, and for uncleanness*, Zech. xiii. 1. The trumpet proclaims to you, O filthy, polluted sinner, going quick with vermine, all overspread with the ugly vermine of sin and corruption : it proclaims, saying, Behold, the God of heaven, hath provided a fountain of purification, both for sin, and for uncleanness ; both for taking away the guilt of sin, and the filth of sin : yea, behold, he hath provided both a Red-sea, and a crystal river ; a
Red-

Red-sea of blood, *The blood of Christ cleansing from all sin*, 1 John i. 7. ; and the crystal river that *proceedeth out of the throne of God and of the Lamb* : and this is to be in you as a *well of water springing up to everlasting life*, in his quickening, purifying, and sanctifying presence and operation, John iv. 14. You cannot sanctify and purify yourself, no more than you can create a world ; but here am I that can create a clean heart within you ; *Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world* ; therefore, *take with you words, and say, Take away all iniquity*, thou whose work it is, and whose promise thus sounds in mine ears, *I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean : from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you*, Ezek. xxxvi. 25. This great trumpet then, hath a sound of life and liberty, pardon and purity ; life to the dead, liberty to the bound, pardon to the guilty, and purity to the filthy. These comprehend all that you need, both in time and for eternity ; for the everlasting gospel proclaims everlasting blessings, everlasting life, everlasting liberty, everlasting pardon, everlasting purity and holiness ; all to be had in Christ, the everlasting Lord and Saviour, *who was dead, and is alive, and lives for evermore* ; and all to be had, partly and graciously here ; and fully, and gloriously hereafter.

5. In a word, the sound of this great trumpet is a sound of *complete salvation*, in all the respects wherein poor sinners that hear the joyful sound need to be saved. It is a sound of instruction to the ignorant, saying, *They shall be all taught of God*. A sound of direction to the bewildered, saying, like a voice behind them, *This is the way, walk ye in it*. The trumpet proclaims, saying, Here is rest, for the weary soul ; comfort, for the drooping soul ; strength, for the weak ; riches, for the poor ; raiment, for the naked ; sight, for the blind ; supply, for the needy soul ; here is salvation for the lost soul, grace, glory, and every good thing for these that have nothing. Here, in short then, is the matter of the proclamation by sound of trumpet from heaven. You have a sum of the joyful sound of this

this trumpet, Isa xxv. 6, *In this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined.* 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.* Ho, every one that pleaseth, come and match with the Son of God : *All things are ready, come to the marriage, and so come to the marriage-feast.*—So much shall suffice for this particular.

4thly, I proposed here to speak a little of the *quality* of this sound of the great gospel-trumpet, when it is blown in Zion. And,

1. It is a *joyful* and a *charming* sound, Psalm lxxxix. 15, 16. *Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound ; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day long : and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.* The voice of the trumpet is, *Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people : For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord,* Luke ii. 10. Some that were once delivered by a conqueror, from outward bondage, made the elements ring, and the birds fall out of the air with their voice, crying out, *SOTER, SOTER, a Saviour, a Saviour.* O how much more should the glad news of a Saviour, to save from sin and everlasting wrath, be received with joy ! It is a joyful and charming sound ; shall the voice of the Charmer be rejected and despised by the deaf adders here ?

2. It is a *divine, awful* sound ; it is the voice of the Son of man ; yea, the voice of the Son of God : it is the voice of the great God that is to be heard thro' this trumpet, that *voice that shakes the heaven and the earth,* Heb. xii. 26.—It is a *lofty* sound, from the *high and lofty One, that inhabits eternity* : a *majestic* sound ; for, *The voice of the Lord is full of majesty.* Though it be a still small voice, like that Elijah heard, 1 Kings xix. 12. ; yet, *the Lord is in it* : and happy they that, through the voice of a man, hear the voice of God,

by receiving it not as the word of man, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which worketh effectually in you that believe, 1 Theff. ii. 13. Hence,

3. It is an *internal* and *spiritual*, as well as an *external* sound; *It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life*, John vi. 63. Hence it is a sound that both wounds and heals the soul: that first kills, and then quickens the soul: and so it appears to be the voice of the living God, who says, *I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal*. It is *external*, in the publication to the ear; and *faith comes by this hearing*; and then it is *internal* and *spiritual*, in the operation of it upon the heart: and, O may it be a living and life-giving, and soul-quickeningsound to many here; for, it is the *voice of the Son of God*, that makes the *dead to hear and live*.

4. It is a *long* and *lasting* sound. The sound of common trumpets, when they are blown, is but a dying sound; but the great trumpet of the everlasting gospel is not so: it is *the word of God that lives and abides for ever*, 1 Pet. i. 23. The echo of this joyful sound will be heard for ever, both in heaven and in hell. The joyful echo among the redeemed, and the dreadful tormenting echo among the damned, will be everlasting: it will not sound for ever as now it doth; but the echo thereof will be heard louder and louder to all eternity, when all things else will wither and fade: this you see clear from 1 Pet. i. 24, 25. compared with Isa. xl. 6. *The voice said, Cry. And I said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever; and this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you*. And as to the present external dispensation of the gospel, God keeps the count of the time how long the trumpet sounds in your ears; *All day long have I stretched out my hand to a disobedient and gainsaying people*, Rom. x. 21.

5. It is a *near* sound, not at a distance, like news from a foreign country, but near at hand, and bringing

ing heavenly things near to us ; *Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness ; I bring near my righteousness ; it shall not be far off ; and my salvation shall not tarry. He placeth this salvation in Zion, for Israel his glory, Isa. xl. 12,—13. The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart ; that is the word of faith which we preach, Rom. x. 8. The word is nigh to your heart : for the Lord is dealing with your heart by it : O may he not only deal, but prevail. For,*

6. It is a *powerful, conquering* sound : it will overcome and prevail, so as to reach the end of it one way or another : *It shall not return unto me void ; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it, Isaiah lv. 11. God will not blow his trumpet in vain ; all rejecters and despisers shall be rendered inexcusable by it ; and all his elect shall be mercifully conquered ; for the trumpet hath a surmounting sound ; it sounds over the tops of all the hills and mountains of sin and guilt, and of unbelief and enmity ; The voice of my Beloved ! behold, he cometh, leaping upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills, Song ii. 8. The voice of the Lord is powerful, melting down mountains in his way. The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon. This leads,*

IV. To the *fourth* general head proposed, To touch at the efficacy of this means ; and why it is promised, that a number of *outcast sinners, ready to perish*, by the blowing of the great trumpet, *shall come*. Arminian doctrine, that aboundeth in our day, makes the efficacy of the gospel depend upon man's free-will : but, *we have not so learned Christ* : he hath made surer work ; and all the efficacy to depend upon his free grace : and this is secured by his *shall be* : *The great trumpet SHALL BE blown, and they SHALL come.* The Father's promise to the Son secures it ; *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, Psal. cx. 3. He shall see his seed. He shall see the travail of his soul, and be satisfied.* The Father's promise to the Son is secured and confirmed by his oath upon this head, Psal. lxxxix.

35. *Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lye unto David. His seed shall endure for ever ; his seed among Jews and Gentiles, and among the nations a-far off ; I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the utmost ends of the earth for thy possession. He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles, and the isles shall wait for his law.* Amidst all the discouragements that men may give us in our preaching the gospel, here is the encouragement that God gives us in blowing the great trumpet in the ears of *outcasts, ready to perish*. There is a number among them that shall come ; *Other sheep I have, that are not of this fold ; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice*, John x. 16. *I must bring them, and they must come.* The sweet necessity he is under of bringing them, produces in the day of power, a sweet necessity in them, saying, O we must come to Christ ; we perish without him : we hear the sound of his trumpet ; and therefore we say, *Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God.*

QUEST. *Why is it promised, that a number of outcasts, ready to perish shall come, when the gospel-trumpet shall be blown ?*

ANSW. 1. Because none would have encouragement to come, if there were not a promise that *they shall come*. Here is encouragement to all that hear the sound of this trumpet. It is true, may a soul say, I know not if I be intended, but I see the promise respects the like of me : the promise of *drawing grace*, respects the like of me, that cannot come of myself ; the promise of *pardon* respects these that are *guilty* ; the promise of *cleansing*, respects these that are *filthy* ; the promise of *taking away the stony heart*, respects these that have a *hard, stupid heart*. Now, this is my case ; and therefore, here is a door of hope ; here is some encouragement for me to come to him, and wait upon him.—And as none would have encouragement if it were not so : so all may have encouragement here : the door of hope is open.

2. He hath promised *they shall come*, because as none would have encouragement to come, so none would have

have *grace* to come, if it were not promised ; and if it were not by virtue of the promise made in Jesus Christ, for, it is *grace* coming out of the promise, that is turned to *grace* in the heart. Then, indeed, the soul comes when the *grace* that lies in the promise is turned to *grace* in the heart, and wrought there by the means of the promise. It is by virtue of the *great and precious promise* we are made *partakers of the divine nature*, and of the Spirit of faith ; the promises being pleas and arguments for faith, and for the prayer of faith, saying, Lord, hast thou not so and so said to such as I am ; and wilt thou not *do as thou hast said* : Hast thou not said, That *Solomon shall reign*, that *grace* shall reign ? and wilt thou suffer sin to reign ? And the promise being the pipe and channel for the communication of *grace*, the conduit from Christ to us, *All the promises being Yea and Amen in Christ*, and the conduit-pipe reaching from the heart of Christ to the mouth of faith, we suck in his fulness. As the law begets terror, so the promise begets faith ; both by the *freeness* of it to the most unworthy, and the *fulness* of it, being a plaster as big as the sore, and exactly answering to its want ; and by the *efficacy* of it, through the secret working of the Spirit, discovering this fulness and freeness of divine *grace*, and drawing the heart towards this promising God.

3. He hath promised *they shall come*, that thus he may secure his own glory, which he designs to shew forth in his way. His great design, in saving any poor perishing sinner, is the glory of his name, and the honour of all his perfections : *Sing, O heavens ; for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel*, Isa. xlv. 23. He designs, by redeeming them, to glorify himself ; and that he may shew forth his perfections, and they may shew forth his praise ; *This people have I formed for myself, they shall shew forth my praise*, Isa. xlii. 21. He thus shews forth the glory of his wisdom, power, holiness, justice, mercy, and truth ; and therefore he hath promised *they shall come* : and this, with all the other promises of God, are *Yea and Amen in Christ, to the glory of God*, 2 Cor. i. 20.

4. He hath promised *they shall come* by faith to him, that their *salvation* may be sure ; *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. As God's word, *Let it be*, brought the world into a being ; so his *shall be*, is the cause of what comes to pass in the new creation. His saying, *They shall come*, is the cause of their coming, otherwise they would never come. He hath declared his will in this world, concerning their coming to him for life and salvation ; and by *his will they are sanctified*, and saved *through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all*, Heb. x. 10. And what can be surer than the will of God, and that God will have his will? *He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will*, Eph. i. 11.

V. The *fifth* head I proposed was, To speak a little of the *end* for which they shall come, namely, *To worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem*. To speak now of divine worship at any length, is what I cannot propose ; there are only four things concerning it, that, I think, the words here lead me to, namely, here is the *nature*, the *object*, the *manner*, and the *spring* of worship.

1. The *nature* of it, imported in the name *worship*.
 “ To worship, is to give any one the honour due unto
 “ him ; so to worship God, is to render that honour
 “ and homage that is due to him, Psal. xxix. 2.”
 Now, the worship of God is twofold, internal and external.—*Internal* worship, is to love God, to fear him, to believe and trust in him ; these are acts of inward worship, and the sum of that honour we are required to give to God in the first command.—*External* worship, is the serving of God according to his own ordinances and institutions, which is the sum of the second command, comprehending all the several ways wherein he will be honoured and served, such as, prayer, praise, &c. Both these must go together : *internal* worship, pleaseth God best : *external* worship, honour-eth him most, and setteth forth his glory in the world. Hence the temple was called, *The place where God put his*

his name, i. e. his worship ; by which God is known, as a man is by his name. They that worship God, must worship him in Spirit and in truth : in Spirit, that is, with inward love, fear, reverence, and uprightness ; in truth, that is, according to the true rule of his word. The former respects the inward power, and the latter the outward rule ; the former strikes at hypocrisy, and the latter at idolatry ; the one opposes looseness of our hearts in worship, and the other opposes the inventions of our heads.

2. The *object* of worship is the LORD ; *They shall worship the Lord,* Hence we read, Matth. iv. 18. *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.* To me it would seem, that by the *Lord* here, in the text, we are to understand the *Lord* and *Saviour* CHRIST, because I see no difference made between the object of *faith* here expressed by *coming*, and the object of *homage* here expressed by *worship* ; *They shall come, and shall worship the Lord.* However this be, it is God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that is the object of religious worship ; and the Unity must be worshipped in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity : and, when we direct our worship to any one person, we must include the rest in the same worship ; and we are to conceive of him as he hath manifested himself to us in his word. If we worship God out of a Trinity, as the Turks ; or God out of Christ, as the Jews ; we worship not the true God, but an idol.

3. The *manner* of worship, and the *acceptable way* thereof, is here pointed out : *They shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem ; that is, to worship him in the beauty of holiness,* Psal. xxix. 2. *i. e. In his holy temple, or, in his beautiful sanctuary : in a way honourable to him, which can only be in and thro' Jesus Christ.*

Now, for the further understanding of this, you would consider, that Jerusalem of old was the place of worship, *Whither the tribes went up, the tribes of the Lord to the testimony of Israel,* Psal. cxxii. 3, 4. But now, under the New-testament dispensation, such is the great goodness of God to us, he doth not now

tye us to any place. See and read, John iv. 20, 21. He doth not tye us to go to the farther part of the nation to worship: no; the land is every where holy: wherever his name is recorded, there is a Jerusalem, there is a Zion.

Again, consider, that the *holy mount* at Jerusalem, mount Zion largely taken, including mount Moriah, was the place of the temple, which was eminently typical of our Lord Jesus Christ. And as all the true worshippers of God then were to worship at or toward the material temple (hence the expression of *worshipping at his holy hill*, Psal. xcix. 9.; and *worshipping towards his holy temple*, Psal. v. 7. *In thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple*: and thus, Ps. cxxxviii. 2.) ; so, to worship the Lord now, in the holy mount, is to worship God in Christ. And as to *ascend into the hill of the Lord*, and to *stand in his holy place*, Psal. xxiv. 3. thus to worship God in the holy mount at Jerusalem, is, in the language of the New-testament, to *worship God in Christ*: in the Spirit of Christ, for assistance; and in the faith of the merit and righteousness of Christ, for acceptance; for, *We are accepted in the Beloved*, Eph. i. 6. It is an *entrance with boldness into the holiest by the blood of Jesus*, Heb. x. 19. It is to have access to God in our prayers and praises, and in the ordinances of the word and sacrament of his own appointment and institution; and *access with boldness and confidence by the faith of him*, Eph. iii. 12. This is the same with that of David, *Bring me to thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacle: then will I go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy*, Psal. xliii. 3, 4.

4. Here also is the *root* and *spring*, or the cause of this worship, implied in these words, *They shall come, and shall worship*: importing, that faith is the internal principle that leads on the soul to religious duties and worship; for first *they shall come*, namely, by faith; and then *they shall worship*. *Without faith it is impossible to please God*, and to worship him acceptably. And importing also, that the power of the Spirit is the internal efficient cause of spiritual worship, stirring up and

and exciting the soul to it : for here is a double promise ; first, *They shall come* ; and then, *They shall worship* ; which says, that not only, must the Spirit give us faith to come, but also grace to worship when we have come. One may be a believer in Christ that hath come to him, and yet out of case to worship the Lord in his holy mount, till the Spirit by his new breathing and influence raise up the dormant seed of grace ; and, by his *blowing upon our garden, make the spices thereof flow out*. The same power that is first put forth in the mighty sound of the great gospel-trumpet, by virtue of that promise, *They shall come*, is necessary also to be put forth by virtue of that promise, *They shall worship*. Our coming to Christ believingly this day needs a powerful *shall be*, for that, *They shall come* ; our communicating worthily to-morrow needs another powerful *shall be*, for that, *They shall worship*.—So much for this head, *They shall worship in his holy mount at Jerusalem*. I come now,

VI. To the *sixth* and last thing proposed, which was, To draw some *inferences* for the *application*.—And,

1st, By way of *information*. If it be so, as has been said, hence,

1. We may see the *infinite mercy* of God toward poor perishing sinners, especially these within the pale of the visible church. Though they be *outcasts*, by casting out themselves ; yet he sends the great trumpet of the gospel to call them in. They are *ready to perish*, in their sin and misery ; and behold, he here shews himself ready to pity, and ready to save them, saying, *To you, O men, do I call ; and my voice is to the sons of men. Incline your ear unto me ; hear, and your soul shall live*.

2. Hence we may see what is the *work of ministers*, whom the Lord sends forth, namely, to *blow the trumpet in Zion*, Joel ii. 1. There is a twofold trumpet they are to blow ; the trumpet of the *law*, and the trumpet of the *gospel*.

(1.) Sometimes they are called to put the terrible trumpet of the *law* to their mouth, *to tell Jacob their sins, and Israel their transgressions*; *to cry aloud, and not spare*, Isa. lviii. 1. They are to spare no pains, nor to spare their breath in blowing from Sinai, to shew sinners both their sinful and miserable state, and how they are upon the very brink of ruin, and ready to perish. But then still they are to preach the law with a view to the gospel, and as a *schoolmaster to lead them to Christ*.

(2) Again, they are called to blow the great *gospel-trumpet* to these perishing sinners, proclaiming life, liberty, and salvation to them in a way of coming to Jesus, as the *end of the law for righteousness*, that the curse of the law may be put to an end with respect to them; not that from henceforth they may be lawless, but that they may be conform to the law, as a rule; for, in coming to him, they come to *worship the Lord in his holy mount*. Thus, indeed, the true gospel-minister preaches always Christ, whether it be the law or the gospel that is in his mouth: and he brings in more honour to the law than all the legal preachers in the world with their moral harangues, and high encomiums upon moral virtue: for the gospel-minister preaches the law and its curse, to bring the soul to Christ, in whom the law gets full satisfaction and complete payment, as it is, a covenant of works; and the sinner coming to him gets redemption from all the curses of it: and then he preaches the gospel of the grace of God in Christ, so as the sinner, being come to Christ, may come to his duty of right worship toward God, according to the direction of the law as a rule. He shews their perishing state, that they may come to Christ, and he calls them to come to Christ, that they may come to God in him, and worship the Lord in his holy mount.

Great skill then is requisite in blowing this great trumpet. It is true, some are qualified of the Lord for blowing more loud and awfully, like BOANERGES, as *sons of thunder*: others for blowing more softly and sweetly, like BARNABAS, as *sons of consolation*; and, indeed,

indeed, *There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit,* 1 Cor. xii. 4. Some are qualified and set apart for one piece of the tabernacle-work, and some for another : some to be founders, and some to be, as it were, barrow-men in the work of the spiritual temple : some for this post and station, and some for the other. Let the great God be revered in all this ; for it is he that qualifies and separates every one for his own proper work. If he call one and the same person, at different times, to different work ; or, if he call out one to go forth and *blow an alarm*, with a terrible sound, and another to trumpet forth grace, and make the *people know the joyful sound* ; there is need for each of them : let infinite wisdom be adored.

3. Hence we may see the *duty of people*, with reference to the *ministers* and their *message*, when blowing a great gospel-trumpet ; it is surely peoples duty, both to *pray* for them, and to *receive* their message, by *hearkening to the sound of the trumpet*.

On the one hand, it is their duty to *pray for poor ministers*, that they may blow the great trumpet with the breath of the Spirit ; and preach the gospel in the *demonstration of the Spirit, and with power*, 1 Cor. ii. 4. *Brethren, pray for us*, says the apostle ; pray that a *door of utterance may be opened*. Never was there a time wherein God's people had more need to pray for ministers : it is a day wherein it is much for them to hold their feet. There are grievous defections among the most part in Scotland, and these breaking out in judicatories, which we should lament over, and give our testimony against, as sometimes we essay to do : yea, there are sinful defects in testifying among these that desire to do so ; and yet sin in not doing so much as they ought. But I say again, ministers had much need to be prayed for : and I have a word to say to you upon this head, not to offend you, but to deal plainly with you in the sight of the great God, whose trumpet I am honoured to put in my mouth. I see some offence is taken at some worthy ministers, whom you and I both, perhaps, reckon so ; I mean, these that, upon the main, are known, to be faithful, so far as their

light and ability goes, and that have the seal of their ministry upon many souls, and whose ministry the Lord is still owning and blessing ; when these do any thing that is amiss in your eyes, whether it be seemingly or really, I ask you, Whether you be more taken up in judging them or in praying for them ? As to *rash* judgment, there is nothing you are more cautioned against in God's word : and as to *praying* for ministers particularly, there is nothing more expressly commanded. Now, I ask you again, before God and conscience, Whether you are more taken up in judging them, or in praying for them ? I shall suppose they are really left to some wrong step ; but, if you have been neglecting to pray for them, perhaps that is the cause why God hath left them, and thereupon you turn your back upon them also and revile them ; and so the poor men suffer both the rebukes of God, and the reproaches of men, for your sin in neglecting to pray for them : and, therefore, hereupon I ask you again, Whether or not, before ever you be offended with them before the world, you are first displeased with yourself before God, and humble yourself before him, for your sinful neglect in praying and wrestling with God for them ? If this be not your way, but, on the contrary, you be rashly disobliged at the poor honest ministers for the evil which your sin hath brought upon them ; then I must tell you, in God's name, though you were as the signet of his right-hand, God will take his own time and way of restoring them, and rebuking you.

But again, as it is your duty to *pray* for ministers, so also to *receive their message*, and hearken to the sound of the trumpet in their mouth ; and, indeed, if it be God's great trumpet that they blow, then surely not to listen to it, is to *stop your ears at the voice of the charmer*, like the deaf adder, and to *refuse him that speaketh from heaven*, which is a sin ; how deep it runs, you may see, Heb. xii. 25. *See that ye refuse not him that speaketh : for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven.*

4. Hence we may see, from this doctrine, what it is that makes the preaching of the gospel *effectual* to the salvation of perishing sinners, when the great gospel-trumpet is blown. It is not any virtue of this or that preacher ; no ; it is the *power of God* exerted according to the promise, that then *they shall come and they shall worship*. What is it that will make the dead sinner to believe savingly ? It is the efficacy of this word, *They shall come*. What is it that will make the believer a worthy receiver at the Lord's table ? It is the efficacy of this word, *They shall worship the Lord in his holy mount*. It is a day of power that is here promised to accompany the blowing of the great trumpet, which he makes the *rod of his strength*, and sends it *out of Zion*. The gospel is the *ministration of the Spirit*, which is received by the *hearing of faith*.—This leads me to the next use we intend from the doctrine.

The *second* use, we make is for *examination*. You may try both your state and frame from this doctrine, in these following particulars, whether or not you be of these who, by the blowing of the great trumpet, have been made to *come* to Christ, and to *worship the Lord in his holy mount*. Examine by these two particulars, 1. If you have been made to *hear* the voice of God in the great trumpet of the gospel. 2. If thereupon you have been made to *live*, so as to come and worship. These two are the sum of God's saving work comprehending all ; *The hour cometh, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God ; and they that hear shall live*, John v. 25.

1. Have you *heard* the voice of God in this great gospel-trumpet ? I ask not if you have heard this or that *man* speaking to you ; but if you have heard *God* speaking by the word to you, and heard it, *not as the word of man, but as the word of God*. More particularly, have you heard,

(1.) So as to be *convinced* of your Egyptian thralldom and Assyrian bondage ; and found yourself to be an outcast wretch, a sinner ready to perish, whereas
before

before you was sleeping in your chains? Hath God's trumpet alarmed you, so as you have seen yourself lying under the curse of the law, and putting you in fear of everlasting wrath and damnation, as one lying on the very brink of hell, and made you to cry, Oh! *What shall I do to be saved?*

(2.) Have you heard so as to be *awakened*, as it were, from among the dead, to see that life and salvation is to be had in the glorious IMMANUEL, Jesus Christ, who is proclaimed a Saviour and Redeemer by the sound of the gospel-trumpet? There is a *seeing of the Son*, by a spiritual discerning, before there can be a *believing on him*, John vi. 46. Hath the great trumpet then so far roused and wakened you up, that you have got your eyes opened, not only to see the really chain of spiritual captivity you were under to sin, Satan, and wrath; but also to see the Redeemer and Deliverer that is *come out of Zion*, to *turn away ungodliness from Jacob*, and that there is salvation in none other? Hath Christ, revealed to you by the word, been thus revealed in you, so as you have seen and perceived him to be the glorious and only Saviour?

2. Have you not only been made to hear the sound of the trumpet, thus wakening you out of your dead sleep, to a sense of sin and sight of the remedy; but, have you thereupon been made to *live*? *The dead shall hear his voice, and they that hear shall live.* Now, how may this life be tried? Why, the text mentions also two parts of this life; first, they shall *come*; and next, they shall *worship in his holy mount*.

(1.) Then, have you been made to *come*; that is, to believe in Jesus, to fly for refuge to him, and to fly out of yourself, as having nothing but sin and guilt, hell and misery about you; to him, as having all for *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*? Have you been brought under a sweet necessity of coming to Christ, and resolutely to throw yourself into his saving arms, saying, If I perish, let me perish there, where never one did? Have you found some secret drawing cord about your heart, making you
restless

restless till you came to Christ for rest to your heart and conscience? Faith is an *entering into this rest*, Heb. iv. 3.

(2) Have you hereupon been made to come and *worship in the holy mount*; to worship God in Christ with holy fear and reverence, coming with humble boldness to the throne of grace? Hath your faith wrought by love, and the love of Christ constrained you to seek and serve him in his temple, and ordinances of his appointment. And, is this holy place the place of your abode, desiring still to *ascend to the hill of the Lord*, and to *stand in his holy place*? The sum of this mark is, Are you brought to David's *one thing*? *One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire into his temple*, Psal. xxvii. 4.

Now, examine yourself by these plain marks; for if you know nothing less or more thereof, whatever be your good disposition at the time, you are a stranger in Israel, and have no right to a communion-table; but, if you have the experience of these marks, then, whatever be the alterations of your frame, you may conclude you are in a safe state, as well as sometimes in a spiritual frame; and so have a right to the great gospel-feast of the Lord's supper in the holy mount, and may venture to it in his name and strength.

The *third* use, with which I shall close, may be in a word of *exhortation*, especially to all the sinners here that are yet in a *lost state* and condition *ready to perish*, and like *outcasts in the land of Egypt*; and we would blow the great trumpet in your hearing, and *be that hath ears to hear, let him hear*. Our preaching the gospel to you, is the accomplishment of one promise; *It shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown*: and we are encouraged to this work, by the promises annexed to it, concerning outcast sinners, ready to perish, *They shall come, and shall worship*. Why then, in the name of the great King, whose unworthy herald I am, I do, as it were, by sound of trum-

trumpet, proclaim life, to dead finners here ; and liberty, to you captive finners ; pardon and indemnity, to guilty rebellious finners ; and purifying grace, to filthy polluted finners ; and all to be had freely : *Who-soever will, let him come and take of these waters of life freely.* Will you give a hearing to our great Lord, whose treasure is put into earthen vessels, and whose voice sounds through earthen trumpets : for God's sake, look over the poor unworthy instrument : little matter who blow the trumpet, if the breath of the Spirit convey the sound into your heart. Look over the head of the poor servant ; *The Master calls you*, even you that are afar off, and farer from God than Egypt and Assyria are from you ; yet the sound of the trumpet reaches to you.

What is your name, man, woman ? Surely your name is in this text, if you be a *sinner, ready to perish*. “ Alas ! may some say, I am so ready to perish, that I am ready to give over all duties of religion, and ready to doubt of all revealed religion, and of the very being of God, and truth of the scriptures ; I am ready to blaspheme, and to say, God is a liar. Oh ! says another, I am ready to raze the foundation of all that ever was done in me, and ready to conclude, that now it is impossible I can be saved.” Say on, soul ; and tell me more in what respects you are ready to perish. “ Oh ! say you, I am ready to pine away in my iniquity, and live in rebellion all my days, such is the power of my corruption ; yea, I am ready through fear and dread, and terrible temptations, to kill, destroy, and put away myself ; and, *While I suffer the terrors of God, I am distracted* : I am ready to think, that the day of grace is past, and that I am a cast-away.” Are you an outcast, ready to perish in the wilderness of darkness, ignorance, and confusion ? Are you an outcast, ready to perish in a prison of unbelief, atheism, enmity, and hard bound with all the chains of hell about you ? Well, whatever prison you be into, whatever outcast state you be into, and in whatever respect you are ready to perish, yet, O hear the sound of the great trumpet, saying, Come, ye that are outcast sinners ;
come

come all ye that are ready to perish ; come to the great King, whose heralds we are ; come to the great Saviour and Redeemer : you will never *worship* acceptably in his holy mount, till first you come ; you will never communicate worthily, till first you come to Christ. O come while the trumpet sounds, come and take his helping hand. who comes to *seek and save you that are lost*. He offers to save you fully, to save you freely, to save you everlastingly. Since you cannot save yourself, will you welcome a Saviour ? O what disoblige you at him, who is as ready to save, as you are ready to perish : and who says, *Welcome* to the worst of you all ; Young sinner, old sinner, great sinner, chief of sinners, come while the trumpet sounds.

The second coming of Christ to judgment is hastening on, and then the *trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall arise* : dead bodies will then rise and come to the Judge at the sound of the last trumpet. But now the great gospel-trumpet calls dead souls to rise and come to the Saviour ; *The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of man, and they that hear shall live*. Whenever dead bodies hear the last trumpet, they shall live ; and whenever dead souls now hear the voice of the Son of God, in the great gospel-trumpet, they shall live also.

“ Alas ! say you, I do not find a quickening power accompanying the word, and raising my soul to life.” Why, what is the reason of that ? Surely, *where the voice of a king is, there is power*, Eccles. viii. 4. And where the word, the voice of King Jesus is heard, there is power. Perhaps, you are hearing the word delivered by us as the word of a man, and not as it is indeed the word of God, which would work effectually. As long as you hear but the voice of a man speaking to you, there is no power, virtue, or efficacy ; but, O tell me, do you hear the voice of the Son of God through this trumpet of man’s voice ? For we speak to you in his name, whose name is *the God that quickens the dead, and calls things that be not, as though they were*. O then tell me, do you hear his voice, a voice that goes not into your ear only, but into your heart ? Is the sound of God’s trumpet going in-through and out-through

your heart ? Then, hope, there is some power ; and if you be hearing his powerful voice, then rise, *the Master calls you*. Rise, dead Lazarus ; rise, stupid soul, ye that are as stupid as the earth beneath your feet. O *earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord*. The last trumpet will not be more powerful, to make the earth and sea give up their dead bodies, than this great gospel-trumpet is powerful to raise dead souls, if the Lord by the breathing of his Spirit be blowing it, and if you be hearing his voice ; *They that hear shall live*. I have no more to say ; and I have said nothing that will be heard, unless he say the word. Rise and live ; rise and come to Jesus, and in this way *come and worship in his holy mount*.——May the Lord himself speak powerfully to you.

SERMON

S E R M O N CII.*

The *Sum* of the GOSPEL ; or, GOD in
CHRIST.

MATTHEW iii. 17.

—*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.*

THIS chapter shews us two things principally,
 1. The rising of the morning-star, *John the Baptist*, to prepare the way for Christ's appearing. 2. The more glorious rising and shining of the *Sun of righteousness* himself, particularly in Christ's baptism. Here is an *objection* John makes against baptizing Jesus, when he came to him to be baptized, ver 13, 14. *But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me ?* Here is Christ's *over-ruling objection*, insisting upon the being baptized of him, and giving the reason of it, ver. 15. *And Jesus answering, said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.* We have here the *solemnity* of the baptism ; and here is from heaven a special display of heavenly glory, both to encourage Christ in his undertaking, now when entering upon his work, his public ministry, and to encourage us to receive him, in and through whom the heavens are opened to us. And hereupon we have,

1st, A messenger from heaven, and then a voice ; *He saw the Spirit descending like a dove*, ver. 16. If there must be a *bodily* appearance, it must not be that of a man ;

* This sermon was preached immediately before the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, at Dunfermline, July 1st, 1737. With some additional enlargement. It hath undergone five impressions,

for, the being seen in *fashion as a man*, was peculiar to the *second* person : none, therefore, more fit than the shape of one of the *fowls of heaven*, and of all fowls, none so significant as the *dove*. Why ? The Spirit of Christ is a dove-like Spirit ; not a *silly dove*, without heart ; but an *innocent* dove, without gall, and harmless, inoffensive. The dove was the fowl offered in sacrifice ; and Christ, *by the eternal Spirit*, offered himself without spot unto God. The tidings of the falling of the flood was brought by the dove, with an olive-branch in her mouth : fitly, therefore, is the glad tidings of peace with God brought by the Spirit as a dove, by the voice of the turtle heard in our land ; by which, the Chaldee Paraphrase, understand the voice of the holy Spirit.

2dly, We have a *voice* from heaven. As the *Holy Ghost* manifests himself in the likeness of a *dove* ; to God the *Father*, by a *voice* ; and it is a voice that brings the best news that ever was heard, and that ever came from God to earth : for it speaks plainly forth God's favour to Christ, and then to us in him.

1. It speaks forth God's *favour* to Christ Jesus our Lord ; *This is my Beloved Son*. This expresseth both his *relation* and *affection*.

(1.) It expresseth the *relation* he stands in to him ; he is *my Son*. Christ is his Father's Son by eternal generation ; thus, as God, he is *co-equal* with the Father, *begotten* of him before all worlds, Col. i. 15. *Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature* : as man, he is the *Son of God*, by supernatural conception, being *conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost*. Also, he is the *Son of God*, by special *designation* to the work and office of Redeemer ; he is sanctified, sealed and sent upon this errand, brought up with the Father for it, and appointed to it.

(2.) It expresseth the *affection* the Father hath for him, *This is my beloved Son* ; he is his *dear Son*, the Son of his love, Col. i. 13. He had lain in his *bosom* from eternity, John i. 18 ; was always his *delight*, Prov. viii. 30. But particularly, as Mediator, and in undertaking the work of man's redemption, he was his

beloved

beloved Son ; His *Elect*, in whom his soul delighteth, Isa. xlii. 1. *Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again*, John x. 17. *The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand*, John iii. 35. Surely thus we may know and admire how he loved us, and the like of us, that *he hath not withheld his Son, his only Son, his Isaac whom he loved*, but gave him up a sacrifice for our sins ; and that therefore he loved him *because he laid down his life for us*. Therefore,

2. Observe God's favour to us in him. He is my *beloved Son*, not only *with whom*, but *in whom I am well-pleased*. Not only well-pleased *with* all that are in him, and unite to him by faith ; but, being *in him*, I am well-pleased, and declare myself well-pleased, and satisfied.

The word signifies somewhat else than that *love, affection*, and *delight* in Christ, in the former clause. The word here *Εὐδοκῶ*, though it be a Greek word importing *approbation* and *affection* ; yet it hath its signification, not from the Greek, but from the Hebrew ; for this verse is taken from Isa. xlii. 1. *Mine Elect, in whom my soul delighteth* ; which, though it be rendered, as here, by the seventy Interpreters, yet properly it signifies to be *appeased, pacified, reconciled* ; and so it is not only, *in whom I delight*, and *am well-pleased for thyself* ; but also, *in whom I am quieted, and satisfied with all these that belong to thee*. This is the Sum of the Gospel, as it is expressed, 1 Cor. v. 19. *God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself*. Out of Christ he is a *consuming fire* ; but in Christ, he is a reconciled God ; he offering himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice, and reconcile us unto God.

From the words we observed two doctrinal propositions. The first was, *That Christ Jesus, the Son of God, is the beloved of the Father, the object of his highest love, delight, and esteem*. This doctrine being formerly †

† This first doctrine was handled in several stated discourses before the sacrament,

spoken to, at considerable length, I proceed now to the second, viz.

DOCT. *That God is in Christ, and in him alone a well-pleased and pacified God.*

For proving and illustrating of this doctrine, see these parallel texts, Isa. xlii. 1. *Behold my Servant, whom I uphold ; mine Elect, in whom my soul delighteth :* compared with Mat. xii. 18. *Behold my Servant, whom I have chosen ; my Beloved, in whom my soul is well-pleased* Isa. xlix. 3. *Thou art my Servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified,* John xiii. 31. *Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.* Mat. xvii. 5. *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased ; hear ye him.* 1 Cor. v. 15. *God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.*

The method we lay down, for the further prosecuting of this subject, through divine assistance, shall be as follows,

- I. We shall speak of God's being *in Christ*.
- II. Enquire how God is in Christ.
- III. Shew that in Christ he is *well-pleased*.
- IV. Make *application* of the whole subject.

I. We are to speak of God's being *in Christ*. For understanding this, we may consider, 1. What God is out of Christ. 2. What God is in Christ.

1st, What God is *out* of Christ to the sinner. Why, he is an offended, a threatening, a dishonoured, and a distant God

1. God out of Christ is to a sinner an *angry* God ; Psal. vii. 11. *God judgeth the righteous ; God is angry with the wicked every day :* or, it may be read, *God is the RIGHTEOUS JUDGE ; God is angry with the wicked every day ;* because he is a righteous Judge, therefore he cannot but be displeased, offended, and angry with them, and, oh ! but the wrath and anger of God is a terrible matter. *Who knows the power of his wrath ? When it begins to burn, it burns to the lowest hell.*

2. God

2. God out of Christ is a *threatening* God ; his anger manifests itself in threatenings and curses ; Psal. vii. 12, 13. *If he turn not, he will whet his sword ; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death ; he hath ordained his arrows for taking vengeance ;* and his threatenings are not bare words ; but as God, in Christ, gives a being to his words of grace ; so God, out of Christ, gives a being to his words of wrath, saying, as it is, Deut. xxxii. 39, 40, 41. *See now that I, even I am he, and there is no God with me : I kill, and I make alive ; I wound, and I heal : neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever. 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, &c.* God, out of Christ, is a God whose mouth is full of curses and threatenings, and whose hand is full of terrible vengeance for executing the threatening ; *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them,* Gal. iii. 10.

3. A God out of Christ is a *dishonoured* God ; and this is the reason why he is an angry God and a threatening God, because he is a dishonoured God ; for *sin being a transgression of God's law*, 1 John iii. 4. ; his authority is contemned, his wisdom slighted, his power vilipended, his holiness baffled, his justice enraged, and all his glorious attributes abused and affronted.

4. God out of Christ is a *distant* God : sin having set God and man at variance, and at a distance from one another ; therefore men are said to be *afar off*, Acts ii. 39. Eph. ii. 13,—17. Not in respect of any *local* distance : for God is every where ; but in point of *moral* distance. We are far from the image of God, far from the favour of God, far from the knowledge of God, far from the love of God, far from the life of God, *being alienate therefrom, through the ignorance that is in us*, Eph. iv. 18 ; and from any relation to God, except that of a vindictive Judge, and an avenger of sin, a consuming fire, ready to break out every moment in ever-

everlasting flames ; between which, and the Christless sinner, there is nothing but the weak tender thread of life, which the least spark of that fire of God's wrath can burn and break, and then he falls into the depth of endless and irremediable torment.—Thus you have a short account what God *out* of Christ is.

2dly, We may consider what God is *in* Christ : Why ?

1. God in Christ is a *reconciled* God, whose anger is appeased, and quenched by the blood of his eternal Son, *offering up himself a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour unto God* ; upon which account he proclaims here, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.* And sends ministers to proclaim the word of reconciliation, *viz. That God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and not imputing their trespasses unto them,* 2 Cor. v. 19.

2. As a God out of Christ is a threatening God, so a God in Christ is a *promising* God. The covenant of promise being sealed and confirmed by the death and blood of Christ, which covenant, is therefore called *the New-testament in his blood,* 1 Cor. xi. 25. And the condition of all the promises being so well fulfilled, the price of them being so well paid, they come to us in the dispensation of the gospel freely and absolutely, to be received *without money, and without price,* because the money and price is already paid down to the full, in the liquid gold of the blood of the God-man ; that being freely received, we may wait with assured hope till they be fully accomplished, because *all the promises of God are in Christ Yea, and in him, Amen, to the glory of God,* 1 Cor. i. 10.

3. A God in Christ is a *glorified* God : as God out of Christ to a sinner is a God abused and dishonoured ; so God in Christ is a God glorified and honoured ; Christ having fulfilled, yea, *magnified the law,* Isaiah xlii. 21. ; he hath *brought in everlasting righteousness* ; made restitution of all that honour to God and his perfections, that sin took away ; *Then I restored that which I took not away,* Psal. lxxix. 4. And Christ testifies this ;

I have

I have glorified thee on earth, even on earth, where thou wast dishonoured: why? I have finished the work thou gavest me to do, John xvii. 4. God in Christ is a God not only whose mercy is magnified, but also whose truth is vindicated, whose holiness is celebrated, whose justice is satisfied, whose wisdom and power, and other attributes, are made more conspicuous in redemption work, than ever they were in making heaven and earth; and a God in whom we may look for salvation through Christ to the honour, the highest honour and glory of all his excellencies.

4. A God in Christ is a *nearly approaching* God, a *nearly related* God.—In Christ, he comes near *graciously*, saying, *I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory, Isa. xlv. 13.*—And he comes near *relatively*, saying, *I will be THY God, and thou shalt be MY people: and that upon account of Christ's approaching to God in our room, as our Surety; Who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me, saith the Lord? Jer. xxx. 21.* Hence the near relation is promised; *And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God, ver. 22.* And this near approach and relation of God to us in Christ, is an everlasting nearness; and hence we have him saying, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee, Heb. xiii. 5.*; and the church, saying, *This God is our God for ever and ever; and he will be our guide even unto death, Psal. xlviii. 14.*—Thus much for what God is in *Christ*.

II. The *second* thing proposed, was, To shew *how* God is in Christ. For clearing this we may consider, 1. What it is *of* God, that is in Christ. 2. *How*, and in what *manner* God *was* and *is* in Christ. 3. What *of* Christ God is in.

1st, What it is *of* God that is in Christ. I shall confine myself to these two comprehensive things, namely, 1. All the *persons* of the God-head are in Christ. 2. All the *fulness* of the God-head is in Christ. And, here is a subject for deep momentuous thoughts and considerations.

[1.] All the *persons* of the Godhead are in Christ ; I mean, God the Father is in Christ ; God the Son is in Christ ; God the Holy Ghost is in Christ ; one God, in three persons is in Christ.

1. God the *Father* is in Christ ; *Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me*, John xiv. 10. And ver. 11. *Believe me, that I am in the Father, and the Father in me.* And hence he is called *the way* to the Father, ver. 6. And there is *no coming to the Father but in him*, because the Father is in him ; that is, even the first person of the glorious Trinity : and yet not excluding his being the way to the other persons of the glorious Trinity : Therefore,

2. God the *Son* is in Christ : as God the Son is Christ ; so God the Son is in Christ : that is to say, God the Son, considered as the second person of the glorious Trinity, is in Christ, considered as Mediator between God and man. The divine person of the Son is as inaccessible to us, as the divine person of the Father ; and we need a Mediator between him and us as he is God, as well as between the Father and us : for, as there is an essential Oneness between him and the Father ; *I and my Father are one*, John x. 30. : so there is a personal Equality ; *Being in the form of God, he thought it no robbery to be equal with God*, Phil. ii. 6. Therefore his infinite holiness and justice must be satisfied, as well as the Father's, by the doing and dying of Christ, as Mediator, otherwise we could never have access to God ; Christ the Son, being God co-equal and co-essential with the Father : and hence, Christ, as *Mediator*, is the way to himself, as God, as well as he is the way to the Father ; because he is the way to God : *Christ having once suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God*, 1 Peter iii. 18. *By him we believe in God, who raised him from the dead, and gave him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God*, 1 Pet. i. 21. And hence, as Saviour, God-man ; and Mediator, between God and man, he calls us to come to himself, as God ; *Look to me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth ; for I am God, and there is none else*, Isa. xlv. 22. As Mediator, he

he is the *means*, by whom; and as *God*, he is the *end*, to whom we come. Here you see it is necessary we understand and distinguish between Christ considered *essentially*, as to his divine nature, and as he is one with the Father; and *personally*, as to his divine person, and as he is equal with the Father; and *economically*, as to his divine office of Mediator, and as he is God's Servant in the work of our redemption: Servant to himself, as well as to the Father, while he came to fulfil his own law, and satisfy his own justice, being in this service considered as a middle person between God and man, and that contradistinct from his being the middle person between the Father and the Holy Ghost: Therefore,

3. God the *Holy Ghost* is in Christ. The third person of the glorious Trinity, proceeding from the Father and the Son, he also is *in Christ reconciling the world to himself*, 2 Cor. v. 20; for he is one God with the Father and the Son: *There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one*, 1 John v. 7. When I say the *Holy Ghost* is in Christ; I mean not here the supereminent unction of the Spirit, that is so much spoken of in scripture, his being anointed with the *Spirit above measure*, to qualify him for his mediatorial office; but I mean, that the Holy Ghost, who is one God with the Father and the Son, is in Christ, reconciled in Christ, satisfied in Christ, appeased in Christ, as well as the Father and the Son; for, *God is one*: and it is God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that was offended by sin; and it is this God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that is reconciled, through the mediation and satisfaction of Christ; so that if this reconciliation had not been made, we could have approached to none of the persons of the glorious Trinity with acceptance; but now access is made to all alike, because access is made to God, or to the divine nature, which is the same in all the three persons.

Well, when you consider what of God is in Christ, remember that all the persons of the Godhead are in Christ; and let this rectify their misapprehensions, who

have dreamed, that Christ is Mediator between God and us; whereas God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is, that ONE God between whom and us Christ is Mediator. When we address ourselves to God, through Christ, for example, in prayer, most usually we do, and should pitch upon the Father by name, being the first person in order of subsistence; but we are to beware of thinking, that he alone is prayed unto, and none of the rest of the persons: or whatever of the three persons we have occasion to name; think not that he alone, and none other, is prayed unto, excluding the rest: for this would not be a worshipping the true God, who is one as to essence, and three as to persons, or personal subsistence. We cannot look aright to one person, without eyeing the others; for, *he that sees the Son, seeth the Father*; and he that sees the Father and the Son, sees the Holy Ghost; for the Father is in the Son, and the Son is in the Father, and the Holy Ghost in both. The object of *worship* is ONE, *viz.* Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God; and the object of *faith* is ONE, *namely*, God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, in and through Christ. It is a mental error to worship first one person and then another, as the Popish and Prelatical forms seem to lead unto; *Lord have mercy on us; Christ have mercy on us*, &c.; as if there were divers objects of worship. We are to beware of worshipping Christ, and then worshipping God, as if they were distinct objects of worship, otherwise we worship not the true God. The proper object is not God and Christ as two, but God in Christ and so the object is one.

[2.] As all the persons of the Godhead are in Christ, so *all the fulness* of the Godhead is in him; *In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*, Col. ii. 9. I shall hear mention a threefold fulness, *viz.* A fulness of *divinity*, a fulness of *sufficiency*, a fulness of *efficiency*.

1. A fulness of *divinity*, or of the Godhead; and *all the fulness* of the Godhead. God's gifts and graces are found in others; but the *Godhead* itself is to be found in Christ; and not a partial, but *all the fulness*

ness of the Godhead, and that *bodily* ; that is, really, substantially, or personally. The Son is the same individual nature with the Father : and Arians must answer for their blasphemy, who would rob Christ of the honour of his Deity, seeing there is but one Deity, one Divinity, one Essence, between the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

2. He hath a fulness of *sufficiency*, besides his *natural* fulness as God. *It pleased the Father, that in him, as Mediator, all fulness should dwell*, Col. i. 19. As Joseph filled the granaries of Egypt with corn : why ? because not only Egypt, but all the nations round about were to be supplied with corn in time of famine ; so it pleased God that *in Christ should all fulness dwell*, that all Jews and Gentiles might come to him for grace ; all must go through the hand of Joseph to the people. The sea is full of water ; because it is to convey water to all the rivers. The sun is full of light ; because it conveys light to all the world : so Christ is full of grace ; because he is to be the conveyer of grace : he is anointed *with the oil of gladness above his fellows*. And there is, therefore, this fulness of sufficiency in Christ ; because there is in him a fulness of divinity. The human nature, being personally united with the Godhead, must partake of all grace ; and it is necessary he should have a fulness of sufficiency, because of his threefold office ; hence, as a Prophet, he hath a fulness of wisdom ; as a Priest, a fulness of righteousness ; and as a King, a fulness of power. Therefore,

3. He hath a fulness of *efficiency* ; such a filling fulness, wherewith all believers are filled, Eph. i. 23. which is his righteousness ; *The fulness of him that filleth all in all*. In all believers, Christ fills all the faculties of their souls ; the understanding, with light ; the will, with liberty ; the heart, with life ; and every member of Christ's body is filled according to its measure ; *The measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*, Eph. iv. 13. All have not alike measure ; one is full as an arm, another is full as a finger ; yet every one hath the fulness of a member ; and all put together, make

make up the fulness of Christ-mystical.—In a word, all God's blessings are in Christ, all his consolations, attributes, and promises are in him ; of which more afterwards.

2dly, We may consider *how* and in what *manner* God was and is in Christ.

1. God was in Christ in the counsel of peace *federally* ; making a *covenant with his chosen* : providing a remedy from all eternity against that ruin he foresaw man would run into, Psal. lxxxix. 3. Hence the grace of the new covenant is said to be given *before the world began*, 2 Tim. i. 9.

2. God was in Christ in the promise *representatively*, Gen. iii. 15. *The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent.* As he was represented by the seed of the woman, so by the seed of Abraham in the promise ; *In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*, Gen. xxii. 18. *Now, to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds as of many, but as of one ; and thy seed, which is Christ*, Galatians iii. 16.

3. God was in Christ, in the ceremonial law, *typically* : the paschal lamb, typified the *Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world*, John i. 29. The ark of the covenant, typified *Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant*. The blood of the sin-offering, typified the blood of Christ, *that cleanseth from all sin*.

4. God was in Christ, in his incarnation, *actually* and perfectly, according to both natures of God and man, in one person ; then the promise was performed when it was said, *Unto you is born in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord*, Luke ii. 11.

5. God was in Christ, in his mediatorial office, *obedientially* ; and that both in the active obedience of his life, and passive obedience at his death : for, he *came to do the will of him that sent him ; and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*, Phil. ii. 10.

6. God was in Christ, in his resurrection, *victoriously* ; for then he *abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light*, 2 Tim. i. 10. *Through death he destroyed*

troyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, Heb. ii. 14.

7. God was in Christ, in his ascension, *triumphantly*; for, *When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them*, Psal. lxxviii. 18. And, *having received gifts for men, he gave gifts unto men, for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying the body of Christ*, Eph. iv. 12.

8. God is in Christ, in his kingdom, *gloriously*; he being now *crowned with glory and honour*, Heb. ii. 10. Because he *humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*; therefore God *hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name*, &c. Phil. ii. 9, 10, 11.—Thus you may understand in what respect God is in Christ.

3dly, It may be enquired, what of Christ God is in.

1. God is in the *human nature* of Christ; *The Word was made flesh*; and *God is manifested in the flesh*, John i. 3. 1 Timothy iii. 16. This is the special way wherein God is in Christ by a hypostatical union, he being God-man in one person. His human nature is God's temple, where he dwells; his mercy-seat, where he abides; his throne, where he reigns graciously and gloriously: and, O! what good news is it, God is in our nature! God is in our flesh!

2. God is in the *mediatorial offices* of Christ; every office of Christ is an habitation of God; the wisdom of God, is in his prophetic office; the righteousness of God, is in his priestly office; the power of God, is in his kingly office: therefore he is called, *The power of God, and the wisdom of God, and the righteousness of God*. Hence,

3. God is in the *name* of Christ; and there is not a name that Christ hath, but if we could believingly view it, we would find God in it. Is his name *Immanuel*? God is there, as a *God with us*. Is his name *Jesus*? God is there, as a *Saviour for us*. Is his name *Christ*? God is there, *anointing him to save sinners*. And because

cause God is his name, therefore his name is as *ointment poured forth*, Song i. 3.

4. God is in the *church* of Christ ; therefore her name is called JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH, *the Lord is there*, Ezek. xlvi. 35. In the *invisible church*, God is in every member of Christ ; in every friend and follower of Christ ; and the more they follow the steps of Christ, the more of God is to be seen in and about them.—And when they have much of Christ in them, then it is sometimes observable by on-lookers, *that God is in them of a truth*, 1 Cor. xiv. 25.

5. God is in the *treasure* of Christ ; *In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*, Col. ii. 3. All the treasures of grace and glory, all the treasures of light and life, and spiritual blessings which he hath purchased, God is in them all ; yea, God himself is the sum total of the treasure that is in him.

6. God is in the *cross* of Christ, in the worst as well as the best of Christ : and hence the apostle *glories in the cross of Christ*, Gal. vi. 14. ; and his people *glory in tribulation*, Rom. v. 3. When he orders a rod, a cross, a trial to his people, God is in it : hence the *fiery trial* doth but *purge away their dross*. A reconciled God is in the cross of Christ ; and hence it is made so light and easy, so sweet and portable, so beneficial and profitable, that it comes to be among the best of their blessings : *It was good for me that I was afflicted. Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, and teachest out of thy law*. The cup may be bitter to flesh and blood, but there is no death in the cup ; nay, God is in it, his blessing is in it, and his Spirit is in it, if it be the cross of Christ.

7. God is in the *work* of Christ, not only in his work of creation and providence, whereof Christ is the author and upholder, is God to be seen in his infinite power and wisdom, but especially in his works of grace and redemption. God is in his work that he works *for us*. As God was in all his miracles ; so in his doing and dying on earth, and in his pleading and interceding in heaven. God is in these works of his ; *They are the doings of the Lord, and wondrous in our eyes*.
God

God is in his work that he works *in us*, when he comes to convince and convert sinners, and draw them to himself, O Sirs, the finger of God is in it; then is *the arm of God revealed*, Isa. liii. 1.

8. God is in the *word* of the gospel of Christ.—When Christ is offered in this gospel, God is offered in him; when Christ is revealed, God is revealed in him. And, O! when the gospel-revelation is effectual, then it is the very *power of God to salvation*, Rom. i. 16. Thus there are some outward visible things, wherein you may see and discern the invisible God; if they be the things of Christ, such as the gospel of Christ, the preached word, the outward dispensation of the gospel, and the written word; say not, *God is far off*, if the word be nigh you, *even in your heart and mouth*, Rom. x. 18.

9. God is in the *heart* of Christ: why, the love of God is in his heart, and the law of God is in his heart; *I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart*; or, as it is in the Hebrew, *It is in the MIDST OF MY BOWELS*, Psal. xl. 8. As Christ lies in the Father's bosom; so the Father lies, as it were, in his bosom, in the midst of his bowels. If you could look into the heart of Christ, you would see nothing but God, the love of the law of God there, the glory of God.

10. God is in the *hand* of Christ: as God is in the heart of Christ, insomuch, that he is the greatest lover of God; so God is in the hand of Christ, insomuch, that he is the only giver of God. What is the great gift of the new covenant? Why, God himself is the great gift, according to that promise, *I will be thy God*. Who is the giver of such a great gift? Who but Christ, into whose hand all things are given, and all the new covenant goods and blessings, even he whom God hath *given to be the covenant of the people*. It is strange, and yet true, Christ is the great gift of God, and God is the great gift of Christ: God gives Christ to us, and then Christ gives God to us. He gives God, and he gives himself, and he gives his Spirit; and he comes with all these gifts in his hand, and presents and pro-

fers them to us freely, under the notion of living waters ; *Whoſoever will, let him come, and take of the waters of life freely*, Rev. xxii. 17.—Thus you may have ſome view *how* God is in Chriſt.

III. The *third* thing propoſed was, To ſhew, that in *Chriſt alone* God is a *well-pleaſed* God. This will appear, if you conſider, 1. What God hath done with reſpect to *Chriſt himſelf*. 2. What he doth for his *people, in him*.

1^{ſt}, We may conſider what he *hath done* with reſpect to *Chriſt himſelf*.

1. He hath ſolemnly proclaimed his *approbation* of his perſon and undertaking from heaven, three ſeveral times, with an audible voice, namely, at his baptiſm, tranſfiguration, and paſſion ; *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleaſed*. Agreeable to which is that open proclamation, Iſa. xlii. 1. *Behold, my Servant, whom I uphold ; mine Elect, in whom my ſoul delighteth*.

2. He hath *releaſed* him from the *prison of the grave*, in which, as our Surety, he was detained for a time ; *He was taken from priſon and from judgment*, ſays the prophet Iſaiah, chap. liii. 8. He was taken from thence by a public ſentence ; which was an undoubted argument, that the debt, for which he was thrown in priſon, was fully paid ; and the Lord was well-pleaſed with the ranſom. Hence it is very obſervable, that the reſurrection of Chriſt is aſcribed unto God, as reconciled ; *The God of peace* is ſaid to bring *again from the dead the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the great ſhepherd of the ſheep*, Heb. xiii. 20.

3. The *authority*, and *power*, and *honour* where-with our Surety is inveſted, as a reward of his hard work, is an evidence, that God is well-pleaſed in him.

QUEST. *What reward hath he conferred on him ?*

ANSW. (1.) He hath ſet him at his own *right-hand* in the *highest heavens* ; Heb. xii. 2. *Looking unto Jeſus, who for the joy that was ſet before him endured the croſs, deſpiſed the ſhame, and is ſet down at the right-hand of the throne of God*. The martyr Stephen, in his dying words,

words, Acts vii. 56. says, that he *saw heaven opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.* Had he been shut out of his Father's presence, it had been a sign that anger still lodged in his breast, both against the Cautioner and the principal ; but his being re-admitted into that glory which he had with *the Father before the world began*, is an evidence, that he is well-pleased in him.

(2.) He honours him with a *complete victory* over all his enemies. He makes all the powers of hell to be prostrate at his feet ; Psal. cx. 1. *Sit thou at my right-hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool.* Phil. ii. 9, 10. *At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, &c.* When man sinned, God delivered the power of death unto the devil, as his executioner ; but he found such a sweet favour in the righteousness of the Surety, that he wrests the keys of death out of the devil's hand, and delivers them into the hand of our Redeemer. Hence Christ proclaims it as good news to all his friends, Rev. i. 17. *I am he that liveth and was dead ; and behold I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death.*

(3.) He not only makes him victorious over all the powers of hell, but, as Mediator, invests him with a *precedency* over all the angels in heaven ; *And every name that can be named, either in this world, or the world that is to come.* Heb. i. 4. *Being made so much better than the angels, as by inheritance he hath obtained a more excellent name than they.* And in the sixth verse, *When he brings in his first begotten into the world, he says, Let all the angels of God worship him.* Doth not this say, that God is well-pleased in him ?

(4.) He hath clothed him with all *judicative authority*, and constitute him the sole Judge of the world ; *The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son.* He hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world, by that man whom he hath ordained, Acts xvii. 31.

2dly, We may consider what *he doth* for his people,

ple, these for whom Christ is Surety ; and from thence it will appear, that God is well-pleased in him.

1. In him, and for his sake, he *pardons* all their sins ; *Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation thro' faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, for the remission of sins*, Rom. iii. 25.

2. In him, and for his sake, he *hears their prayers* ; Rev. viii. 3, 4. *And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer, and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar, which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints ascended up before God, out of the angel's hand.* This is the incense that renders them acceptable unto God, and without which they would be an abomination.

3. In him, and for his sake, he admits them into *communion and fellowship* with himself ; *By the blood of Jesus we have access to the holy of holies, &c.* Heb. x. 19,—22.

4. In him, and for his sake, they have *adoption*, with all the privileges that attend it ; *In the fulness of time, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons*, Gal. iv. 4, 5.

5. In him, and for his sake, they have access to *glory* at last. The righteousness of Christ, removes the bar that bolts heavens gates against us, which was sin, Heb. ii. 10. and v. 9. ; there says the apostle, *Christ was made perfect through suffering, in bringing many sons and daughters to glory.*—Now, from these things it is clear, that God is *well-pleased* in Christ.

IV. The *fourth* thing proposed was, To make *application*, and it may be applied,

1st, By way of *information*. Is *God in Christ* ? Then let us see God here ; for here is the glass wherein we may see all the divine glory : in Christ we may see God in all his attributes and fulness ; in all his saving offices and relations to us ; in all his graces, and in all his blessings.

1. In Christ we may see God in all his *attributes* and *fulness*; there is nothing that the Father hath, except his personality, but the Son, as Mediator hath; *All things that the Father hath, are mine*, John vi. 15.; all things that God hath, they belong to the Mediator, also the God-man. Here then is an ocean where you and I may dive for ever, and never reach to the bottom. In him we may see the *wisdom* of God; *In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*, Col. ii. 3. Poor foolish sinner, who hast no wisdom, knowledge, or understanding, here is a treasure for you, Christ, the *wisdom of God*, 1 Cor. i. 30.—In him we may see all the *power* of God; *We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but unto them that are called, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God*, 1 Cor. i. 24. Poor weakling, that can do nothing, here is a bargain for you to lay hold upon; *It is he that can work in you, both to will and to do*; and make his *people willing in the day of his power*, Psal. cx. 3. You are not called to come to Christ, but by the power of Christ, which is the power of God; you are to receive him, who can give you power to receive him; and as an absolute weakling to take hold of his strength, and look to his power, to whom is given *all power in heaven and in earth*.—In him we may see all the *holiness* of God; he is said to be made of God to us *sanctification*: and surely, here is an immense fountain of sanctity, the infinite holiness of God. O poor, vile polluted sinner, that hast lost the image of God by the fall of the first Adam, and the deficiency of his holiness; here is a better Head and Husband for you, in whom is all the fulness of divine holiness, that ye may be complete in him.—In him we may see all the *justice* of God, and all the *righteousness* of God; we may see justice *satisfied* in him, by his mediatorial righteousness; for, the *Lord is well-pleased for his righteousness sake*; yea, he that is the *righteousness of God is made unto us righteousness*, 1 Cor. i. 30.; And, O wonderful word! 2 Cor. v. 21. *He was made SIN for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*. O guilty, guilty sinner, here

here is a joyful sound in your ears ; *He that bath ears to hear let him hear* : you may, in Christ, be more righteous in God's sight than ever you was guilty in his sight ; yea, you may be the *VERY righteousness of God in him* ; you may not only be *justified*, but find God to be *just in justifying you* ; because the justice of God is in him, and it is satisfied in him, magnified in him, glorified in him.—In him we may see all the *mercy* of God : all the infinite love, pity, and compassion of God is in him, in his heart : what is Christ, but the love of God wrapt up in the garments of flesh and blood ? *In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins*, John iv. 9, 10. And Jude, verse 21. *Keep yourselves in the love of God. How ? looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.* O poor miserable sinner, would you wish to find mercy in the moment of death, and mercy at the great day ! Know there is no mercy to be expected from God out of Christ ; and unless you look to his mercy as in Christ ; for he will never shew mercy to the prejudice of his justice : and it is only in Christ that *mercy and truth meet together, and embrace each other*.—In him we may see all the *faithfulness* and *truth* of God ; *My mercy and my faithfulness shall be with him*, Psalm lxxxix. 24. I have observed, (as I formerly noticed, upon another discourse,) between thirty and forty places of scripture, where mercy and truth, mercy and faithfulness are joined together ; and here you see they are joined together in Christ. In him the mercy and love of God vents to the honour of divine truth pledged, even in all the threatenings of the law, as well as divine truth pledged in all the promises of the gospel ; because in him all the threatenings and curses of the law have spent their force, Gal. iii. 13. *And in him are all the promises Yea and Amen, to the glory of God*, 2 Cor. i. 20. He is *the way and the truth* ; truth itself, the God of truth, the truth of God. O perfidious, faithless, unfaithful, and treacherous sinner, that hath

hath many times lied to the God of truth, would you have your falshood all done away, and swallowed up in the truth and veracity of God, and your salvation secured, notwithstanding of your falshood, fickleness, and instability? Here is a pillar on which you may stand firm and fixed amidst all changes, whether in your outward lot or inward frame; *For all flesh is grass, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever.* The truth of God stands unalterably the same.—Again, in him we may see all the *authority* of God; *My name is in him*, Exod. xxiii. 21. O! poor lost sinner, when Christ in his gospel, comes to *seek and save that which was lost*; say not, *By what authority doth he these things?* He is the Sent and Sealed of God; and he hath all the authority that God can give him: and if you ask, *By what authority we, poor sinful mortal worms like yourselves, do offer him, and all his riches to you?* Indeed we could have no authority, if he had not said, *Go preach the gospel to every creature: And lo I am with you to the end of the world.*—In a word, in him we may see all the *fulness* of God; *It pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell*, Col. i. 19. In him dwells *all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*: not only all the *attributes* of God, but all the fulness of all the divine attributes; not only the *wisdom* of God, but all the fulness of divine wisdom; not only the *power* of God, but all the fulness of divine power; not only the *holiness* of God, but all the fulness of divine holiness; not only the *justice* and *righteousness* of God, but all the fulness of divine righteousness; not only the *mercy* of God, but all the fulness of divine mercy; not only the *truth* and *faithfulness* of God, but all the fulness of divine faithfulness; not only the *authority* of God, but all the fulness of divine authority: not only is God in him, but all the fulness of the Godhead. O poor, empty sinner, here is *unsearchable riches*, a bottomless well of everlasting salvation and consolation for you.

2. In Christ we see God in all his *saving offices*. You know the Father hath anointed him to the office of Prophet, Priest, and King: O Sirs, what employment will you put in his hand? It is he, as a Prophet, who says,
They

They shall be all taught of God ; look to him for the promised teaching. It is he, as a Priest, who says, upon the ground of the sacrifice he hath offered, I, even I, am he that pardoneth thine iniquity for my own name's sake ; look to him for remission in his blood. It is he, as a King, who says, I will subdue your iniquities ; sin shall not have dominion over you. O ignorant sinner, will you find in your heart to refuse such a Prophet as Christ is ? Who teacheth like him ? O guilty sinner, will you refuse such a High Priest as this ? such a sacrifice as this is ? O enslaved sinner, will you refuse the help of such a King and Conqueror as this ? If there be none of these offices to be dispensed with, then take hold of him in them all.

3. In Christ we may see God as he is clothed with all *relations* that can contribute to the happiness of a sinner. What friend or relation do you want, O sinner ?—Want you a *Father* to pity you ? Behold here you have an *everlasting Father* ; for that is his name, Isa. ix. 6. ; and *in him the fatherless find mercy*.—Want you a *mother* to be tender to you ? Behold, here motherless children may have their losses made up ; *When father and mother forsake you, here is one to take you up*, Psalm xxvii. 10. He is one that can be a thousand times better to you than father or mother ; and manifests more love than the tenderest mother that ever was ; *Can a woman forget her sucking child ? Yea, they may forget ; yet will I not forget thee*, Isaiah xlix. 15.—Want you a *husband* ! O ! what would you think to be married with the *Heir of all things* ? Why, if the ear of faith be opened, you may hear him saying, *Thy maker is thy husband*, Isaiah liv. 5. And again, Hosea ii. 19. *I will betroth thee unto me for ever*. If you say, Oh ! how will it be consistent with the justice of God, for him to marry such a black bride ? Why, he says, *I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness*. If you say, How will it be consistent with the wisdom, mercy, truth and faithfulness of God, to betroth the like of me ? He says, *I will betroth thee unto me in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies ; I will even betroth thee*
unto

unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord. Thou shalt know God in Christ, who can betroth thee to himself, and yet be infinitely just, and wise, and merciful; and faithful in doing so; because *mercy and truth have met together* in Christ, the glorious Bridegroom; they strike up a match together, and embrace each other, that there might be nothing to hinder the match between Christ and you.—Want you a proper match then, O sinner, or a meet help, poor bankrupt, run in such arrears to the law and justice of God? Is not he that hath *unsearchable riches*, a fit match for you? Poor, dying creature, that will be food for worms in a little, here is a living Head for you, that can make you *live for ever*. O mortal worm, here is an immortal Husband for you. Poor, changeable creature, here is an unchangeable Match for you, Christ, *The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*.—Want you a lover? Are you an outcast, that reckons yourself despised by all the world, insomuch that none cares for you, nor loves you? Behold an infinitely loving and lovely Jesus tendering his love to you, saying, *I will heal your backslidings, and love you freely*, Hosea xiv. 4. And he is seeking your conjugal love, saying, *My son give me thy heart*.—Want you a leader through the dark and difficult steps of your way; a guide, a director, and counsellor; in whatsoever affair you have upon your hand, wherein you need to be directed? O Sirs, here is the *wonderful Counsellor*, who says, Isaiah xlii. 16. *I will lead the blind in a way they know not, and in paths that they have not known. I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight*.—Want you a shepherd to feed you? or a captain to fight your battles for you?—Want you a physician, when in sickness, to heal you?—Want you a refiner and purifier, when you are in the furnace, to purge away your dross? Behold a God in Christ hath all the happy relations you can desire.

4. In Christ we see God in all his *graces*. This is a great part of the glory of the only begotten of the Father, that he is full of grace and truth, John i. 14. And out

of his fulness have we all received, and grace for grace, verse 16. Grace is poured into his lips, Psalm xl. 2. ; and, I hope, he is pouring grace from his lips by his word among some of you this day. *The Spirit of the Lord is upon him ; for he hath anointed him ; he is anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows ; anointed with the Spirit of all grace.*—Want you grace to believe ? Behold it is in him, as he is the *Author of faith.*—Want you grace to repent ? Behold it is in him as a *Prince and Saviour, exalted to give repentance.*—Do you want grace to pray ? It is he that hath the *Spirit of prayer* to give, Zech. xii. 10.—Do you want grace to *communicate* aright ; grace to *mortify* sin ; grace to *bear the cross* ; grace to *resist temptation* ; grace to *do and suffer* ? It is he that hath all grace to give, and who says, *My grace shall be sufficient for you.* Hence his people are called to *be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.*

5. In Christ we may see God in all his *blessings* which he hath to give. He is the Lord-Dispenser of *temporal* blessings ; for, *The earth is his, and the fulness thereof* : the Lord-Dispenser of *spiritual* blessings ; for heaven is his and the fulness thereof : the Lord-Dispenser of *eternal* blessings ; for eternal life is in him, and he is *the true God, and eternal life.* It was promised of him, that men *should be blessed in him* ; and accordingly he is *sent to bless us*, Acts iii. 26. *God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.* I might here enumerate many particular blessings. The blessing of *illumination* is in him, for, he is *the light to lighten the Gentiles* : the blessing of *conversion* is in him ; for he says, *When I am lifted up, I will draw all men to me* : the blessing of *justification* is in him ; for, *We are justified freely by his grace* : the blessing of *reconciliation* with God is in him ; for, it is he that makes *peace by the blood of his cross* : the blessing of *sanctification* is in him ; for, *He is made of God to us sanctification* : the blessing of *acceptation* with God is in him ; for, *We are accepted in the Beloved* : the blessing of *access* to God is in him ; for, *By him we have boldness and access, with confidence thro' faith*

faith of him : the blessing of *consolation* is in him ; for, *He is the consolation of Israel* : the blessing of a *happy death* is in him ; for, *Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord* : the blessing of a *happy resurrection* is in him ; for, *He is the resurrection and the life* : the blessing of a *happy sentence* at the great day is in him, and at his disposal ; for, *All judgment is committed unto him* ; and it is he that will say to the wicked, *Depart from me, ye cursed* ; and to the righteous, *Come ye blessed of my Father* : the blessing of *eternal glorification* is in him ; for, as he is the glory of the higher house, so he says, *Father, I will that these whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory* ; and so shall they ever be with the Lord. Can you tell me any spiritual blessing that is not in him ? No ; Eph. i. 3. *We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, only in Christ*. And now, after all, what think you of him ? Have you no heart to join hand with such a well furnished Saviour, *In whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily* ? If you have no heart to such a good bargain, this is very sad : but, because it is a day of glad tidings, I will tell you, among all other things, that all hearts are in his hand, and it is his prerogative to open the locked heart. It is easy with him to create a clean heart, to melt the hard heart, to fix the wandering heart, to cleanse the filthy heart, to elevate the drooping heart, to conquer the stubborn heart, to quicken the dead heart, to draw the backward heart, as we formerly observed, in another discourse ; and if any thing draw your heart to him, it will be the revelation of his grace and fulness ; and of God's being in him, and in him a well-pleased God §.

FURTHER, in the light of this truth, particularly that *God is in Christ*, we may see,

1. How little of God is in the *present generation* ; for, if God be in Christ, and only in Christ, then a generation that is without Christ, is without God. A Christ-

§ Here the action-sermon ended, in order to give place to communicating, the proper work of the day. What follows was delivered afterwards.

less generation is a Godless generation ; God is not to be found where Christ is not to be found. If Christ be not in a family, God is not there : if Christ be not in the heart, God is not there : if Christ be not in a sermon, God is not there. Where Christ is owned, God is owned : where Christ is dishonoured, God is dishonoured : where Christ is away, God is away ; for, *God is in Christ*. And, Oh ! is it not too evident that God is away from our nobility, when Christ is disowned, and dishonoured, and disregarded among them ? That God is away from the commonalty and generality of people, when Christ is so little known and loved ? God is not to be found among *Arians* ; why ? They rob Christ of his supreme Deity, and eternal Godhead. God is not to be found among *Arminians* ; why ? They spoil Christ of the freedom and power of his grace. You need not seek God among *Papists* ; why ? Because Christ is dethroned there, and the merit of works set up in his room. You need not seek God among *Legalists* and erroneous preachers ; why ? If Christ be not in their preaching, God is not there ; though they make mention of Christ's name, yet while they preach not the true Christ, they preach not the true God.—It is as evident as the sun-beams, that God is far away from the present generation ; because when Christ is not there, God is not there. God is not among the *ignorant* and *erroneous* ; because Christ, as a Prophet, is not there. God is not among the *self-righteous* ; because Christ, as a Priest, is not there. God is not among the *wicked* and *profane* ; because Christ, as a King, is not there. God is not among these that are drowned in *sensuality* and *worldly-mindedness* ; because Christ and his Spirit is not there. God is not among these that *deny* there is any *divine impulse* leading a man to such and such a duty, and leading him on therein ; because it is contrary to Christ, who, as the Way and Leader by his Holy Spirit, promised to *lead the blind in a way they know not* ; and to *make darkness light before them* ; and to be a *voice behind them*, saying, *This is the way, walk you in it*. This Spirit is promised to be with his servants and people in all generations ; *Lo I am*

I am with you always, even to the end of the world: I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. But,

2. In the light of this truth, we may see who are *false and presumptuous dealers* with God; even these that adventure to deal with a God out of Christ. Who deals with God out of Christ? even these that live in unbelief and impenitency; for it is in a way of faith and repentance that all who deal with God in Christ do walk. These that hope all is well, and will be well with them, though yet they have never fled to Christ for refuge, nor know what it is to live upon him by faith: These that hope to atone God by their repenting and reforming, by their future pains and prayers, and never receive the atonement: These that hope in God's mercy, and yet were never afraid of his justice, nor concerned how to have an infinite satisfaction given to infinite justice, by betaking themselves under the covert of the blood of the God-man: these, and many such there are who are presumptuous dealers with God out of Christ, to whom he will be a consuming fire, if they remain there.

3. Hence we may see, who are the *fair and honest dealers* with God, even these that so take up God in Christ, and all things in Christ, that they dare not approach to God, but in Christ; they dare not pray to God, but in Christ; they dare not hope in God's mercy, but through Christ; they dare not hope in the promise, but as it is dipped in the blood of Christ; they dare expect nothing, but in Christ: but in and through him and his blood, they come boldly, and hope confidently; *We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus*, Heb. x. 19. If they joy in God, it is through Jesus Christ; if they deal with God for pardon, it is through the blood of Christ; if they deal with God for justification, it is through Christ as the Lord their righteousness; if they deal with God for sanctification, it is through Christ as their strength; if they deal with God for grace, it is through Christ as the storehouse of all grace.

4. Hence we may see what are the *marks* by which
you

you may know if ever you have got a discovery of God in Christ.

(1.) What sight have you got of God *out* of Christ? They that have seen him in the gospel-glass, have seen him first in the glass of the law. The faith of the law ordinarily goes before the faith of the gospel. Have you got apprehension of him as an angry God, because of your sin; a threatening God, a dishonoured God, a distant God, and so apprehend yourself to be *without God, and without Christ in the world?* Have you got an afflicting sense hereof?

(2.) What apprehension have you got of God for *relieving* you from this misery? If you viewed God in Christ, then you have seen him a reconciled God, a promising God, a glorified God, and a nearly approaching God, coming towards you, flying on wings of grace and mercy, and so with *healing under his wings*, and with balm perfumed with Christ's righteousness, Matth. iv. 2.

(3.) What of God have you seen *in* Christ? Have you seen the greatest glory of God, and all the glory of God in him? Have you seen all the persons of the Godhead glorified, reconciled, satisfied, and well-pleased in him? Have you seen all the fulness of the Godhead dwelling and residing in him? Have you seen more of the glory of God in him, than ever you saw in the sun, moon, and stars? Have you seen the method of salvation through him to be worthy of God, as contributing to the illustration of all the divine attributes, in so much that God, in redeeming Jacob, doth glorify himself in Israel.

(4.) What of Christ have you seen God in? Have you seen the glory of God in his face? 2 Cor. iv. 16.; in his person; in his human nature, in his being *God manifested in the flesh*? Have you seen God and his glory in the undertaking of Christ; in the incarnation of Christ; in his doing, dying, rising, ascending, and exaltation to the right-hand of God? Have you seen God and his glory in the intercession of Christ, in his offices, in his names, in his fulness, in his righteousness, in his gospel and promises?

(5.) What

(5.) What way do you deal with God for *blessings* ? Is it only in him, because it is said, *Men shall be blessed in him*?—What way do you deal with God for promised *privileges*? Is it only in him, in whom the *promises are Yea and Amen*?—What way do you deal with him for *pardon*? Is it only in Christ, whose *blood cleanseth from all sin*?—What way do you deal with him for *purification*? Is it only in Christ, who *is made of God to us sanctification*, and has promised the Spirit to *take of the things of Christ and shew them unto us*?—What way do you deal with God in *prayer*? Is it only in the *name of Christ*?—What way do you deal with him in *praise*? Is it only in Christ you offer praise as well as prayers?—What way do you deal with God in *believing*? Is it by him you believe in God?—What way do you deal with God in *rejoicing*? Do you *joy in God, through Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement*?—What way deal you with God in *approaching* to him in any duty? Know you what it is to *have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by this new and living way, which he hath consecrated thro' the vail of his flesh*.—What way do you deal with God in the tenor of your *conversation*? Is it such as *becometh the gospel of Christ*? Is it your desire and endeavour to spread the favour of his name, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

(6.) What *hope and expectation* have you in God with respect to *future things*?—What hope have you in God with reference to days of *trouble, trial, and calamity*? Is it only in Christ the *Refuge*?—What hope have you in God with reference to *death*? Is it only through Christ's taking away the *sting of death*?—What hope in view of *judgment*? Is it in Christ, the *Lord your righteousness*?—What hope of a happy *eternity*? Is it only in Christ? *The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*.—Do you take up Christ himself to be the *true God and eternal life*, and that everlasting glory lies in the everlasting vision of the glory of God in Christ, and fruition of this God? Again,

5. Since God is in Christ, and in him well-pleased,
then

then hence we may see, and try whether he be well-pleased with you in him.

(1.) If he be well-pleased with you in him, then you have sometime seen and found God to be a *displeased* God, and displeased with you, as it is said, Psal. lx. 1. *O God, thou hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us, thou hast been displeased ; O turn thyself to us again.* They that have the faith of God's being well-pleased, have felt his displeasure ; and have been put in fear of his wrath because of sin.

(2.) You have seen there was no pleasing of God, nor pacifying of him by any *sacrifice* or *service* of yours. *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God ? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old ? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil ? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body, for the sin of my soul ?* Micah vi. 6, 8. *Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, then said I, Lo I come : in the volume of thy book it is written of me ; I delight to do thy will, O my God,* Psalm xl. 6, 7. Heb. x. 5. Nothing could satisfy you but what satisfies God ; you could find no rest but in him in whom God rests.

(3.) You will be well-pleased with *Christ*, well-pleased with the *way of salvation* through him and his *righteousness*, even as God is well-pleased for his *righteousness*' sake, because, as it magnifies the law, and makes it *honourable* ; so grace reigns through that *righteousness* to *eternal life*. You will be well-pleased to be *in him*, saying, *This is my rest, here will I stay, for I like it well.* Well-pleased to be *like him*, saying, O to be conform to his image ! Well-pleased to be *for him*, and upon his side, for his cause, truth, and interest, though all the world should be against him. Well-pleased to be *with him* ; to be with him on *earth*, and have fellowship and communion with him ; to be with him in *heaven*, and reckon it your chief happiness to be for ever with the Lord. And if you be well-pleased with Christ, you will be ill-pleased with yourself, with your own righteousness, your best duties and performances, &c.

(4.) You

(4.) You will be well-pleased with God in him : if God be well-pleased with you in Christ, then you will be well-pleased with God in Christ ; that is, you will be reconciled to God in him : the good pleasure and love of God in Christ will, according to the measure of your faith of it, kill your displeasure and enmity against God ; for, *Faith worketh by love*, even as unbelief worketh by enmity : *And you that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled*, Col. i. 21. 2 Cor. v. 18, 19. *Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, for to make in himself, of twain, one new man, so making peace. And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby*, Eph. ii. 15, 16. Not only the enmity between Jews and Gentiles, but between God and man. You will be well-pleased with God's choice of him ; you will be ready to say as the queen of Sheba concerning Solomon, 2 Chron. ix. 8. Well-pleased with God's perfections, as they are in Christ ; Well-pleased with God's accepting of Christ and his works, and advancing him to the throne ; well-pleased with God's anointing him, and putting all our stock in his hand.

6. Hence we may see what God is to the *unbelieving Christless soul* : as God in Christ is a well-pleased God ; so God out of Christ, is all things that are *terrible and dreadful*. He is infinite wrath and anger, fire and brimstone, and vengeance ; God is the very hell of hell : *Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire ? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings ?* Isa. xxxiii. 14. He is a God preparing flames of indignation, to burn and destroy the soul that remains in that Christless state ; *For Tophet is ordained of old, yea, for the king it is prepared, he hath made it deep and large : the pile thereof is fire and much wood, the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it*, Isaiah xxx. 33. See the description of hell, Revel. xxi. 14. it is called *the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death*. Again,

7. Since God is in Christ, and in him a well-pleased God; then hence we may see, that Christ is the *great theme*, that gospel ministers should preach upon. It is true, works and duties ought to be preached in their place: but one great difference between the gospel and the legal way of preaching is not, that the one preacheth duties, and the other not; but the legal way makes *duties* the foundation of gospel privileges; whereas the gospel-way makes *gospel privileges* the foundation of duty, or Christ and his graces the foundation of all holy obedience: the one is for the order of the covenant of works, *Do*, and then *live*; the other for the order of the new covenant, *Live*, and then *do*. You must have spiritual life in Christ before you can do any duty*. When we do not preach Christ, we do not preach the true God, nor true obedience unto him. God out of Christ is not a well-pleased God, but a revenging God: therefore, obedience to God, out of Christ, is but rebellion; faith in God, out of Christ, is but infidelity; love to God, out of Christ, is but enmity, even as the mercy of God out of Christ is but fury: *He that honours not the Son, honours not the Father*, says Christ; *We are to confess that Jesus is the Lord, to the glory of God the Father*, says the apostle. To neglect Christ, therefore, is to neglect the Father: and what makes gospel ministers harp most upon this strain? Even, because, if we could once get people into Christ, they could not miss holiness. Why? because they could not miss God himself; they would in him find the favour of God, the grace of God, the image of God, which is all in Christ, and no where else. People may preach the law, and yet miss the law, and all true obedience to it: but one cannot preach Christ, and miss the law; because, as God is in Christ, so the law of God is in him, who is *the end of the law for righteousness*, Rom. x. 4.; and in whom, as our ark, the law is kept: the law, as a *covenant*, is in him, as the *Lord our righteousness*, for *justification*; the law, as a *rule*, is in him, as the *Lord our strength*, for *sancti-*

* The Author handles this point very copiously, Vol. II. Sermon. XXIII.,—XXVII. page 245.

fication : therefore, if we could get people into Christ, then we would get them both justified and sanctified. If, therefore, any think, why do you not preach up works and duties more ? I will only say, if you be offended at the preaching of Christ, I fear you are ignorant of works and duties both ; yea, and ignorant of God to whom you pretend homage and obedience ; for, as God is in Christ, so he is in none of your works and duties that you perform, while you are out of Christ ; and you must be where God is, that is, in Christ, before ever you can perform a duty that God will have any regard unto ; *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine : no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches : he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit : for without me ye can do nothing,* John xv. 4, 5. *He hath made us accepted in the Beloved,* Eph. i. 6. Wo to these to whom Christ is a stumbling-block ; but blessed are all they that shall not be offended in him.

8. Hence we may see, where *God*, and *all things* we need, are now to be found ; *The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand,* John iii. 35. Where God goes, all things go with him : God is gone into Christ ; therefore, all things follow him : and since God is in Christ, and all things with him, then where should we go but where God goes ? Where should the fish go, but where the water goes ? God, the fountain of living waters, is gone into Christ, and let us then follow him there : where he loves to dwell, let us love to dwell : where he stays, let us stay ; where he rests, let us rest : let us take pleasure in him, in whom God is well-pleased ; *To whom shall we go ?* says Peter, *thou hast the words of eternal life.* O Sirs, to whom should we go, but to him, in whom God is well-pleased ? To whom should we go, but to him, that hath the eternal God in him, eternal life in him, eternal blessings in him ; and all things that concern eternal happiness in him.

My friends, though you had never heard a word of the gospel before, there is more in this truth than a

whole world is worth, namely, That God is in Christ, in him well-pleased ; *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased* : and he, and all things in him, is offered in this gospel unto you. And, O Sirs, if your heart were open to receive him, happy would you be to eternity. I know not what the joyful sound of the gospel is, if it be not the news of God's being in Christ, and in him well-pleased ; and *blessed are the people that know it*, and embrace it ; and *curled are the people that despise and undervalue it* ; and all the people of God must say AMEN : *How shall they escape who neglect so great salvation* ? Happiness and misery in life, in death, and for ever, is now before you, O hearer of this gospel. If God be in Christ, and in him well-pleased ; and if this be the gospel of Christ, then God is in it dealing with you, man, woman ; with you and each of you, of whatever station or denomination ; high or low, rich or poor, young or old. As it is said, when God appeared to Elijah at Horeb, 1 Kings xix. 11,—13. there was a *strong wind* ; then there was an *earthquake*, but God was not there ; but after that, there was a *still small voice*, and God was there : so we may say, at this day, there are strong winds of temptation, whereby many are made to turn with the wind ; but God is not there : there are great earthquakes of confusion and commotion ; but God is not there : and there are fires of division, wrath, and contention ; but God is not there. O ! where is God then ? Why, there is a *still small voice* of the gospel sounding in your ears ; and if the name of Christ be recorded herein, God is there ; *My name is in him*, Exod. xx. 24.

May he give proofs of his powerful presence, by drawing out your heart to him, of whom the Father here proclaims, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased*,

S E R M O N CIII*.

Present DUTY before approaching DARK-
NESS.

JER. xiii. 16.

Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness.

THESE words are part of a weeping prophecy, wherein the prophet is attempting to awaken this secure and stubborn people to *repentance*, from the consideration of the judgments of God that were coming upon them, of which we read in the preceding part of the chapter: and now he comes to give them good and seasonable *counsel*, verse 15. *Hear ye, and give ear, be not proud; for the Lord hath spoken.* God has past his word, and the *decree is gone forth*: and then he calls them to repent, and *give glory to God, before he cause darkness.*

From the connexion we may observe these few things.

1. That God, in his most severe threatenings, and most awful providences, aims at mens *repentance*, and returning to him.

2. These who despise the threatenings of divine wrath, should *stay still* and *hear* what the Lord says to them; as you may see, Prov. i. 25, 26, 27. *But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my*

* This Sermon was preached at Cambusnethen, on Wednesday, August 3d, 1737. ; being a FAST-DAY, appointed by the *Associate Presbytery*, at the earnest desire of the SOCIETIES in those bounds. It hath undergone five impressions,

reproof: *I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you.* See also ver. 33. *They that hearken unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil; whereas these that hearken not, he will laugh at their calamity. Be not proud; for the Lord hath spoken.*

3. What *hinders* people's hearing, when God speaks either by word or rod? What but pride? *Be not proud*; do not think yourself too good to be taught. Be not scornful, be not wilful, be not secure when God threatens; be not impatient when God strikes: for pride is at the bottom of both.

4. We ought to consider *who speaks* to us by the word and rod: *The Lord hath spoken*; he whose authority and power is irresistible: therefore, bow your stiff necks and stout stomachs, which proceeds from hardness of heart, and a custom of sinning. Consider, might he say, it is not with Jeremiah you have to do; it is not with the minister you have to do; it is with the great God; *Be not proud; for the Lord hath spoken.* When you harden yourself against the word and the rod, you harden yourself against God himself.

Another *counsel* is in the words of my text, *Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness.*

Where observe two things; first, an *exhortation*: and then a *motive*. The *exhortation* is, *Give glory to the Lord your God.* Here is a merciful *counsel* God gives them, saying, *Give glory to the Lord*; opening up yet a door of hope to them: and here is a merciful *compellation* he takes to himself, *The Lord your God.* Here we may observe, that God, amidst his threatenings, does not forget that they are his people, and he their God; see Jer. iii. 12, 13, 14. He calls himself *the Lord their God*, that he may shame them for forsaking him, and that he may invite them to return. *Give glory to the Lord your God*; not to your idols, not to other gods. Give him glory by confession of sin, by repentance and reformation. This is a comprehensive duty, containing all other duties in the bosom of it.

We

We have here the *motive* to this duty, *before he cause darkness* ; before he bring such judgments upon you as you shall see no way of escaping. Darkness and distress will be the portion of these that repent not, to give God glory. When these who, by the fourth vial, were *scorched with heat*, repented not, to give glory to God, the next vial filled them with *darkness*, Rev. xvi. 9, 10.

The doctrinal observation we incline to prosecute from these words, is the following.

DOCT. *That it is the duty of a sinful people to give glory to God, before he cause darkness : to repent, before he bring judgments upon them.*

We ought to give glory to God *actively*, in a way of duty, before he glorify himself *passively*, upon us in a way of wrath. This is the great call of God in his word, Isa. lv. 6, 7. *Seek ye the Lord, while he may be found ; call ye upon him while he is near. 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.* 1 Chron. xvi. 29, 30. *Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name : bring an offering, and come before him ; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Fear before him all the earth.* Mal. ii. 2. *If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the Lord of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings.* Rev. xiv. 7. *Fear God, and give him glory, for the hour of his judgments is come.* Rev. xvi. 9, 10. *And men were scorched with heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues ; and they repented not to give him glory. And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast, and his kingdom was full of darkness, and they gnawed their tongues for pain.* Psal. xcvi. 7, 8, 9. *Give unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name ; bring an offering and come into his courts. O*
worship

worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness : fear before him all the earth.

The method we propose for the further illustration of this subject, through divine assistance, shall be as follows.

- I. We would speak a little of this glory that is to be given to God, and what it is to glorify him.
- II. Enquire *how* we are to give him glory, or by what *means* we are to glorify him.
- III. What is *imported* in the expression, *Give glory unto the Lord your God.*
- IV. Speak somewhat of the *motive* here assigned, *Before he cause darkness.*
- V. Deduce some *inferences* for the *application* of the whole.

I. We would speak a little of this *glory* that is to be given to the Lord, and what it is to glorify him.— God's glory is either essential or declarative. His *essential* glory is the incomprehensible majesty of his Deity. This is incapable of addition or diminution; for, our *heavenly Father is perfect*, and our *goodness extendeth not unto him*, Psal. xvi. 2. His *declarative* glory is, when either he himself, by his word, work, or Spirit, manifests his glory to men or angels; or when they endeavour to declare how glorious he is, by knowing, loving, fearing, serving, obeying, praising, and commending him; by worshipping him, by believing in him; by trusting in him, and depending upon him, and advancing his glory, by their thoughts, words, and actions.

We cannot glorify God, by adding any glory to him. It is his prerogative thus to glorify us; and thus he did in the first creation, when he crowned man with *glory and honour*, Psalm viii. 5. : and thus he does in the second creation and restitution of our lapsed state, when he gives the *beginning* of glory in *regeneration*; for grace is glory in the seed; and glory is but grace in the flower: therefore, we are said to be *changed into the same image from glory to glory*, 2 Corinth. iii. 18.

And

And thus he does in the consummation of our holiness and happiness in heaven; as Christ said, John xvii. 1. *The hour is come; Father, glorify thy Son*: so when the believer's hour is come, the hour of death, God will then glorify him with himself, as verse 5. *Glorify me with thyself, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.* So will believers be glorified in that glory which he prepared for them before the foundation of the world. It is, I say, God's prerogative to glorify us; but in that sense we cannot glorify God, no more than we can create a new Godhead; but our glorifying him is a *declaring* him glorious. We give him glory, when we *ascribe* glory to him. Brute creatures glorify him *passively*, but rational creatures ought to do it *actively*. Wicked men eclipse his declarative glory by sin, which yet is the greater wrong done to themselves than to him: for, as the sun is still full of light in itself, when you see it under an eclipse, by the moon's interposition between us and it, which, indeed, is not so properly an eclipse of the sun and wickedness of men; not by depriving God of any perfection, but they deprive themselves, whose highest end and perfection is to glorify God, and to be made conformable to him — *Thusto glorify God, is to shew forth his glory; and to ascribe glory unto him.*

II. The *second* thing I proposed was, To shew, *How* we are to glorify God; or, by what *means* to give him glory?

In general, we are to glorify God with our *whole* man, soul and body; 1 Cor. vi. 20. *Ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in spirit, which are his*; that is, both with the inward and outward man: with the *inward* man, by loving him with the greatest love, studying acquaintance with him, longing after him, delighting in him, fearing his name, and following hard after him: with the *outward* man, and that both with our lips, and with our lives; with our *lips* we ought to pray and praise God, speaking to him, and of him, and for him; our *tongues* should be pencils, to delineate and express the glory of God: many there

are whose tongues are but sponges, to wipe out and deface his glory, who seldom speak of God but in an oath, or make mention of his name but when they curse or swear by it. How like are they to hell already, who have no other use of God but to blaspheme him ! and blasphemy will be their work for ever, if they repent not to give him glory. Alas ! how few speak honourably of God in the society they converse with, though he be still intimately present with them, and one of the company ? Nay, idle tales and raillery is the business of their tongues ; *They speak vanity every one with his neighbour*, Psal. xii. 2. *I hearkened and heard, but they spoke not aright.*

Again, With our *lives* and *actions* we are to glorify God : Hence, Mat. v. 16. *Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.* John xv. 7. *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.* There may be many empty talkative professors, who would gladly pass for *trees of righteousness* : yet bear nothing but leaves, an external shew and flourishing outside ; these they wear for their own glory, but are wholly deficient in that which is most conducive to the glory of God, the fruits of the Spirit, and the *fruits of righteousness, which are by Christ, to the praise and glory of God*, Phil. i. 11. We are to glorify the divine perfections, by seeking conformity to them, so as to *be holy as he is holy*. And by performing these duties which his attributes oblige us unto ; for his incommunicable perfections, such as, infinity, eternity, immutability, &c. are inimitable, yet oblige us to duties towards him.

QUEST. *What are the special duties by which we are called, in the text, to give glory to God ?*

ANSW. The context clears they are faith and repentance. 1. *Faith*, verse 15. *Hear and give ear ; for the Lord hath spoken.* 2. *Repentance*, and humbling ourselves under his mighty hand ; *Be not proud ; for the Lord hath spoken.* Thus we are called this day to give glory to God.

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•I shall therefore enquire, 1. What this *faith* is ; and how it gives glory to God. 2. What this *repentance* is ; and how it gives glory to God.

1st, What this *faith* is ; and how it gives glory to God. What this *faith* is we may guess from the context ; *Hear, and give ear ; for the Lord hath spoken.* It is a *hearing* and a *giving ear* to what God speaks in his word. Unbelief stops our ears, like that of the *deaf adder*, that *will not hear the voice of the charmer* ; but faith is an opening the ear to hear God himself speaking. By unbelief we hear only what man speaks to us, but by faith we hear and give ear to God, and believe what he says in his threatenings and promises. We give no glory to God till we hear him. and give ear to him by faith. When we hear God speaking in the *law*, then we have the *faith of the law*, and are awakened : and when we hear God speaking in the *gospel*, then we have the *faith of the gospel*, and are quickened. When we truly hear a threatening God, then we believe and fear : and when we truly hear a promising God, then we believe and hope in the mercy of God through Christ. And this is the faith we are called to this day, that we may give glory to God.

QUEST. *How doth faith give GLORY to him ?*

ANSW. In general, because it answers God's *faithfulness*. It is said of Abraham, *He was strong in the faith, giving glory to God.*

More particularly, saving faith gives glory to God,

1. Because it brings nothing to him but *poverty, want, and emptiness*. Other graces bring something to him, but faith brings nothing ; love brings fire to him ; repentance brings tears to him ; obedience brings works : but poor faith brings nothing but a bare hand and an empty vessel. Indeed, when we bring any thing to God, we are apt to carry away something of the glory that belongs to him ; but faith brings nothing to commend the soul to God ; and the poorer any come to God, the more they glorify him.

2. Faith glorifies God ; because it seeks *all in him, and from him*. As it brings nothing to him, so it expects

pects every thing from him, saying, *All my expectation is from thee* ; I have no hope but in thee ; all my wants be upon thee.

3. Faith glorifies God, by venturing all upon his word. If that word fail me, says faith, I am gone ; but, *my hope is in thy word*. Faith hings by the girdle of his loins ; his faithfulness pledged in his word ; and his word as Yea and Amen in Christ ; and this brings more glory to God than all things else : *The promises are Yea and Amen in Christ, to the glory of God*, 2 Cor. i. 20.

4. Faith glorifies God, because all other acts of glorifying are only so, in so far as there is faith in them, and as they spring from faith ; for, *Without faith it is impossible to please God*, Heb. xi. 6. No work can please God without faith. Take away faith from your prayers, and God gets no glory, nor you any comfort by them, James i. 5, 6, 7. *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, &c ; but let him ask in faith, nothing wavering : for, he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind, and tossed. For, let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord*. Let faith be separated from your hearing, and God gets no glory by it ; yea, *whatsoever is not of faith is sin*.

2dly, What is this *repentance* ? And how does it give glory to God ? What this *repentance* is, may be taught us in the context, *Be not proud, for the Lord hath spoken* : the proud soul is the impenitent soul ; the proud man flights and disdains the word of God, and will not hear nor regard what God says ; the proud man is the rebellious man, saying with Pharaoh, *Who is the Lord that I should obey him ?* This repentance then is the direct opposite of pride : to be truly humble under the mighty hand of God, and thereupon subject to God. So that there are two branches of this repentance ; *Humiliation* and *Reformation*, and both these we are called unto this day ; and by both these we are to give glory to God.

QUEST. How doth HUMILIATION give glory to God ?

ANSW.

ANSW. 1. By a humble confession of sin, we give him the glory of his *holiness*, owning he is a holy God, and we are unholy sinners, and that he is *of purer eyes than that he can behold iniquity*, Hab. i. 13.

2. By humiliation, we give him the glory of his *dominion and sovereignty*, while we testify our reverence and subjection to his laws, as *holy, just, and good* : acknowledging his authority. While we stand out against God, we deny his dominion, but when we stoop to him, we acknowledge his sovereignty over us, and our subjection to him.

3. By humiliation, we give him the glory of his *justice and righteousness*, acknowledging he is righteous in what he does against us, Dan. ix. 14. Neh. ix. 33. Psal. xxii. 3.

4. By humiliation, we give him the glory of his *power*, that he can punish us for our sins, that he has authority and ability so to do, Dan. iv. 34, 35. We own he has ability to crush us under his feet, and dare not harden ourselves against him.

5. By humiliation, we give him the glory of his *truth and veracity* in his threatening ; thus old Nineveh, Jonah iii. 5. *They believed God, and proclaimed a fast* ; they believed, that, unless they humbled themselves, the word of the prophet would come to pass, that threatened their ruin ; thus did Josiah, 2 Kings xxii. 19.

6. By humiliation, we give him the glory of his *patience and forbearance* towards us. When a catalogue of our sins is presented to us, and brought forth before our eyes, then we stand astonished at God's forbearance, Lam. iii. 22. Oh ! *it is of the Lord's mercy that we are not consumed, and because his compassions fail not* ! —And thus we see this part of repentance gives glory to God, and his perfections.

QUEST. *How doth REFORMATION give glory to God ?*

By *Reformation* I understand, not only that *departing from evil*, but that *doing of good*, which flows from that faith and humiliation already spoken of. It is a bringing forth fruits of holiness and righteousness, to the glory

glory of God. And this Reformation gives him glory several ways.

1. It is an owning it our principal honour and happiness to be employed in his *service*, and so a proclaiming, that he is a good and bountiful Master. Men are thereby induced to believe, when we are painful and diligent in his service, that there is a great pleasure in it, and a great reward for it.

2. Holiness and reformation glorifies the power of his *grace*, because it is the effect of his grace. Our hearts being naturally rebellious and disobedient, therefore the power of grace is making them submissive, willing, and obedient: and hence all believers will say, with Paul, *By grace I am what I am*. It is *thro' Christ's strengthening me I can do all things*.

3. By holiness and reformation we glorify and magnify the efficacy of Christ's *death* and *intercession*; the virtue of *his* blood, and the power of *his* death, who *died for us, that we might not live to ourselves but to him*. We thus glorify his fulness: for, if so much grace be imparted to us, as to enable us to bring forth fruit to his glory, what must be in him who is the ocean? The continual supplies of grace tend to raise high thoughts of him.

4. By reformation and holiness we glorify the *faithfulness* of God in making good his promise. God hath promised, *I will put my Spirit within them, and cause them to walk in my statutes*: when therefore we walk therein, then the faithfulness of God, in making good his promise, is manifested.

5. By reformation and holiness of walk we glorify God, by expressing his *perfections* in our conversation: having the very image of God upon us, and stamped in our life; *Ye are a holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should shew forth the praises, [or the VIRTUES] of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light*, 2 Pet. ii. 9.

6. By reformation and holiness of walk we glorify God, by inducing *other people* to glorify him; *Let your light so shine before men, that they seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven*, Mat.

v. 16. *Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles, that, whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may, by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation,* 1 Pet. ii. 12. While others by their evil works, draw people from God, we, by our conversation, should draw them to him.

III. The *third* thing proposed was, To shew the import of the expression, *Give glory to the Lord your God.* And here you may observe the import of it, 1. With relation to the *act*, GIVING God glory. 2. With relation to the *object* to whom it is to be given, *to the LORD your God.*

1st, With relation to the *act*, GIVE glory to God. And,

1. It is a *giving*, not *professing* or *promising* only, but *giving* glory to God. This giving glory to God doth not ly in resolution only, for the time to come, or hereafter I will do so and so ; but it is present humiliation he calls us to: *Now is the accepted time, before the decree break forth ;* before darkness come on, give glory to the Lord.

2. It is *giving*, not *extorting* ; for, as it should be a present humiliation, so a voluntary one. Pharaoh was at length humbled, Exod. ix. 16. saying, *I have sinned against the Lord your God and against you :* but it was extorted. Sparks come naturally from a fire, but not from a flint, unless it be smitten : then is our humiliation right, when it is natural and voluntary ; *Give glory to God.*

3. It is *giving*, and not *commanding others* to do so, but *ourselves giving glory to God* : intimating, that it is not only present and voluntary, but proper and personal humiliation, Zechariah xii. 10. *Every family apart, and their wives apart ; every person apart, every man and woman apart.* This is the call of God to us, *Give glory to God.*

4. It is *giving*, and not *lending* for a time, importing an upright, ingenuous, and honest humiliation : not *bowing down the head like a bulrush* for a day, Isa. lviii. 5. ; but it is sure work, like that mentioned, Neh.

ix. 38. *Because of all this we make a sure covenant, and write it ; and our princes, Levites, and priests, seal unto it.*

5. It is a *giving*, not a *selling* ; importing, that it is a free, not a mercenary humiliation, that the Lord calls for. Some people would give some glory to God, providing they might thereby gain some glory to themselves, like that of Saul, 1 Sam. xv. 13. *I have sinned ; but now honour me before the people.* But we are to give glory to God ; and take shame to ourselves, and acknowledge as it is, Dan. ix. 8, 9. *that to us belongs confusion of face, because we have sinned : but to the Lord our God belongs mercy and forgiveness : to him belongs all the glory.*

6. Hence it is *giving* and not *parting* stakes, if we may be allowed the expression, with God ; importing, it must be full and entire humiliation. Men will confess their moral and not their intellectual sins ; the evils that relate to their morals, their drinking and whoredom, and other gross evils : but as to the evils that relate to their principles, they are shy to make acknowledgement of their errors and ignorance. They will hardly own they are fools ; but they that give glory to God, and none but these, will confess their total corruption of heart, as well as way.—Thus we see what is imported in these words, as it concerns the act, *Give glory to God.*

2dly, We may consider the import of the words, as it relates to the *object* ; *Give glory to the LORD your GOD.* It imports,

1. A glorifying him in his *sovereignty* : give glory to the Lord, as he is the Lord of heaven and earth ; the Lord of lords ; the Lord of angels ; the Lord of men and devils ; the Lord of our life ; the Lord of our breath ; the Lord of our time and talents ; the Lord of our health and wealth, and enjoyments ; the Lord of all that we have and are : the Lord of our house, and land, and children ; the Lord disposer of all things, to whose government we ought to submit. We do not give him glory if we not practically acknowledge his Lordship, and own him as our Lord and Sovereign.

2. It

2. It is a glorifying him in his *propriety* in us, as the Lord our God. This is what we are called and commanded to do in the very first command of the law, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me*; which requires us to “know and acknowledge God to be the Lord our God and Redeemer, and to worship and glorify him accordingly.” Never will we be truly humbled, nor give him the glory due to him, unless we come to him as the Lord our God, laying hold on his covenant, that says, *I will be thy God*. The faith of this relation in Christ, is presupposed to our coming; *Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings*, Jer. iii. 22. O the faith of this mercy of God in Christ would make us return to him as our own merciful God, saying, *Behold, we come to thee; for thou art the Lord our God*.—Thus much for the import of the expression, *Give glory the Lord your God*. I come now,

IV. To the *fourth* thing proposed, *viz.* To speak a little of the *motive*, namely, *Before he cause darkness*. I shall speak to this head, 1. By considering the several *significations* of darkness in scripture. 2. By offering some *remarks* concerning the darkness here spoken of.

1st, I shall consider the several *significations* of *darkness* in scripture.

1. Sometimes *darkness* is put for *sin* in general, and for *Satan's* kingdom; *He hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us to the kingdom of his dear Son*, Col. i. 13. The gospel is designed to *open men's eyes* and to bring them *from darkness unto light*, and *from the power of Satan unto God*, Acts xxvi. 18. Now, when we understand it in this sense, to *give glory to God before he cause darkness*, may have this import, *viz.* before he give up to the power of *sin* and *Satan*, by leaving us altogether under the *dominion* of *sin*. It is true, God is not, and cannot be the author of *sin*, nor can he be properly the cause of it, no more than the *sun* can be the cause of *darkness*; but as when the *sun* withdraws, *darkness*¹ succeeds; so when God departs, *sin* and *Satan* must have the sway.

2. Sometimes *darkness* is put for *ignorance* and *blindness* of mind, *incredulity* and *unbelief*; John i. 5. *The light shines in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not.* Matth. iv. 16. *The people that sat in darkness, saw great light.* Then the meaning is, in this sense, *Give glory to God*, before he give you up to *judicial blindness of mind*, and to *final unbelief*, according to that threatening, Isa. vi. 10. *Go tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; see ye indeed, but perceive not: make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.* Oh! dreadful judgment!

3. It is put sometimes for *error* and *impiety*, in opposition to truth and holiness; 1 John i. 5, 6. *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all; that is, no untruth or unholiness: and again, If we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lye, and do not the truth.* Now, in this sense, the meaning of it is, *Give glory to God*, before he give you up to the *errors of the times*, and to a *spirit of delusion*, like that threatened, 2 Thess. ii. 10, 11, 12. *Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved; for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, to believe a lye, that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness.*

4. Sometimes *darkness* is put for *sorrow*, *grief*, and *heaviness*; Micah vii. 16. *Though I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light unto me; that is, when I am overwhelmed with heaviness and grief, the Lord will be my comfort; as it is said, Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness to the upright in heart; where light and gladness signify the same things, even as darkness and heaviness signify the same: hence the meaning of the word in this verse is, Give glory to God, before he cause grief and sorrow to come upon you, as travail upon a woman.*

5. *Darkness* is sometimes put, in scripture, for the *loss of Christ* and the *gospel*, and the *blind miserable state* that follows thereupon; thus John xii. 35. *Yet a little while, says Christ, and the light is with you; walk while*

ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you, verse 36. While ye have the light, believe in the light : then the meaning is, Give glory to God, by believing and walking in the light, before he cause such dreadful darkness, as that of taking away the candlestick, or removing the gospel, the means of grace and salvation. This is one of the greatest plagues and judgments : but spiritual judgments, though heaviest, are generally least felt and understood. Therefore,

6. *Darkness is, in scripture, sometimes put for great afflictions, and heavy calamities ; Ezek. xxxii. 8, 9, 10. I will set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord, &c. Joel ii. 2. The day of the Lord cometh, a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness ; as the morning spread upon the mountains : a great people and a strong, there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations : a fire devoureth before them. Zeph. i. 14,—17. The great day of the Lord is near : the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities. And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord ; and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung. Lam. ii. 1, 2. I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. He hath led me and brought me into darkness, but not into light. And it is in this sense especially, that some take the words of the text ; and so the meaning is, Give glory to God, before he send more heavy dispensations, grievous afflictions, and terrible calamities ; personal, congregational, and national.*

7. *Darkness is, in scripture, sometimes put for death and the grave ; Job x. 31. Before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness, and the shadow of death. Also ver. 22. A land of darkness, as darkness itself, and the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness. Then, Give glory to God, before he cause darkness ; that is, before his mes-*

senger, *death*, be sent to rend soul and body assunder; for if you die before you give glory to God, by faith, repentance, humiliation, and renovation of heart and life, ye perish for ever. Therefore,

8. *Darkness* is sometimes also put for *hell*; Jude, verse 3. *To whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.* Matth. xxv. 30. *Cast ye the unprofitable servant into utter darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* Matth. xxii. 13. *Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into utter darkness; there shall be weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.* Why then, Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, or before the shadow of the everlasting evening be stretched over you, when he will get glory upon you passively, thro' eternity, if you do not give him glory actively, now in time.—Here, in the text, it seems to be especially meant of the darkness of *desolating judgments* and *calamities*, not excluding any of the rest mentioned.

2dly, The next thing I proposed, on this fourth general head of method, was, to offer some *remarks* upon the darkness here spoken of.

Remark 1. “That by darkness here we are especially, as I have said, to understand *affliction and judgment.*” God was to judge and afflict Israel, and bring them under a seventy years captivity.—And judgments are several times expressed by darkness, thus in scripture, Psalm cvii. 10. Joel ii. 2.

Remark 2. “Afflictions are, on several accounts, compared to darkness:” partly, because of their dreadfulnes; they are frightful, as men are afraid in the dark: and partly because of their dangerousness; there is great danger of stumbling in the dark, as in the following part of the verse, where the text lies; *Before your feet stumblie upon the dark mountains; and while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness.*

Remark 3. “That there are *signs* of darkness before it come, or when it is a-coming; such as *heaviness* and *drowsiness*, which seize people when the dark night approaches.” Alas! what a sign of darkness

is the present *security* of our day? Men crying, *Peace, peace*, it says *sudden destruction is at the door*. Coldness seizes people in the dark night: and so coldness of affection towards God and Christ, is an evidence of the darkness of our day: the sun down, and the stars appearing. Oh! when the *Sun of righteousness* is hid, and only the stars appear, only ministers heard, only their gifts seen and discerned; what a *darkness* is this! When the wild beasts come abroad, it betokens *darkness*: thus, when the church is infested with foxes and wolves; see to this purpose, Acts x. 29, 30. *I know this, that after my departure, shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock, &c.* Song ii. 15. *Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines.* See also, 2 Peter ii. 1, 2, 3.

Remark 4. “That *darkness* of trouble and wrath “come not upon a church without a *cause*.” Give him glory before he *CAUSE* darkness. *Afflictions* springs not out of the dust: God owns himself the author; *Is there evil in the city, and I have not done it?* There is a concatenation and chain of causes, but God is at the top of the chain; he causes darkness.

Remark 5. “That *sin* provokes God to cause darkness. Give glory to God before he cause it; intimating, That the dishonouring of God by *sin*, is the procuring cause of trouble and darkness, though God be the efficient cause. The darkness of sin is ours, but the darkness of judgment for sin is the Lord’s; *Who gave Jacob to the spoil, and Israel to the robbers? Hast not thou, O God, against whom we have sinned?* Isaiah xlii. 24.

Remark 6. “That God is not willing that darkness “come *unawares* upon a church and people, but before he cause darkness he warns them; Give glory “to the Lord, before he cause darkness.” He is not willing to destroy; *As I live, I have not pleasure in the death of sinners: Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?*

QUEST. But when darkness is determined, why doth God call sinners to turn to him, to repent, to give glory to him? What good service will that do, when to them the darkness and judgment is determined?

ANSW. If we give glory to God, then either,

1. It will *prevent* the darkness of judgment threatened, as in the case of Nineveh, and make the Lord to turn his hand, though he doth not turn his mind.

2. It may *delay* the darkness, so as there may be peace and truth in our days: or,

3. It may *mitigate* the darkness, and make it easy, and not so terrible: or,

4. It may *shorten* the dark night of judgment, as it is said, *For the elect's sake these days shall be shortened*: or,

5. It may contribute to *strengthen* and *fortify* us for the trial, when it comes, and makes us able to bear it.

6. It will turn the judgment into a *mercy*, and the darkness to *light*: for, *All things shall work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose, and to them that give glory to God.* These are the upright ones, of whom it is said, *To the upright there arises light in darkness.*

V. The *fifth* thing proposed was, To make *application*; which may be in an use of *information, trial, and exhortation.*

1st, We may improve this doctrine for *information.* And if it be so, that we are to *give glory to God*, particularly by *faith, repentance, and humiliation, before he cause darkness*, then we may hence see,

1. The excellency of CHRIST, in whom all the glory of God shines, and by whom God hath got all the glory that he requires. Hence the song of the angels before the incarnation, Isa. vi. 18. *The whole earth is full of thy glory.* Heaven, the whole heaven was full of it before, but now the whole earth. And hence the song of the angels after his incarnation, *Glory to God in the highest! on earth peace, and good-will towards men!*

2. Hence see the excellency of the *Christian religion*, in that it tends to give glory to the great God, and the excellency of the *gospel*, that shews the way how God may get glory.—On this score the *Popish religion* is to
be

be rejected, that robs God of his pardoning mercy, ascribing it to the Pope, as if he had power to pardon ; it robs Christ of the glory of his righteousness, ascribing so much to the merit of works ; and of the glory of his intercession, ascribing it to angels and saints.—On this head the *Arminian* doctrine is to be rejected, as robbing Christ of the glory of his free grace, in electing from eternity, and effectually calling in time, ascribing so much to man's free-will.—*Socinians* and *Arians* rob Christ of the glory of his divine nature, and of the merit and value of his blood, as a sacrifice satisfactory to divine justice.

3. Hence see the *infinite evil of sin* that robs God of his glory. Every sinner is a robber, and every sin a robbery committed upon God. It is a robbing him of his omniscience and omnipresence, as if he did not see and was not present observing ; of his justice as if he did not regard ; of his power, as if he could not punish ; the language of the sinner is, *God is altogether such an one as myself*.

4. See whence it is, that the great end of the gospel is to level and bring down *self*, viz. because this is the great idol that stands opposite to God : *If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself*. Self is the greatest enemy in the world to the glory of God.—We may bring the two opposite poles of heaven together, sooner than make a man serve himself, and yet aim at God's glory ; *No man can serve two masters*.

5. Darkness is to be the *portion* of these who give not glory to God. The darkness of death and destruction will come upon such useless persons, as bring in no revenue of glory to the exchequer of heaven. The unprofitable servant that hid his talent, was to be bound hand and foot, and cast into utter darkness.

6. Hence, how reproveable these, and such like persons, are,

(1.) Who bring *no glory* to God at all, being quite useless in the earth. It is not enough for a servant to say, I did no evil : he is an unprofitable servant that does no good. Negative holiness will do you no good ; you must not only be able to say, I was no drunkard nor swearer :

swearer : you must be positively holy, otherwise God gets no glory.

(2.) These are reproveable that rob God of his glory ; *Will a man rob God ? yet ye have robbed me*, Mal. iii. 8. Thus hypocrites rob him of his omniscience, as if God did not search the heart ; unbelief robs him of his faithfulness, as if he were a liar ; epicures, gluttons, and drunkards rob him of his glory, for they make their belly their god ; covetous people rob him, by making gold their god ; hence covetousness is called *idolatry*. Oh ! how is he robbed by the Arians, Socinians, and Deists of our day !

(3.) These that arrogate his glory to *themselves*, instead of giving glory to God, they take the glory to themselves. Thus some ascribe the honour of their success in the world to themselves, whereas, Deuter. viii. 18. *It is God that giveth power to get wealth*. Some ascribe to themselves the honour of their duties when assisted ; they do all to be seen of men ; seeking to themselves the applause of men, and the praise of men more than the praise of God. The oil of vain-glory feeds the lamp of many professors ; *Come see my zeal for the Lord of hosts*. The wind of vain-glory hath blown many to hell. Thus the ambitious Hamans and Herods of the earth seek, that men should give them divine honour, and take God's glory to themselves, while they would lord it over the consciences of men, and would have themselves more obeyed than God. Thus many assume to be *lords of God's heritage*, and to have the disposing of their spiritual rights and privileges, such as the *election of ministers* *, which is a privilege belonging to a Christian congregation, and not to any patron whatsoever ; *God only is Lord of the conscience*.

2dly, The next use we shall make of the doctrine is of *examination*. Well then, you may try if you give God the glory by these two things. 1. There are

* The evil of patronage is laid open, and the Christian people's right to chuse their own pastors clearly asserted, Vol. V. p. 304, 316, 357, 398, 424, 425.

some things will be burdensome to you. 2. There are some things you will desire and long for.

[1.] There are some things will be *burdensome* to you ; such as these following,

1. *Sin*, Because it brings *dishonour* to God : the sin of your nature, heart, and life ; *Against thee, thee only have I sinned*, Psalm li. 6.

2. *Self* ; you will be brought to abhor *self*, because it competes with God : Oh ! to have the single eye ! *Oh ! wretched man that I am !*

3. That you cannot glorify God as you *ought*, and that you come so far short of glorifying him ; this will be your burden : wo is me that I honour him so little !

4. The *dishonour* done to God in the world will be your burden and grief ; *I beheld transgressors and was grieved*. When you see God affronted, his name profaned, this will touch you : *The reproaches of them that reproached thee have fallen upon me*.

[2.] There are some things you will *desire* and *long for*, if you be giving glory to God ; such as ;

1. You will long to have his *kingdom* established in the *world* : you will have some concern for Zion and for God's honour ; *If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right-hand forget her cunning*.

2. You will long to have his kingdom *within you*, and his throne erected in your heart ; every thought brought into captivity to his obedience.

3. You will long to have the work of *holiness* carried on, without resting in any degree of attainment ; *Pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ : The righteous holds on his way*.

4. You will long to be *with him*, to behold his glory ; O ! when shall *the day break, and the shadows flee away !* O for the day when I shall be *like him*, and see him as he is ; and glorify him to purpose !

3dly. The third use we make of the doctrine, is for *exhortation*. O Sirs, be exhorted then to *give glory to God, before he cause darkness*. For motives to persuade you hereto.

1. Consider that the glory of God hath been much *darkened* by our sins, and the sins of this generation ; darkened to such a degree, as may justly provoke him to cause darkness. How hath he been dishonoured by our forefathers and us ! How is he dishonoured by the gross infidelity, error, ignorance, and irreligion of the day ! by the great contempt and neglect of precious Christ, and his glorious gospel ! the woful barrenness and unfruitfulness of ordinances ! lukewarmness and indifferency in the matters of God ! lamentable backsliding and defection from his ways and truth ! hypocrisy, carnality, and earthly mindedness ! all seeking their own things, and not the things of Christ Jesus ! gross immorality, cursing, swearing, whoredom, drunkenness, profanation of God's name and Sabbath ! treacherous dealing with God, and contempt of our solemn Covenants, National and Personal ! and departure from covenanted zeal, principles, and practices ! How is he dishonoured by our sinning against so much, and so many mercies and warnings !

2. Consider, how the darkness of *sin*, in dishonouring God, is attended with the darkness of *judgment*, portending yet greater darkness. How many shadows of the evening are stretched over us !—The shadow of *spiritual judgments* and *plagues* ; such as blindness of mind, hardness of heart, stupidity, security, and deadness ; and the giving up of men to the lusts of their own hearts, in the righteous judgment of God !—The shadow of *desertion* ; the Lord visibly withdrawing his gracious presence from his ordinances, and the assemblies of his servants and people !—The shadow of *disensions* and *divisions* among ministers and people : God dividing us in his anger !—The shadow of *heavy grievances* upon his church, notwithstanding of endeavours used for her relief, when he goes not forth with our armies !—The visible *glory* of the church, her doctrine, worship, discipline and government, sadly corrupted with carnal policy, framing the tabernacle of God otherwise than according to the pattern seen in the mount !—The *invisible* glory is much withdrawn, that few tokens appear of God's powerful presence in the sanc-

sanctuary, and a great famine of spiritual influence !— What a shadow of darkness is the *reduction* of the remnant ! Isa. i. 9. *When the good men perish, and few faithful pastors and sound professors are left ! Help, Lord,* says the psalmist, *for the godly man ceaseth ;* few to bear witness for God ; and when candidates for the ministry are lax and latitudinarian in their principles, affecting nothing but new modes of flourishing and haranguing, without studying the life, power, and mysteries of the gospel !

3. Consider, how much it *concerns us to give glory to God* : glorifying of God is the great end of our creation and being ; *The Lord made all things for himself* : and if all things, then man especially, the master-piece of the visible creation. It is for this end God hath given us rational souls and noble faculties, and the means of grace ; and all lest this end be not obtained. The glorifying of God is the chief end of all his works, *viz.* creation, providence, and redemption. All the other creatures, sun, moon, and stars ; yea, and brute beasts, they all glorify God according to their nature and capacities ; and, what are we doing ? We depend upon him absolutely for life and breath, and being every moment : *In him we live, move, and have our being* : and is it not highly reasonable that we live to him ? The glory of God is most excellent, his glory is above heaven and earth. His glory surpasseth the thoughts of men and angels. It is more worth than heaven ; more worth than the salvation of all men. His glory is dear to him. He hath given many excellent gifts to his children, but his *glory will be not give to another*. And, if his glory be so dear to him, should it not be dear to us ? And ought we not to promote it ? Our not glorifying of God will come to a sad account : for the sum of the grand account we are to be called to, is this, What revenue of glory have you brought in to me ? And, if God have no glory by us, he will have glory upon us. If you glorify him not actively, you shall glorify him passively : and, alas ! how sad will their case be, who shall serve for no other end, but to set forth the glory of his vindictive justice

to all eternity ! In a word, it will be our unspeakable advantage to glorify him, for we shall be glorified by him ; *These that honour me, I will honour.* How sweet will it be in a dying hour, if you could say, *Father, I have glorified thee on earth ; glorify thou me with thyself,* and with the glory thou hast prepared for me from all eternity.

4. Consider *whom* it concerns to glorify God ; put it not off from you.—Doth it not concern *magistrates* to give glory to him, by enacting good laws, and executing them faithfully ? See Jer. xiii. 18.—Doth it not concern *ministers* and *church-officers* to give glory to God, by asserting and maintaining the true doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of God's house ; to *buy truth and not to sell it*, though it should cost us our life, as it hath done many worthy ministers and martyrs.—Doth it not concern *people*, in their private stations, to give glory to God, and advance the kingdom of Christ Jesus, and to contribute their mite, though they were never so poor and mean, for the building of the tabernacle ? As, when it was reared in the wilderness, some that were able gave gold, silver, precious stones, scarlet, and fine linnen ; some that were poorer, and unable to give great things, they gave badgers skins and goats hair : so, according to your ability, you are to give glory to God, and to pray for the coming of his kingdom, when you can do no more.

QUEST. *How shall I give him glory before he cause darkness.*

If the question be about the *means*, I have already spoken of this in the doctrinal part : but if the question be about the *power* and *ability*, indeed you cannot give him glory if he do not give you grace ; you cannot glorify and sanctify his name, unless he sanctify your heart ; you cannot humble yourself for your sin, unless he accomplish his promise to you, see Ezekiel xxxvi. 25,—31. *I will sprinkle you with clean water, &c. A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, &c. I will put my Spirit within you ;—and then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings*

doings that were not good, and shall loath yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities and your abominations. O Sirs, therefore seek to have the promised blessings and graces of the new covenant, the promised Spirit poured out upon you, that you may humbly confess your sins, and give glory to God ; without this, your confession and humiliation will be defective : and there are four respects wherein *ordinary confessions* are defective. Either we come not *far enough in*, to make *personal* confession ; whereas *every family* and *person* should *mourn apart* : or, we go not *far enough down*, to our heart-sins, but stop in outward and general sins : or, we go not *far enough back*, as David, confessing the *sins* of his youth, yea, of his nature : or, we go not *far enough on*, but confess, and then run away to our *sins* again, without having any stamp or impress of confession upon our walk or conversation, and without continuing under a sense of *sin*, as David, *My sin is ever before me* ; and without walking softly all our days, as Hezekiah : therefore, that our confession may be of a right stamp, O let us supplicate the *Spirit of all grace*, that we may be in case to *give glory to God*.

And, in order to our having the Spirit, and having grace to glorify God, O let us, through grace, come to Christ, who hath the *Spirit above measure*, and who is the store-house of all grace. By faith and believing in Christ, we give more glory to God, than we can do any otherwise. By being *strong in the faith*, we give *glory to God* in all his attributes, because, in the way of *salvation*, through Christ, all the perfections of God shine gloriously : and therefore, when we believe in Jesus, and close with this way of *salvation*, we give him the glory of them all.—Why, thus we glorify the *wisdom* of God, in laying such a plan of our salvation, as tends to display the *manifold wisdom of God*, in uniting the most distant extremes, and making a *God-man* the centre in whom God and man meet together.—We glorify his *power*, in executing and finishing what Wisdom did so marvellously contrive, and destroying principalities and powers, and saving us, notwithstanding all the mighty oppositions that stand in the way.—Thus

we glorify the *holiness* of God, since in Christ, God hath shewed his purity, and hatred of sin, to be so great, that *he spared not his own Son*, when he only *knew sin* by *imputation*.—Thus we glorify the *justice* of God, in that a satisfaction of *infinite value*, hath been yielded by an almighty Redeemer, so as thereupon God becomes *just in justifying them that believe in Jesus, and declaring his righteousness in the remission of sin*.—Thus we glorify the *truth* of God, whose faithfulness is fully established, and the truth of all the law-threatenings, in that he hath exacted the punishment threatened: and thus Christ also, at the same time, hath sealed all the promises of the *covenant of grace*, in so much that they are all *Yea and Amen in him*.—Thus we glorify the *goodness* and *mercy* of God. *Goodness* appears in its glory, in providing a Redeemer for such as have *destroyed themselves*; and the greatest blessings are bestowed freely upon the most unworthy. *Mercy* appears to the utmost, while provision is made for bringing sinners to partake of the happiness they had forfeited, and *grace reigns through righteousness*: and thus a way is laid out in which justice and holiness should not be injured, and yet grace and mercy eminently exalted.—Here is the most rational scheme in the world, which contributes to advance, and exalts all the perfections of the great God.

O then, as we would give glory to God, let us come to Christ by faith: for, as this way is most for God's glory, so it is best for our behoof. Tell me, O sinner, have you no *sins* to be saved from? Since you have, O whither should you go but to him, who is the *Lamb of God, that takes away the sins of the world*?—Have you not souls to be saved? Why then, whither should you go, but to the Saviour of souls? Is there not a *life* to come? O then, whither should you go but to *him who hath the words of eternal life*? Is there not a *wrath* to come? O then, where should you go but to him that can only *deliver you from the wrath to come*? Do you think he is unwilling to receive you? O sinner, how can that be? If he yielded himself into the hands of them that sought his life, will he withhold himself

himself from the hearts of them that seek his mercy? Was he willing to be taken by the hands of violence? And is he not much more willing to be taken by the hand of faith? Are you destitute of faith? O Sirs, look to him as the *Author of faith*. Though you cannot come to him, make that errand, saying, "Lord, "I cannot come; but I come to thee for grace to "come: O draw me, draw me." Say not, I am unworthy; for if you would have nothing but what you are worthy of, you must have nothing but hell.

If you say you have a proud heart, a hard heart, a dead heart, a wicked heart. O put these among the rest of your sins, and come to him to be saved from them all.—None ever came to him for a cure, and went away without it. You would find something in yourself; but it is best you find nothing, but what you have reason to be ashamed of, that you may come to Christ for all, so as to glory only in him. Let thy emptiness further thy coming to him for all, instead of hindering thee. Come as thou art; come poor, come needy, come naked, come empty, come wretched; it is his joy and crown to receive thee.

Oh! there is a necessity for thy coming, there is no other *Saviour* but he, and thou perishest: come then, and *give glory to God before he cause darkness*; give glory to God before he cause judgments to fall upon thee. Give glory to God before he take away the candlestick of the gospel. Give glory to him before he take away ministers and sermons. Give glory to him before he lay you on a sick-bed, or a death-bed. Give glory to him before he pronounce that fearful sentence on you, *My spirit shall no more strive with man. He that is filthy, let him be filthy still; he that is unjust, let him be unjust still. Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone.* Give glory to him before he pronounce that final sentence, *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!* Give glory to him before he cause darkness.

5. Consider, that darkness is *threatened*. There are signs of darkness and of judgment a-coming.

(1.) Abound-

(1.) Abounding of all manner of *sin*. See *Hos. iv. 1, 2, 3.* *Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel; for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, mercy nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood. Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven; yea, the fishes of the sea, shall also be taken away.*

(2.) These aggravated so much, being against *light, love, and mercy*; so that the patience of God is abused; *Rom. ii. 4, 5.* *Despiseest thou the richness of his forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance; but after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath?* *Rom. ii. 4, 5.*

(3.) When God's patience is not only abused, but *affronted, and ridiculed, and laughed at*; *Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days, scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.—The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, &c.* *2 Pet. iii. 3, 4, 9, 10.*

(4.) When there are *few to stand in the gap*; *And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none,* *Ezekiel xxii. 30.*

(5.) When the *righteous are removed*; *The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come,* *Isa. lvii. 4.*

(6.) When the *gospel is despised, and Christ is rejected* by the generality, it bodes darknes; *The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and is wonderful in*

in our eyes. Therefore I say unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof, Mat. xxi. 42, 43. O then, Give glory to God, before he cause darkness.

And we would advise you to give him glory particularly in the six following respects.

1. By *confession* of sin ; Give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession to him, Josh. vii. 19. Confess secret sins in secret : and, when charged in an ecclesiastical way, do not cover sin.

2. By *thanksgiving* ; Psalm lxxix. 30. *I will praise the name of God with a song : and will magnify him with thanksgiving.* Psalm l. 23. *Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me.* When we pray, we act like men ; when we praise, like angels.

3. By *calling* upon God ; *Call on me in the day of trouble ; I will hear thee, and thou shalt glorify me, Psal. l. 14.*

4. By *suffering*, when he calls you to it ; *Glorify ye the Lord in the fires, Isa. xxiv. 15.* Dishonour not God then, by complaining : *Why should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his iniquity ?* Remember thou art man, and man is born to trouble, Thou art a living man, and that is a mercy ; yet in the land of hope. Thou art a sinful man that deservest hell ; and a man but suffering punishment for his sin : and let all these be arguments against murmuring.

5. *Glorify him by living to his praise*, living a fruitful life ; *Hereby is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.* Living a holy life ; studying to be holy by avoiding sin, and hating it wherever you see it, especially in yourself. You will hate a toad, or serpent wherever you see it ; but much more if it be crawling in your own bosom : so here, sin has its residence in the heart ; *Out of the heart proceedeth evils* : therefore, abhor that abominable thing which God's holy soul hates. Glorify him by a zealous life, *Contending for the faith* ; and by being conscientious in the discharge of relative duties, that the name of God be not blasphemed, but that the doctrine of God be adorned.

6. Give him glory by living by faith upon the Son of God ; you cannot glorify God, if you do not glorify CHRIST ; *He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him*, John v. 23. O then, Sirs, give Christ the glory of his name and offices.

[1.] Give Christ the glory of his *name*, by making his name your strong tower. Give him the glory of his name JESUS, by looking to him for salvation. Give him the glory of his name CHRIST, *The anointed*, by looking to him for *the Spirit, the anointing*. Give him the glory of his name, *The Sun of righteousness*, by praying him to arise on you with *healing in his wings*.—Give him the glory of his name, *The Resurrection and the Life*, by looking to him for life to your dead soul.

[2.] Give him the glory of all his *offices*. A man in his office reckons it his honour to be employed, much employed. O then, Sirs, give Christ the glory of his *Prophetical* office, by employing him to teach you, and to dispel the darkness of your mind.—Give him glory as a *Priest*, by employing him to pardon you, and wash you in his blood.—Give him glory as a *King*, by employing him to subdue all your iniquities, mortify all your corruptions, and destroy all your spiritual enemies.—Give him glory as a *Physician*, by employing him to heal all your diseases.—Give him glory as a *Captain*, by employing him to fight all your battles.—Give him glory as a *Treasurer*, by employing him to supply all *your wants out of his fulness*.—Give him glory as an *Agent*, by employing him to do all *your works in you and for you*, saying with the Psalmist, *Do thou for me, for thy name's sake* : and again, Psal. lvii. 2. *I will cry unto God most high, unto God that performeth all things for me*. If you cannot believe, nor employ him, O will you give him glory as the *Author of faith*, by pleading, that he may come and take employment, and work faith in you —Give him the glory of his *drawing* grace, saying, *Lord draw me, and I will run ; turn me, and I will be turned*. Remember you are called to give him glory before he cause darkness. Darkness will come whether you will or not, the darkness of distress,

stress, the darkness of a sick-bed, or a death-bed, the darkness of death itself, the darkness of a judgment-day. If you would have darkness to be light before you, O Sirs, *give him glory before he cause darkness*. O seek to be regenerate ; for you cannot please God while you are in the flesh : *Who can gather grapes of thorns ?* Seek acquaintance with Christ and union to him ; you cannot glorify God but in Christ : be acquainted with the rule whereby we glorify God and enjoy him. Seek to have the word hid in your heart, and particularly to be well acquainted with the gospel-covenant : plead the promises thereof ; *For the promises are Yea, and Amen*, in Christ, *to the glory of God*, 2 Cor. i. 20.

S E R M O N C I V.

The GREAT RUIN, and the GREAT RELIEF;
or, Help from HEAVEN to SELF-DESTRUCTORS ON
EARTH *.

H O S E A xiii. 9.

*O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy
help.*

HOWEVER uneasy it is for men to hear of their sin and danger, from the word of God, yet it is necessary they hear of both, as long as sin may be repented of, and danger may be prevented. Here in this chapter, the children of Israel are,

1. Reproved and threatened for their *idolatry*, notwithstanding the provision that God made to prevent their falling into it, vers. 1,—4.

2. They are reprov'd and threatened for their *wantonness, pride, and luxury*, and other abuses of their wealth and prosperity, vers. 5,—8. And though the wrath that is threatened as a-coming upon them, for these and other sins, is very terrible, yet, *in the midst of wrath, he remembers mercy*; and therefore, in the midst of words of wrath, he forgets not to intermix words of mercy; *O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help.*

There are two springs of gospel-repentance; one is, *a true sense of sin*; and another, *the apprehension of the*

* This subject was handled in two sermons. The first was preached at Bra'd Craigs, on Wednesday, March 22d, 1738; being a day appointed for solemn Fasting and Humiliation, by the ASSOCIATE PRESBYTERY, at the earnest desire of the Societies for Prayer, in and about Edinburgh.—The second was delivered on the Sabbath thereafter at Dinton. It hath been six times printed,

mercy of God in Christ: both these we are led to in these words. That we may have a *true sense of sin*, we are here taught how we have *destroyed ourselves* by it: that we may have an *apprehension of mercy in Christ*, we are taught, that *in him is our help*.

In these words you may observe two things.

1. The *persons* or *people* to whom God speaks, and how he speaks to them, *O Israel*. It is with affectionate concern, that God deals with sinners for their conviction and conversion.

2. The *thing* he speaks to them, *Thou hast destroyed thyself*; but *in me is thy help*. Here is,

(1.) The *spring* of their RUIN, it is of *themselves*; *O Israel! THOU hast destroyed thyself?* or, it hath destroyed THEE, *O Israel!* that is, thy sin and folly, thy own wickedness hath destroyed thee. Wilful sinners are self-destroyers. Obstinate impenitence is the grossest self-murder; thy blood is upon thine own head.

(2.) The *spring* of their RELIEF, *But in me is thy help*. Here is a plank thrown out after shipwreck.—There is help even for self-destroyers in me the *Saviour* and *Salvation*.

The words may be read, *O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself*, FOR *in me is thy help*: *q. d.* Say not, that I, who thus threaten wrath against thee, have destroyed thee; thy sin hath done it. It is the rebel that destroys himself, though he fall by the sword of his provoked sovereign. Thou art the cause and author of thy own ruin; *For in me is thy help*. I was always able and ready to help thee, and would have certainly saved thee, but thy sins and wickedness carried thee to other helps, which were but lies and vain confidences. I would have helped thee, and healed thee, but thou wouldst not. Thus it is a proof of their destroying themselves. Thou art thy own destroyer; for I am thy helper, that have been offering thee my help, which thou hast put away from thee, and so destroyed thyself by refusing my help, and rebelling against me thy help. In God alone, and not in us, is our help; and therefore, in ourselves alone, and not in God is the cause
of

of our ruin. In our reading, *BUT in me is thy help*, it seems not to run *argumentatively*, but *adversatively*, as the opposite of the former clause of the verse: yet it hath the same import with the other reading, and magnifies not only the power of God, that can help, when things are at the worst, and help these that cannot help themselves; but also the mercy and grace of God that will help these, that have destroyed themselves, and have no will to be helped, but have long refused his help. And, indeed, our case were miserable for ever, if God were not better to us than we are to ourselves.

From the words there are these six general observations we may make.

1. That, as sin is a ruining thing, so it brings *ruin* not only upon persons, but upon nations and churches that are guilty; *O Israel! thou hast DESTROYED thyself*.

2. God's dealing with men for their conviction is very home and close; *O Israel! THOU hast destroyed thyself*: and as God, when he makes conviction particular, and persons make close application, thou *man*, thou *woman* hast done so and so, and destroyed thyself by thy sin; so he wills *nations*, and *churches*, and *cities* to be convinced and humbled for their particular sin and guilt; *O ISRAEL! thou hast destroyed thyself*.

3. God's method of grace toward self-destroying sinners, having once discovered their sin, is next to reveal his thoughts of *love*: his words are a proper fence against two ruining extremes, presumption and despair. To prevent presumptions, he says, *O Israel! thou hast DESTROYED thyself*: to prevent despair, he adds, *But in me is thy HELP*. With the same breath he tells us of the ruin and of the remedy; and, with the same hand, reaches the blow and the blessing; or, gives the wound and the cure.

4. Such is the unspeakable mercy of God, that he hath more *pity* and *kindness* for us than we have for ourselves. Our unnatural cruelty to ourselves is as the soil to set forth the riches of God's mercy: *When no*
eye

eye pitied thee ; no, not thine own eyes, *I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live, Ezek. xvi. 5, 6.* When thou wast in thy blood, wallowing in thy own blood, and hadst brought thy blood upon thy own head, then I pitied thee. Men usually say, if a man will be wilful, let him be so, but God says, I will pity him.

5. Nothing ruins sinners so much as their *slighting the mercy of God*, their opposing his offer, and refusing his help. As God offers his help, which he hath laid upon One that is mighty, inasmuch, that the cause of our destruction is not in God, but in ourselves ; so the chief thing, by which we ruin and destroy ourselves, is our refusing God's help, rejecting his Christ, in seeking help and happiness elsewhere than in him ; *O Israel ! thou hast destroyed thyself ; but in me is thy help.* And thou hast rejected me, and run away to creature-helps, and creature-supports, and creature-comforts, and forsaken me the fountain of living waters.

6. The sixth observation we make from the words, is, what we shall speak to, and it is this ; *That as man's ruin and destruction is only of himself, and his own sin ; so his relief and deliverance is only owing to God, and his sovereign grace and mercy.—O Israel ! thou hast destroyed thyself ; but in me is thy help.*

This text and doctrine is a tree which hath two branches. I shall endeavour therefore, *First*, To consider the former branch, *viz. That man's ruin and destruction is only of himself, and his own sinfulness ;* and what fruit may be gathered from this branch of truth for our use and improvement suitable to the design of the day. *Secondly*, I shall go on to the other branch of the text and doctrine, *namely, That our relief and deliverance is owing only to God, and his sovereign mercy ;* and consider what fruitful lessons may be gathered thence for our use and improvement thereof.

First then, *That man's ruin and destruction is only of himself, and his own sinfulness.* This is plain from scripture ; Jer. ii. 17, 19. *Hast thou not procured this unto thyself,*

thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, when he led thee by the way? Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see, that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts. Ezek. xxxiii. 11. Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel? Again, Mat. xxiii. 37. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. Behold your house is left unto you desolate. For further clearing of this, I offer these following propositions.

The first proposition is, “That sin is a killing and “destroying thing.” Death and destruction came in by this door; *The wages of sin is death, Rom. vi. 23. 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. It wounded and slew our first parents in paradise: it destroyed them, first, as to the peace of their conscience: for it made them hide themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden, Gen. iii. 8. It destroyed them, next, as to the state of their souls; for it made them both legally dead, under the law-sentence, and so liable to eternal death; and spiritually dead, under the power of sin, Eph. ii. 1. according to that threatening, Genesis ii. 17. In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die. And lastly, it destroyed them as to the life of their body: for presently became mortal, subject to all outward miseries, which are a temporal death, and to the dissolution of soul and body, which is natural death: and, at last, dropped their body into the dust, according to that, Gen. iii. 19. Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return. As their sin destroyed themselves, so it did their posterity; and their sinning posterity destroy themselves by their own sin. Thus every particular sinner*

finer is a *self-destroyer*.—The *slothful* man is said to be his own murderer ; Proverbs vi. 32. *The desire of the slothful killeth him*.—The *adulterer* is his own murderer ; Prov. vi. 32. *Who so committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding ; he that doth it, destroyeth his own soul*.—The *drunkard* is his own murderer ; Prov. xxiii. 29, 30. *Who hath wo ? who hath sorrow ? who hath contentions ? who hath babbling ? who hath wounds without cause ? and, who hath redness of eyes ? They that tarry long at the wine, they that go to seek mixt wine. How sweetly soever it go down, at last, It bites like a serpent, and stings like an adder*.—The *extortioner* is his own murderer : he *heaps up treasures of vengeance for himself*, Jam. v. 3, 4.—The *voluptuous*, the *wanton debauchee* is his own murderer ; Jam. v. 5. *Ye have lived in pleasures on the earth, and been wanton ; then it follows, Ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. They that make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof, they but nourish themselves for the day of slaughter*.—The *false prophet* and the *false teacher* murders his own soul, as well as the souls of others. Hence such are said to *bring upon themselves swift destruction ; many following their pernicious ways ; their judgment, now of a long time, lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not*, 2 Pet. ii. 1, 2, 3. In a word, *all impenitent sinners* are said to *treasure up wrath to themselves against the day of wrath*, and the *revelation of the righteous judgment of God*, Rom. ii. 5.—All this says, that sin is a killing thing, and sinners are self murderers and self-destroyers : and it cannot be otherwise, because *sin is a transgression of the law*, and the transgressors of the law are liable to temporal judgments here, and eternal hereafter ; *Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death*, James i. 15.

The *second* proposition is, “ That as sin is a hurtful “ and destructive thing, so the destruction it makes is “ *very extensive*.” Sin destroys and abuses every thing ; it makes an universal abuse : no wonder, for it is an abusing of God ; and, if it could, would destroy him : therefore we call it *Deicide*. It would pull God out of his throne ; it abuses his authority, interposed in his

law ; it abuses his justice, as if he would not punish ; and abuses his power, as if he could not : it is an abuse of his wisdom, as if his law were not right and reasonable ; an abuse of his knowledge and omniscience, as if he did not see and observe : it is an abuse of his long-suffering, patience, and forbearance ; an abuse of his sparing mercy and kindness : and when it abuses God, the chief good, it must abuse every thing. It is an abuse of his threatenings, as if they were not to be feared ; and an abuse of his promises, as if they were not to be regarded : it is an abuse of his holiness ; a direct contrariety to his nature and will : it is an attempt upon his being ; *The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God* : he wishes there were none.—Sin is an abuse of CHRIST ; it is a refusing and rejecting of him ; an abuse of his person, natures, and offices : it is an abuse of his death, his blood, his righteousness : a neglecting of the *great Saviour*, and the *great Salvation*.—Sin is an abuse of the SPIRIT : it is a *resisting of the Spirit* ; a *quenching of the Spirit* ; a *vexing of the Spirit* ; a *doing despite unto the Spirit of God*. It is such an universal abuse of GOD, FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, that, no wonder, they that see sin with the Psalmist, cry out with him, saying, *Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight*, &c. Psalm li. 4.

When sin thus abuses the God of heaven, no wonder, that it abuse man upon earth. Your sin, man, woman, is an abuse of your rational soul, which is capable of *glorious enjoyment in heaven* : but by sin it grovels on earth among the dust, wallows in a filthy kennel. Sin is an abuse of the *body*, which should be the *temple of the Holy Ghost*, it becomes thereby the temple of the *devil*.—Sin destroys the very body : it is an abuse and destruction of time, that precious time that should be spent in preparing for eternity. It is an abuse and destruction of health and strength ; God lends you health and strength, and you employ them against God ; yea, *strangers*, as the prophet says, Hosea vii. 9. or *strange gods have devoured their strength* : it may be, *strange women, strange lusts, strange lovers, devour your strength*. —Sin

—Sin is an abuse and destruction of wealth, riches, and worldly prosperity. God, as it were, hires the wealthy to be dutiful to him ; but Jeshurun-like, *they kick against him, when they wax fat* ; Deut. xxxii. 15. Jer. v. 7, 9. *When I fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots houses, &c. Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord ? shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this ?* Thus it was an aggravation of Israel's sin ; *they gave all to Baal, all to their lusts : She did not know, that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal*, Hosea ii. 8. Some give all the silver and gold that God hath given them, yea, more than they can well spare, to their profane diversions, idle, vain, and wanton amusements, lewd and wicked practices.—Again, sin is an abuse of warnings, afflictions, and judgments. It is an abuse of light and knowledge : it is a crossing of the light of nature and of scripture both. Men cannot sin at so cheap a rate, as in the days of *popish* darkness, when the scriptures were locked up in an unknown tongue ; *If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin ; but now, they have no cloak for their sin.*—In a word, sin is an abuse of the word, the preached word, the written word : it makes men wrest the scriptures to their own destruction : to impugn the necessity of divine revelation, and turn Deists, Arians, Atheists, and incarnate devils. It is an abuse and destructions of wit, reason, talents, sermons, Sabbaths, and every thing.

The *third* proposition is, “ That this certain and “ universal destruction that sin works, is *gradual*.”—Sin destroys them like a consumption by degrees ; though it brings *sudden and surprising destruction* at last, 1 Thess. v. 3. yet it brings the *heaviest destruction* by several steps ; *He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed ; and that without remedy*, Prov. xxix. 1. We use to say, *Nemo repente fit turpissimus* ; “ None instantly become most flagitious :” men come not to the utmost of vileness, but by degrees.

James i. 15. *When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.* In nature corrupted, there remains some sparkles of *divine light*, some bridles to restrain black and bloody, foul and abominable sins, viz. *fear* and *shame*, the spies of the *natural conscience*; these must be abated by little and little, before a man grow impudent in sin, declaring it as Sodom. The person that hath got some *Christian education*, he *first*, perhaps grows out of conceit with *religious duties*, and neglects to perform them: *then* he begins to wish there were no precept or injunction to such duties; *next*, he falls a questioning, whether there be such a heaven or hell, as preachers hold out to him? Then he begins to pick up all the arguments that can make for *Heathenism*, and against *Christianity*, or *divine revelation*; then he hearkens to nothing that will make against him, and chuses to deal with them that are too weak for him; for he hates the *light*, and is afraid of it: after this, he takes loose reigns, and joins himself with the companies that practise wickedness, and agree with him in his folly: and then, finally, he laughs and scorns at all the ministers of the word; and now he is come to his *Acme*, his height in wickedness. Now, he follows his lusts with greediness, resolving, if he shall be damned, he shall be damned for something: like these, Jerem. xviii. 12. saying, *There is no hope; but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart.*

Thus there are several steps of Satan's ladder. The man comes first to *walk in the counsel of the ungodly*; then *he stands in the way of sinners*; and lastly, he *sitteth in the seat of the scornful*, Psalm i. 1. Satan leads men up the steps of his ladder, till they fall down and break their neck. After temptation is offered, first comes approbation in the understanding; after that, consent in the will; after that, comes practice in the affection; after that, custom in the repeated act; then follows, delight in that sinful way; after this, comes the defence of it, with all the rhetoric hell can invent; after that, comes boldness in sinning with a whore's forehead;

head; and, last of all, comes scorning, and a *drawing iniquity with cords of vanity*, Isaiah v. 18. Boasting in wickedness, and *glorying in their shame*.

Satan acts first like a creeping serpent, and then like a flying dragon. His first request seems mannerly and modest, as Semiramis desired of Ninus to reign but one day, and that day to do what she pleased; and in that day she cut off his head. Sin deceives men till they be hardened through its deceitfulness. It appears, at first, but little in the fountain, in the heart and thought; then it bubbles out into a stream in evil words; then it increases into a river in evil actions; next, it swells into a torrent, and overflows all in a long custom, till it drown men in perdition, and thus it gradually destroys them.

The *fourth* proposition is, "That this destroying evil is of ourselves, and our own *obstinate will*." Men are apt to charge God foolishly, as if he were the author of their *sin and ruin*, though yet he solemnly clears himself, by oath, from having the least hand in it, Ezek. xxxiii. 11. *As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?* 2 Peter iii. 9. *He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.* When God's fury breaks forth like fire against impenitent sinners, it is their own hand that kindles it; *Ye have kindled a fire in mine anger, which shall burn for ever*, Jer. xvii. 4. It was the cry of Sodom's sins, *that brought down the Almighty in flames of fire upon them*. God doth not destroy the sinner, till the sinner hath wearied God out of all patience, as it were: and hence he says, Jer. xv. 6. *I am weary with repenting; thou hast forsaken me, saith the Lord; thou art gone backward; therefore will I stretch forth mine hand against thee, and destroy thee. I am weary with repenting: God bears with sinners, till he can bear no longer; The Lord could no longer bear; why? because of the evil of your doings, and because of the abominations which ye have committed; therefore is your land a desola-*

desolation, and astonishment, and a curse, without an inhabitant, as at this day, Jer. xlv. 22.

And as our *destruction* is not of God, far less is our *sin*; it is wholly of ourselves, James i. 13, 14. *Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil; neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.* When men break out into lying, stealing, killing, swearing, whoring, and the like, it proceeds from the *lusts that war in their members*, James iv. 1.; and from the *motions of sin that work there*, Rom. vii. 5.: it proceeds from the *corrupt fountain of the heart*, Matth. xv. 18, 19. Christ says, *Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornication, theft, false witness, blasphemies.* Thus Isa. lix. 17. *Their feet run to evil: why? whence is that? It follows, their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; and hence, as it is said, verse 6. Their works are works of iniquity.*

It was said of the old world what may be said of this, *God saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth: Why? whence was this? Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*, Gen. vi. 5. *There were evil motions continually working in their minds; and hence they became so monstrously wicked.*

Man's sin is of *himself*, by reason of *imbred corruption*, which gives matter, life, and being to every sin; inso-much, that were it not for this, neither the ill customs of the world, nor yet the temptations of Satan could fasten upon us. Hence you see our Lord Jesus, though he lived and conversed in the world with all sorts of people, yet no allurements thereof could provoke him to sin. Satan also, in vain attacked him with all his temptations, but he had not tinder in him to give fire to these matches; according as he saith himself, *The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me*, John xiv. 30. He hath no *corrupt matter* to work upon: he may shoot his darts, but they return to his own hurt. Were it not then for the corruption of our sinful nature, neither the devil nor the world could draw

us to sin : and Satan knows this well enough ; hence he suits his temptations to our natural inclinations.

Now as man's sin is of *himself*, and his ruin of *himself*, so especially it is of his *obstinate will* ; John v. 4. *Ye will not come to me that ye might have life*, says Christ. Nothing from without or within, is so much the cause of man's ruin as the *will*. As for the *body*, it is but a *lump of dust*, that cannot act without the *will* ; the eye cannot look ; the feet cannot walk ; the tongue cannot speak without the consent of the *will* : and as for the other faculties of the soul, all of them are influenced according to the motion of the *will*.—I find the *ignorance* of the *mind*, attributed to the *obstinacy* of the *will*, 2 Pet. iii. 5. *This they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old*. Men hate the *light*, and will not come to it, lest their deeds be reprov'd ; *Light is come into the world, but men love darkness rather than light*.—Again, the *affections* are under the command of the *will* ; *fear, love, joy, delight, desire* are, as it were, lackies unto this *commanding faculty*.—The *memory* is regulated by the *will* ; it remembers only these things best, that the *will* is most delighted with ; and what the *will* doth not affect, the *memory* doth not retain.—All the thoughts are under the power of the *will* : all the imaginations of the soul fix themselves on this or the other object, as the *will* is pleas'd and delighted therewith or not.—Thus, nothing without or within is the cause of man's ruin and destruction so much, as the *will*.—It is the *will* that rejects the *word* of God ; Proverbs i. 30, 31. *They would have none of my counsel ; they despised my reproof, therefore they shall eat of the fruit of their own way*. It is said, Prov. xi. 5. *The wicked shall fall by their own wickedness*. Psalm lxxxi. 11. *My people would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me*. Mat. xxiii. 37. *I would have gathered you, but ye would not*. Isa. xxx. 15. *For thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, in returning and rest shall ye be saved, in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength ; and ye would not*. Jer. vi. 16, 17. *Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old*

old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls ; but they said, We will not walk therein. Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Harken to the sound of the trumpet : but they said, We will not hearken. So perverse is the will, and so bent are men upon eternal ruin, that they will do more to escape temporal than eternal danger ; more to escape a temporal than eternal fire : yea, they will do more to be damned, than to be saved ; and chuse to do any thing, rather than come to Christ the Saviour ; and here is the chief ruining sin, *a wilful rejecting the mercy of God, the Christ of God.* Hence men are said to love death ; *All that hate me, love death,* Prov. viii. 36.—Hence the question, *Why will ye die ?* Ezekiel xviii. 31.

Men's unwillingness to come to Christ for salvation appears by these two things, among many others.

1st, They are *naturally* unwilling to come to the outward means of grace ; *Thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee,* Psalm l. 17. This hatred of the outward means, saying in effect to the Almighty, *Depart from us ; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways,* Job xxi. 14. ; and refusing with the prodigal, to return to our Father, till compelled ; this *natural hatred*, I say, even of the outward means, is evident from the choice they make of outward things ; for example, man, tell me, what *place* do you chuse ? Is it not natural to you that are *ungodly*, to chuse to be in any place, rather than where the *gospel* is powerfully dispensed ; You chuse the *tavern*, rather than the *temple* ; the place of vanity and foolry, rather than the place of ordinances and divine worship, unless it be, when you come to hear a sermon for your diversion ; and so for feeding some lust or other, not for food and edification to your soul.—Tell me also, what *family* do you chuse ? Such as have the disposing of themselves had rather be in a family, where there is nothing but profaneness and wantonness, than in such where the fear of God is taught, and where God is duly worshipped, morning and evening—Again, what *service* do you chuse ? Some had rather undergo any drudgery, than be employed in spiritual worship. “ Nay, you may
“ take

“take the carnal man, *says one*, and tie him to a stake, and kill him with praying and preaching.”—What *delight* do you chuse? Are they not rather any vain, carnal delights, than in divine and spiritual things?—What *books* do you chuse? Would you not, many times, rather read any wild romance, than sit down and search the scriptures? Any book rather than the book of God.—And, in a word, what *company* do you chuse? Is it not any carnal company, rather than the company of the godly? Any diverting or dedaunched company, rather than spiritual and edifying company? He that is upright in the way, is an abomination to the wicked. Any conversation, or communication is chosen, rather than such as is instructive in religion. If any would attempt this in some companies, they would but expose themselves to be flouted as unpolite and unfashionable, in this profane age.—If conscience answer to these, and the like questions, it will bear witness to this truth, that men are naturally unwilling to submit to the outward means of grace.

2dly, It appears from this, that when men are under the means, they are unwilling to be *wrought upon* by these means; both unwilling to be enlightened, and unwilling to be drawn.

(1.) They are unwilling to be *enlightened*, and *bate the light*, John iii. 20. Thus doth the present generation *bate the light*, of a testimony for truth, and against their defections, as Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, hated the plainness of Amos, saying, *The land is not able to bear with all his words*, Amos vii. 10.

This unwillingness to be enlightened is plain,

1. Because they *shut their eyes*, against the light, and will think well of themselves, whatever wickedness be charged upon them, or whatever sin be shewed them.

2. If they cannot keep out the light; yet they let it in by *balves*, using all arts to diminish their guilt, to lessen their sin, that so they may have the more favourable opinion of themselves; they will put the blame upon some other, if it be possible, as Adam upon Eve, and she upon the serpent.

3. If the light hath so far entered, that the man sees himself a miserable creature, then he does what he can to deliver himself from the *power of conviction*, and the *sense of sin* : nay, if he get his corrupt will, it shall neither stay so long with him, nor work so powerfully on him, as to oblige him to come to Christ.

4. When conviction hath so far prevailed with him, as that he hath some thoughts of coming to Christ, yet then he delays, and puts it off, through the power of remaining aversion and enmity ; it is not yet time ; and thus some delay to their eternal ruin.

5. If light come yet a further step, to make him judge he is in danger of perishing for ever, if he come not to Christ presently ; yet, if God suffer his present fear to abate, then his resolution abates also, and he *returns to his folly*.

6. If his fear return more strongly upon him, so that he hath no rest nor quiet, yet how unwilling is he to come to Christ wholly ? If he get not a farther touch of divine power, he remains but half willing. He would have Christ for his Saviour to deliver him from hell, not for his Lord to *reign over him*, and deliver him from sin.—Thus men are unwilling to be enlightened, and averse from letting in all the light.

(2.) Though enlightened, yet they may be unwilling to be *drawn* to Christ : and hence resist many strokes, and common motions of God's Spirit. Thus a man may have much, and long experience of the *bitterness of sin* ; and yet be unwilling to come to Christ, and be saved from it.—He may not only know that sin hath done him much *mischiefs*, but that it will do him much more ; and yet be unwilling to come to Christ.—He may have in his eye the *precious promises* of glorious things to be obtained in a way of coming to Christ, and have some comfortable feeling of these things, even a *taste of the powers of the world to come*, and *receive the word with joy* ; and yet be unwilling to come to Christ,—Further, God may set before him the *dreadful threatenings* of eternal death and wrath, yea, and he may have some foretaste of the *wrath to come*, like Cain and Judas ; and yet, if God leave him there,
he

he remains unwilling to come to Christ, and perishes for ever.

People may be converted to some general regard for religion, and yet be heart-enemies to *the power of godliness*, having a direct enmity against religion, in the *height, and depth, and length, and breadth* of it.—Enemies to the *height* of it, or to a high profession, especially in a time wherein it may be dangerous to confess Christ openly before the world. They reckon this were but to expose themselves.—Enemies to the *depth* of religion, and to the mystery thereof: they are not for wading into the depth of it, but only for stepping about the skirt, the hem, the outside of it.—Enemies to the *length* of it. The hypocrite will not *always call upon God*. What! to be always watching, constantly praying; this is intolerable.—Enemies to the *breadth* of it, as it extends to their thoughts, words, and actions, to all times, places, and companies: this is intolerable also.—Thus men discover their hatred of religion, who yet have no will to be thought irreligious; and so men wilfully destroy themselves.

I proposed to *apply* or gather some fruits from this branch of the text. Many lessons may be hence learned: I shall therefore, from what I have said, deduce a few things for *information*, and *humiliation*.

1st, For *information*. Hence we may learn the following six particulars.

1. What a forlorn *condition* the fall of Adam hath brought us into! We have run away from God, and will not be called back to him. Men are become so mad and distracted, as to chuse death, and to be in love with sin, our mortal enemy; *This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness*. None are greater enemies to sinners than themselves; they are their own murderers, butchers, and executioners. They will be away to the devil, to their sins, to their lusts; their own feet carry them to hell; the Bible calls them *dogs* and *swine*, because they run as dogs to the vomit, and as swine to the puddle.

2. Hence see, that it is no easy matter to *convert* a sinner. True converts had good reason to give God the glory of their conversion; for, *He that hath wrought them to the self-same thing is God*. No thanks to free-will. Let the Arminians try what hand they can make of it. Man had once free-will to good and evil both, in a state of innocence; but now, in his corrupt state, he hath no free-will but to evil. He hath a heart full of *enmity against God*, and against all the means of his own salvation.

3. Hence learn, whom sinners have to blame for their ruin, and how vain their shifts and excuses for their sin are, since it is such a dangerous and destructive thing. Call no sin little, when *the wages of the least sin is death* and destruction. You may put what name you will upon sin, and call drunkenness, good fellowship; and pride, gallantry; and covetousness, good husbandry, or frugality; but so many sins, so many wounds you give your poor soul. What pleasure or profit can be in that which will be bitterness in the end; that is honey in the mouth and poison in the belly?

4. Hence see how *inexcusable sinners* are, when God *arises to judgment*. Since they wilfully destroy themselves, *every mouth shall be stopped*. God offers them salvation; they will not have it. God will *be just when he judges*; for sinners reap the *wages of their own works*; and the sinner's conscience will eternally torment him. If now they are their own murderers, is it a wonder they shall afterwards be their own tormentors? Tho' now they do their best to lull conscience asleep; yet it will waken upon them, and charge them for ever with their own ruin. This will be a never-dying worm in their breast. How much are they to be pitied, when, instead of pitying themselves, they are putting hands to themselves, by their own desperate wickedness.

5. See how little reason sinners have to be *jocund* and *merry*, in a course of sin. Do you see the wicked mockers of God and religion, how they are dancing towards *the chambers of death*? Alas! does self-murder deserve a song of triumph? Prov. xxvi. 18, 19. *As a mad*

mad man who casteth fire-brands, arrows and death ; so is the man that deceives his neighbour, and saith, Am not I in sport ? Ah ! what mad men are these that are deceiving and destroying themselves, and saying, *Am not I in sport ?* It is a strange counsel that Solomon, after the sad experience he had of his own folly, gave to the young man, Eccl. xi. 9. *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes ; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.* Here is a comedy in the first part of the verse ; but a tragedy in the last part of it. When iniquity hath played her part, vengeance leaps upon the stage ; *Rejoice, O young man !* Why ? this is a brave allowance. Well, but remember the judgment to come ; *q. d.* take thy pleasure, but consider thy doom ; sin on, if thou darest. The comedy is short, but the tragedy is long. Put the *rejoice* and the *remember* together, and chuse, whether you will *rejoice* or *remember* ? Whether you will take your short heaven now, or your long hell hereafter ? Whether you will chuse the pleasures of sin now, which cannot look death and judgment in the face without being damped ; or the pleasures of *religion* with all the tribulation that may attend it ; that can look upon death and judgment with joy ? Ah ! poor pleasures ! that cannot stand a serious thought of death and judgment. Remember, that *for all these things ;* why ? the Judge sets down all upon the table of remembrance ; *item*, for your drunkenness ; *item*, for your whoredom ; *item*, for swearing ; *item*, for Sabbath-breaking ; *item*, for mocking, and a thousand things ; *For all these things God will bring thee into judgment.* What a fair thread have you spun, that must answer for all ? Who yet are not able to answer for one. *Rejoice*, but *remember* ; oh ! here is a sad *but*, that spoils all the sport. A guilty conscience cannot abide to hear of judgment ; because then the sinner hears his own condemnation.

Therefore, sinner, laugh at leisure, lest God laugh next at you and your *destruction*, according to Prov. i. 24, 25, 26. Some laugh at the word, which is yet fulfilling

filling upon them ; for it says, *There shall be in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, saying, Where is the promise of his coming ?* They esteem no more of his threatenings denounced in the preached word, than of flashes, of lightening in a theatre, or thunder in a stage-play. But death and an awful tribunal will be found no matter of sport ; and the more any fear the threatened wrath of God, the less shall they feel ; *To this man will I look, even to him that trembles at my word :* but the less you fear, the more shall you feel ; Psalm xc. 11. *Who knoweth the power of thine anger ? even according to his fear, so is his wrath.*

6. Hence we may learn, what it is that ruins famous churches ; O Israel ! *thou hast destroyed thyself.* What brought desolation upon them, but their own sin ? And particularly, their wilful departure from God, and refusing help, his offered salvation. Psalm lxxxi. 11, 12. *My people would not hearken to my voice, Israel would none of me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts lust ; and they walked in their own counsels.* Matthew xxiii. 37, 38. *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have done it ? but ye would not, Behold, your house is left to you desolate !* It is left empty ; empty of all its multitude, that use to come to solemn feasts, Lam. i. 4. ; empty of pure ordinances, though once the city of our solemnities ; empty of powerful influences of my Spirit, and wo to you, when I depart ; empty of diligent labourers and faithful preachers, having, instead of ministers, seducers ; instead of pastors, impostors ; instead of labourers, loiterers ; *Behold, your house is left to you desolate :* it is left to you, being left of God, it is yielded up to you. Churches and cities left and deserted of God, are yielded up to the worst of sinners ; and what will they do with holy things, or holy places, and holy ordinances, and holy Sabbaths, when left to them, and
God

God himself is gone ? How will they profane his *Sabbaths*, pollute his *ordinances*, destroy the *doctrine*, *worship*, *discipline*, and *government* of his *house*, break down the *carved work* ; and turn the *house of prayer* to a *den of thieves* ? Behold, *your house is left unto you desolate*.

2dly, This subject may be improven for *conviction* and *humiliation*. Ought we not this day to be *humbled* before God, and *convinced*, that this is the case with us. —And that God is saying to us, as he did to Israel, O Scotland, *thou hast destroyed thyself* ! O Edinburgh, *thou hast destroyed thyself* ! O sinner, *thou hast destroyed thyself* ! Oh ! let ministers and people take with the charge, *Thou hast destroyed thyself* : here, let us *lament*, and be *humbled* before God.

How many ways might we mention, hath Scotland been *destroying itself*, since our *glorious Reformation* from *Popery* ? Particularly, by breaking our *National Covenant* with God : we gave our hands solemnly to God, and then departed from him ; and gave our hands to the men of the *world*, by *public Resolutions*, to join with them : yea, we dishonoured him by burning our *Covenant* with the King of kings, and giving *sacrilegious homage* to the kings of the earth, as if they had been supreme over all persons, and in all *causes*, *civil* or *ecclesiastical* ; by defiling ourselves with many *oaths*, contrary to the *oath* of God, and accepting *Indulgencies* founded upon that wicked *Supremacy*, assumed over the *house* of God * : by involving ourselves in the guilt of their *blood*, that suffered for the testimony of Jesus, in witnessing for him as King in Zion, in opposition to such as robbed him of his *crown* ; by neglecting, at the merciful Revolution, the fairest opportunity of reviving a *covenanted Reformation*, and rebuilding his *house* upon the *right foundation* : but, instead of that, we may say, *We and our forefathers have sinned ; we understood not his wonders, nor remembered the multitude of his mercies ; but provoked him at the sea, even at the Red-sea*, Psalm

* The reader will find the above transactions more fully laid open, Vol. IV. pag. 383, Vol. V. pag. 115, 317.

cvi. 6, 7.; at the very time and place of *deliverance* from *tyranny* and *arbitrary power*.

But, in later times, how have we *destroyed ourselves* more and more? I shall mention some sins that *ruin* and *destroy churches* and *nations*; and we may consider, whether or not we have been and are *destroying ourselves* therewith.

1. *Lukewarmness* and *indifference* in religion is a desolating and destroying sin; *Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth*, Revel. iii. 15. This made God cast off that church of Laodicea; and is not this the sin of this generation? Interpendent, as it were, and hanging between heaven and hell, between God and Baal; zeal for the kingdom, and cause, and honour of Christ wearing gradually out.

2. *Apostasy* from God is a desolating and destroying sin to churches and nations; *Thou hast left thy first love: Remember therefore, from whence thou hast fallen, and repent, and do thy first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place*, Revel. iii. 4, 5. The *candlestick* is the church; the *sin* that removes the *candlestick* is *apostasy*. And are we not chargable in this land with apostasy in judgment, leaving the *ancient truth* of God for *new errors*; *new gods*, but *old devils*, Deut. xxxii. 17, 18.: *new lights*, but *dammable errors*, and *doctrines of devils*; many of these tolerated, untouched and uncensured by the *judicatories* of the church †; chargeable with apostasy in affection, having *left our first love*, Jer. ii. 2. *The love of our espousals*, when our land was married to God by *solemn Covenant*? With apostasy in practice and conversation, as many of Christ's disciples left him, when he was apprehended; yea, many who seem to run well for a time, they sit up; they *begin in the Spirit*, and *end in the flesh*.

3. *Barrenness* under the means of *grace*, that God hath been some time giving a plentiful allowance of,

† Some of these errors, which our Author probably here alludes to, are condescended upon, Vol. I. pag. 238. Vol. II. pag. 204, 446. Vol. IV. pag. 148.

of, is another sin that brings desolation and destruction; this is represented by the *curse* denounced upon the *barren fig tree*, Luke xiii. 7. *Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground. The ax is laid to the root of the trees: therefore every tree, which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire*, Matth. iii. 10. If under Zion's blessings we bring forth Sodom's blossoms, see what God will do; *I will break up the hedge, and dress it no more, the clouds shall rain no more rain upon it*, &c. Isaiah v. 5, 6.

4. *Union and communion with a wicked world is church-destroying and soul-destroying; for the companion of fools shall be destroyed.* There are sinful unions and associations, whereby churches and nations may be destroyed; such was our *incorporating union* with England, upon terms opposite to our *Covenant union* formerly with them; to which may be applied, Psal. cvi. 28, 35, 40. *They joined themselves unto Baal-peor; they were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works.* Many a sad lesson have we learned from our neighbours, and many dismal consequences have followed this incorporation.—I designedly enlarge not upon any of these things that are more fully represented in a published *Testimony* among your hands, adopted by you, that have invited us to this day's work here †.

5. *Pride of privileges and confidence in the church and temple*, like the Jews, that cried, *The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these*, Jer. vii. 4. As if an established church could be their security; but, what is the name of the church, when the glory is departed? Is it not their confidence, that the Lord is with them because they are a church, that will secure them: see Mic. iii. 10, 11, 12. *They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say, Is not the Lord*

† The direful consequences that have attended the union of the two kingdoms are laid open in the *Ast and Testimony*, pag. (misc) 46.—49.

among us? none evil can come upon us. Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house, as the high places of the forest.—Therefore saith the Lord, Zeph. iii. 11. Thou shalt no more be haughty, because of my holy mountain.

6. Gross and cursed *hypocrisy* is another destructive and desolating sin; we see Matth. xxiii. 13,—29. no less than eight *woes* are denounced against *hypocrites*. Hypocrites mock God, and destroy themselves: they profess one thing, and are really some thing else; like the blasphemy of these who said, *they were Jews, and were not, but were the synagogue of Satan*, Revel. ii. 9. They professed to be a true church, and yet were but a church malignant; as if some should profess to be a true *Presbyterian church*, and yet be really *Antichristian*, or *Erastian*: O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself, &c.

7. *Stubbornness* and *incorrigibleness* is a desolating and destructive sin: when neither word nor rod prevail with a people to leave their sin, and return to him, this brings *temple-desolation*, and presages still heavier and heavier judgment: *If, by these things, ye will not be reformed, then will I punish you seven times more; and yet seven times more; and I will walk contrary to you*, Lev. xxvi. 23. I have so and so punished you, and ye have not returned unto me; therefore prepare to meet thy God, O Israel! Amos vi. 12.

8. *Covenant-breaking* with God is another desolating and destructive sin; in that same chap. Lev. xxvi. 25. *I will bring a sword upon you that shall avenge the quarrel of my covenant*. Such an avenging sword is yet hanging over Britain and Ireland, for *breaking, burning, and burying* out of mind the *covenant* made between God and our fathers; though many say, What have we to do with what our fathers did this time hundred year? Well, but see, what God hath a-mind to do, Deut. xxix. 24, 25. after an account of God's covenant with them, 2 Kings xvii. 13, 14, 15, 18.

9. *Ignorance of God*, and *profanity of life*, which go
toget-

together, is a desolating and destructive sin, Hosea iv. 1, 2, 3, 6. *Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel; the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land; by swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out; and blood touches blood.* See what a catalogue of profane courses accompanies ignorance of God; and what follows, *Therefore shall the land mourn; and my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.* Here we see, that *profane people*, though they should be never such great wits, and have never so much *head-knowledge*, yet they are ignorant of God, and their ignorance *destroys* them.

10. Another desolating, church-ruining and destroying sin is, the *rejecting of Christ* from being their Lord and King. Christ will be a sole King, and will have none upon his throne but himself; and when a church rejects him as a King, then he rejects them as a church. This was fearfully exemplified in the Jews, where they said, *We will not have this man to reign over us; and we have no king but Cæsar*: thus, out of their own mouth, they verified Jacob's old prophecy, *That the sceptre was departed from Judah, and the law-giver from between his feet; and therefore Shiloh was now come, the true Messiah was come*; and him they rejected from being king, and therefore he rejected them from being his church. What for a body is that, which wants the head? And what for a church is that, of which the apostle speaks, Colossians ii. 19. *Not holding the head?* Christ is the *head of the body, the church*; but will Christ hold that church as his body, that does not hold him, nor hold only as a church of him as their head and king.

Here it will be expected, I should speak of some late practices by the generality of ministers in Scotland, that were, whatever the profession to the contrary be, a practical disclaiming of the sole headship and supremacy of our Lord Jesus Christ over his church. I shall only say, That the general course of

falling in with this Erastian act * is such an affront done to our *glorious King Jesus*, that tho' judicatories should conspire to bury it in the grave of oblivion, and cover it with the fair mask of *mutual forbearance* and *brotherly love*; yet, I doubt not, but as it will be remarked to posterity, as a crowning piece to Scotland's defection at this day, so the Lord will resent it among other injuries done to him, when he comes to plead his controvery.

The judicatories have been of late refusing to adopt a testimony offered to them, and now published for God and his truth; and therefore, little wonder, that God hath left them to fall in with these open indignities done to the *crown royal* of King Jesus. And this hath contributed to confirm some in the course they were led to of testifying, in a way of secession for them, who had, so long time, and by so many acts, been suppressing the truths of God, and oppressing the people of God, obtruding *HIRELINGS* upon reclaiming congregations, and so scattering the flock of Christ, as sheep without a shepherd; and assuming a power and authority, contrary to the *warrant* of the *word* †. If these and the like are the circumstances of the judicatories, none need think strange, that some have taken the method of testifying against the defections of the day that now they are upon; nor ought any to reckon

* Our Author here undoubtedly alludes to the affair of one JOHN PORTEOUS, captain of the town guard of Edinburgh, who had been legally condemned to die, for several murders, committed by him on the populace, at a public execution, where he had the command; but who afterwards, by the influence of some great men, obtained a reprieve; which so incensed the people, that they rose up notwithstanding, and executed him at Edinburgh, Sept. 7th, 1736. The king and parliament resented this affront very highly; and accordingly framed a most strange and extraordinary act to discover the actors: and ordered all the ministers of Scotland to read the said act, in the time of divine service in their churches, every first Sabbath of the month, for a whole year, under certain penalties. Though this was a gross and public profanation of the Lord's day, a prostituting the pulpit, and a practically giving up with the alone headship and sovereignty of Christ over his church; yet the most part of the ministers read this act to the no small grief of many of the godly.

† If the reader inclines to see a more ample account of these particulars, he may consult, Vol. I. pag. 238. Vol. II. pag. 149, 466, Vol. IV. p. 148. Vol. V. pag. 304, 317, 357, 395, 396, 425.

it a *schismatical* course. Though none can justify themselves from being guilty of dishonour done to their glorious Lord, yet let them bear most the charge of *schism* and *division*, that divide most from the head Jesus Christ, and from the *truth*, as it is in him. Let none think these are the *dividers*, who are but the smallest number, taking a different course from the rest †. When the whole church turned *Arian*, departed from Christ the head, except *Athanasius*, I have no difficulty in saying, they were all *Schismatics* but himself. Let the true nature of *schism* be considered, and we may then either defy *reproach*; or, as long as the Lord is with us, we may easily bear it. We are not good soldiers of Christ, nor followers of him, if we cannot endure a hiss for Christ, who *endured the cross, and despised the shame* for us; and now is *set down at the right-hand of the throne of God as the glorious King of Zion*.

These are some of the sins that destroy *nations* and *churches*; I might mention many more: but if we reflect upon these, and the deep share we have in them all; may we not receive the conviction offered here, *O Israel! O Scotland! thou hast destroyed thyself?* Magistrates, ministers, and people have *destroyed themselves*: such a charge you read of in many places of scripture, such as Micah iii. 1, 2, 5, 6, 7. Ezekiel xxii. 25,—31.

But since, I suppose, the most here present are from the adjacent city, we have occasion also to say more particularly, *O Edinburgh! thou hast destroyed thyself*: are not all the desolating and destroying sins, that I have mentioned already, to be found in *THEE*, by which thou hast been, and art *destroying thyself?* And to these may be added some other sins, which I judge they are chargeable with, and ought to be humbled for this day.

Is not *pride, idleness, and fulness of bread*, that was the iniquity of her sister Sodom, also to be found with her? Ezek. xvi. 49. Cities are destroyed by *luxury* and *wantonness*, when God is calling for mourning,

† Our Author's sentiments on this point, are more fully expressed, Vol. V. pag. 313.

Isa. xxii. 12, 13, 14. Enquire before the Lord, if this be not the sin of the city? Cities are destroyed by their *oppression of the poor, their racking of rents, their injustice, and fraudulent dealings between man and man; Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see if ye can find a man, if there be any that executes judgment, that seeks the truth*, Jer. v. 1.; Intimating, how hard it was to find a truly honest and righteous man, and how exposed the city therefore was unto wrath. Cities are destroyed by neglect of *family-worship*, in reading the word of God, singing the praises of God, and calling on the name of God. If this neglect be the sin of the city, it will be the ruin of it; *Pour out thy fury upon the heathen, and the families that call not on thy name*, Jer. x. 25. Cities are destroyed by the sin of *slighting the warnings of the word*, despising faithful messengers they have had among them, that gave them fair and faithful warning. Edinburgh hath been privileged with some such from time to time; but the more plain and faithful some of them have been, perhaps, they were the more despised and disparaged.—Jonah preached but one sermon to Nineveh, and they repented; but many a faithful sermon hath Edinburgh heard, and never repented; and, perhaps, they who have dealt with them most faithfully have been treated most contemptuously, even as Paul was called a *pestilent fellow*. The town of Northampton in New England hath not had a long tack of the gospel; yet, as we hear, the gospel there hath done wonders, thro' the out-pouring of the Spirit of God with it. But, what shall we say? We have had the Bible in our own language, and the doctrines of the gospel dispensed for near two hundred years; but with how little effect? How gross our ignorance! how depraved our manners! how little of Christianity in a Christian nation! And what if God be now saying, *My Spirit shall no more strive with man*; it shall no more strive with Edinburgh; it shall no more strive with Scotland? *The kingdom of heaven shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruit thereof*.

Again,

Again, Cities have been destroyed by *murder* and *bloodshed*; for, *Blood hath a strong cry to heaven for vengeance*, Gen. iv. 10. No doubt, the city hath reason to mourn, on this account for much bloodshed committed therein, and never mourned over; I mean, not only the blood of *infants*, murdered in secret; nor do I mean only the blood of *innocents*, not long ago suddenly slaughtered at the execution of *Wilson**, for which the Lord may plead a controversy with the city, if it hath not been duly purged by public justice; far less need I here proclaim, what hath been too much proclaimed already to the prostituting of the pulpit, and the profaning of many a Sabbath-day; but I mean especially, the yet unpurged blood of *martyrs* shed at the *Cross*, and in the *Grass-market*, in the late times of *tyranny*. This blood hath never yet been duly mourned over by *public humiliation* on that account: and therefore it cries against the *city* for vengeance, and against the *land*. And, what if God hath ordered, that the pulpits of Scotland should ring so many days with the noise of the blood of a *murderer*, as a righteous judgment upon them, for neglecting to mention and mourn over the guilt of the blood of *martyrs*, that was shed about the same place. But,

Again, Cities have destroyed themselves with monstrous *whoredom* and *adultery*, of which the Lord says, Jer. v. 8, 9. *Shall I not visit for these things? and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?* If people, at this day, are declaring their sin as Sodom; if stews are tolerated, and works of darkness covered, and if church-censures and discipline be bought away with money †, how provoking to God must it be, and how like the *popish* practice in their book of *rates*? So much for *whoredom*, so much for *adultery*, so much for *murder*; and declaring, that no such acts of favour can be granted to the *poor*; enough to invite men to sin, that

* The person's name who was executed between Leith and Edinburgh, where captain Porteous ordered the soldiers to fire upon the populace, and killed several of them. See above p. 448.

† It was alledged, that these heinous evils and corrupt practices were prevailing too much in the metropolis,

know the price, before-hand, at which they may be absolved, or free of all *church-censure* ; if any thing, like this, hath, at any time, taken place among us, *Shall not the Lord visit for these things ?*

Again, Cities have destroyed themselves by *Sabbath-breaking* ; as you may see, Amos viii. 5, 7, 8. *When shall the Sabbath be gone, say they, that we may sell corn, and set out wheat ? &c. Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwells therein ?* These that take their own pleasures on the Lord's day, kindle his displeasure against themselves, *Who ordered the man that gathered sticks to be stoned to death.*

In a word, Cities have destroyed themselves by their *abuse of plenty*, as here in the context ; Hos. xiii. 6, 7. *They were filled, and their heart was exalted ; therefore they have forgotten me : therefore I will be to them as a lion, &c.* like Jeshurun, that *waxed fat and kicked.*—When the body was stuffed up with plenty, the soul was puffed up with pride, forgetting God, and abusing his goodness to lasciviousness and wantonness, consuming their time and substance with *vain shows, idle assemblies, plays, balls*, and I know not what a multitude of mad amusements to gratify the flesh ; till their *plenty* be turned into *poverty* ; their *wantonness*, into *wo and misery* ; and their time swallowed up in *eternity*. *O Israel ! thou hast destroyed thyself.*

Again, Let *every one* take home the charge ; *O sinner ! thou hast destroyed thyself* : as by these *sins* I have mentioned ; so particularly by thy wilful rejecting of Christ, and unwillingness to come to him, which may be proven against you, partly by your unwillingness to submit to the outward means, and partly by your unwillingness to be wrought upon by them, as I have shewed already : so strong is your natural enmity, that if left to yourself, you are undone.

Again, let the *godly*, themselves, take home the charge, and be humbled before God ; because, as you are as great self-murderers by nature, as the rest of the world, so even, since grace took a dealing with you, such are the remains of that self-disposition, in innumerable instances, that it may be said, even to you that
are

are the true Israel of God, *O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself.* And though God had no other controversy against Scotland, than even the *iniquities of sons and daughters*, it is enough; their unwatchfulness, their untenderness, their neglect of a gospel-conversation, neglect of relative duties; their detestable neutrality in the matters of God; their grievous insensibility of the dishonours done to Christ; their little love to and sympathy with one another; their bitterness and prejudice against one another; their self-seeking, and self-pleasing, and preparing their own houses, building to themselves *ceiled houses*, while the *house of the Lord lies waste*; their carnal ease, when they should be fighting the Lord's battles, and *following him without the camp*. When David would persuade Uriah, 2 Sam. xi. 11. to go to his house, and enjoy the lawful pleasures of his bed, he refused it, saying, *The ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in tents, and my Lord Joab, and the servants of my Lord, encamp in the open fields, and shall I go home and eat and drink, and ly in my bed of ease and pleasure? As the Lord liveth, I will do no such thing.* This looked like a man truly concerned for the ark and Israel of God. Many of us do not so much as forbear our unlawful pleasures of pride and wantonness. Tho' *the ark of the Lord abide in tents*, and though the church be going to the wilderness, or *encamp in the open fields*, yet many remain loitering in their beds of ease, and pleasure, and sloth: but God loves not jollity, when he calls for mourning; nor sloth, when he calls for watching, and appearing for him.

Again, The godly sometimes have destroyed themselves by their *divisions* among themselves. May I not say with the apostle, 1 Cor. xi. 18. *I hear that there are divisions among you, and I partly believe it?* and we know some evident effects of it. But, O my dear friends, what a reproach is it to your *Christian profession*, to hear of praying societies divided against *praying societies*? It was observed by enemies themselves, to the commendation of the *primitive Christians*, "Behold! how they love one another." Alas! how reproachful is it, if the contrary be said of you, Behold, how

they hate one another ; how they bite and devour one another. What a miserable thing it is, if in matters that either might be accommodated, or born with, Christians should destroy themselves, and destroy one another ? How is our God thus dishonoured, the gospel discredited, religion wounded, and the hands of witnesses for reformation weakened !

In a word, The *children* of God themselves have, at this day, destroyed themselves, by leaving their *first love*, by their carnality in their work and walk, and their *evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God* : by these things they destroy themselves, destroy their peace, destroy their comfort, destroy their assurance, destroy their freedom in coming to God, destroy their name and credit. They destroy their beauty and liveliness, and provoke God to *write bitter things against them*. Yea, the *children* of grace may, by their uncircumspect walk, provoke their heavenly Father to break them with *breach upon breach*, and to bring heavy strokes both temporal and spiritual, upon them, Deut. xxviii. 58, 59. Let none of God's people therefore say, such and such instruments have destroyed us, ministers and judicatories have destroyed our church-privileges and liberties, and robbed us of our spiritual rights. Whatever truth be in this, that way of speaking looks not like due humiliation before God, for these are but the fruits of God's anger against us for our sin ; *Behold thou art wroth, for we have sinned*, Isa. lxiv. 5. It is an angry God that leaves a generation of sinners that are self-destroyers, to be also destroyers of one another ; and therefore let us blame ourselves, because we have sinned, and brought on all this destruction upon ourselves. It would look like *kindly humiliation*, if every one were saying, I am the Achan that hath *troubled the camp of Israel* ; I am the Jonah that hath raised this storm of wrath ; I am the sinner that hath provoked God to leave ministers and judicatories to themselves ; and to leave his house desolate ; it is I that have provoked him to send the loose, lax, and corrupt ministry here and there through the land ; it is I that have provoked him to leave some good ministers

nisters to make sad defection ; for it is possible Israel's sins may provoke God to leave a minister, as good as *Aaron the saint of God, to set up a golden calf in Horeb*, Let every one of us not only bear the charge, *O Israel ! thou hast destroyed thyself ;* but let us take with the charge, saying, I am the *person* that hath destroyed myself, and destroyed the generation, and my sin may justly provoke him to send more heavy destruction yet, and terrible desolation : for if *every sin* deserves God's heavy wrath, what may my *aggravated sins* provoke him to ? We never ly open to mercy, or to gospel-grace, so much as when we take with the law-charge, and answer to the voice of God, *O Israel ! thou hast destroyed thyself ; Truth, Lord, I have destroyed myself.* And if brought to this, then hear and consider

The *second* branch of the text, *In me is thy help* : importing, that our relief and deliverance is only owing to God, and his sovereign mercy ; *To the Lord our God belongs mercy and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against him*, Dan. ix. 9. And since all have destroyed themselves, none can be saved but in a way of free mercy, as God says to Moses, Exod. xxxiii. 19. *I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and shew mercy to whom I will shew mercy.* He might justly suffer all to go on in ruining themselves eternally ; but as he proclaims mercy in the gospel, so to whomsoever he extends mercy, he must do it by an act of sovereign grace, delivering them out of their own murdering and destroying hands.

Now, Sirs, here is another root of *true repentance* and *humiliation* ; the former is a *true sense of sin*, as a destroyer ; the next is an *apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ*, as a Saviour, and the only help ? *In me is thy help.* The root of *true religion* lies in a right view of ourselves, and our own sinfulness ; and next in a right view of God and his grace : for clearing this matter I offer a few remarks.

First, I remark, from the scope of God's words here, " That he takes occasion from our *sins*, to set out his " grace." Man is unmerciful to himself ; but God is

merciful to him. So cruel is man, that he destroys himself; so kind is God, that he offers his help, and hath *laid help upon One that is mighty*, upon his eternal Son, whom he hath given to be the Helper and Saviour, to shew his mercy. And by this instance, we may see, that God will do a thousand times more to shew his mercy towards sinners, than to shew his wrath against them. He hath *set forth Christ to be the propitiation*, to make his shewing mercy consistent with the honour of justice, Rom. iii. 25, 26. It is true, some may think, how comes it then, that there are more damned than saved; for Christ says, *Strait is the gate of life, and few there are that find it*: But here, concerning the paucity of the saved, it is to be considered, that, as it is not improbable there shall be more glory among the few that shall be saved, than wrath among the many that shall be damned; so there is more mercy shewed, in saving a few, when he might have condemned all, than there is justice shewed, in condemning many, when he might have damned all.

Again, mercy is *absolute*, having respect to nothing in us; but justice hath a respect to the *demerit* of sin, *the wages* whereof is death. God, in shewing mercy, is himself at the whole cost: but we make way for his justice, by provoking him. *Damnation* is an act of justice, that our sin obliges him to do; but *salvation* is an act of mercy, which he is under no obligation to pass: yet, notwithstanding all our sinfulness, he proclaims his willingness and readiness to save and help. Hence, I think, it is remarkable, that, after the greatest sins that ever were committed, there have been instantly the greatest displays of mercy: thus the first sin, by which all mankind were ruined, was soon followed with the promise, wherein mercy was proclaimed.—Here was the greatest sin, the root of all sin among men; and yet the greatest display of mercy.

Again, that sin of the Jews, in *crucifying the Lord of glory*, will be owned to be the greatest sin: and yet it is followed with the greatest display and proclamation of mercy: therefore Christ enjoins his disciples to *go and preach repentance and remission of sins in his name*,

to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem, Luke xxiv. 27. Why, begin at Jerusalem, who had just now embued their hands in his blood! Why, they have most need of mercy; and the offer of it to them will manifest the sovereignty of it. O who would not then put in for a share of mercy in the blood of Christ? Why should we refuse our own mercy? *Here is water, what hinders but we are baptized?* Here is blood, what hinders but we are washed? Nothing hinders but our own wilful refusing, and continuing to destroy ourselves. Men will not welcome this offer of grace; they continue obstinate till God create a *will*, and make them *willing in the day of his power*: and hence all that are helped, and saved out of their own murdering hands, must be saved by an act of sovereign mercy; *In me is thy help.* Again,

The second remark I offer is, “That the nature of God requires, that in helping and saving of sinners, his mercy be *free* and *sovereign*.” because he is a sovereign God, infinitely happy in himself without us; and it is at his option to manifest mercy or not, to save or not, as much as it was his option to make men or not. He does what he will *among the armies of heaven*. Hence he exercises sovereignty in the cause why he shews mercy, even *because he will shew mercy*; sovereignty in the person whom he saves; in the time when he saves them, in the instruments by whom; and the means by which he saves them. I might shew, at large, how he does all this according to his own will and pleasure; *Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth*, James i. 18.

Thirdly, I remark, “That the nature of man requires this, that if he be saved, it be by the *free, sovereign* grace, and mercy of God.” What is man? He is a *despicable* creature, a worm; *Fear not, worm Jacob*. If Israel, that were such a vast multitude, *like the stars of heaven*, the numerous offspring of Jacob, be but a worm in God’s sight, then what is one man? Yea, before God *all the nations of the earth are as nothing, yea, less than nothing and vanity*, Isa. xl. 15. What a little piece of that *nothing* are we, that God should pity us!

Man

Man is a *deformed* creature, over-run with the loathsome leprosy of sin ; if there be any hope for such, it must be of the free grace of God. Yea, man is a *rebellious* creature, as I have formerly shewed ; he is neither able nor willing to help himself, but active and wilful in destroying himself. He despises and opposes all the loving *arguments* and *invitations* to be reconciled with God, 2 Cor. v. 20.—And because we cannot win at God himself, we *crucify the Son of God*, as the Jews did when he came upon the errand of salvation. Here is the temper of the sons of Adam, till grace subdue their enmity. Is there any thing here to move God to save ? O ! if free grace did not move itself, we would persist for ever in our enmity. The salvation that he brings us to, is neither deserved nor desired by us. *Deserved* it cannot be, where there is such a desert of hell and wrath : *desired* it is not, unless God create that desire of salvation, through Christ, in these who by nature wilfully reject him. Hence,

Fourthly, I remark, “ That the nature of the *help* “ that he gives and offers, is such as declares it to be “ only in himself that our help lies.” I shall instance in the powerful help we need, both as to justifying and sanctifying mercy. There are two great attributes of sin, guilt and power.

1. Who can help the *guilt* of sin, but a God of infinite power ? It requires greater power to *pardon sin*, than to work a miracle upon the body ; *Whether is it easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, Arise and walk ? But that ye may know, that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, &c.* Matth. ix. 5. The Pharisees made the objection, *Who can forgive sins but God ?* Christ takes their own argument, and uses it against themselves, shewing that he was God, because he could forgive sin. Why, can God only help from the guilt of sin ? Why, the guilt of sin hath the whole strength of God’s law to back it, and take part with it ; and God’s law hath the whole strength of infinite justice to maintain it : therefore there must be an infinite power to take away the guilt of sin, even that same power that can satisfy infinite justice.

2. Who

2. Who can help away with the *power* of sin? Sin is not only an *enemy* but *enmity*; and to kill enmity and resistance against God, is more than to create a world out of *nothing*, where there is nothing to resist. To take away sin, and bring in grace, that are such direct opposites, requires infinite power to effect it. There is in the understanding an incapacity to *understand the things of God*; for, *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; they are foolishness to him.* Hence the *weapons of the gospel warfare* are powerful through God, to pull down strong holds, and cast down vain imaginations, that exalt themselves against the knowledge of Christ, and raise millions of objections against him: and when God helps the soul, he has all these mountains to level; *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.* Hence also the same power that raised Christ from the dead, is requisite for raising a sinner out of the grave of sin. Let men talk of the power of nature as they will; let me see any of them that can raise themselves, Ephes. i. 19, 20. The change that God works when he takes away the power of sin, is *from darkness to light*, from death to life; and, as it were, from being beasts to be men; *The beast of the field shall honour me, the dragons, and the owls*, Isaiah xliii. 20. These beasts are men, who elsewhere are compared to the wild ass's-colt: *This people have I formed for myself, they shall shew forth my praise*, verse 21. To make a sinner a saint, is as much as to make a beast a saint, or to turn a stone to a child of Abraham.—Therefore in God only is our help.

And now to apply this branch of the text. Hence,

1. We may see where the help of a *ruined church* lies. Scotland hath destroyed herself, but where lies her help? *Vain is the help of man*; vain is the help of princes and parliaments; vain is the help of church-judicatories. The poor scattered flocks of Scotland, oppressed with the violent obtrusion of *hirelings* upon them, have been crying to judicatories for help, but in vain; their *tender mercies* have been *cruelties* *. Yea,

* This affair was formerly laid open, Vol. V. pag. 304, 316, 357, 398, 424, 425.

vain is the help of all creatures, even of these to whom some are now looking for help ; I mean, a handful of MINISTERS associated together for the relief of the poor oppressed people of God, and for testifying against the *corruptions* and *defections* of the day ; vain, I say, is their help, unless the Lord put to his hand ; for, *If the Lord do not build the city, the builders build in vain.* It is the *Man whose name is the BRANCH*, that must *build the temple of the Lord, and bear the glory* : your help lies in the name of the Lord, that made heaven and earth. Yet hence see,

2. That it is the Lord only that can *raise up helpers, and Saviours in mount Zion* ; and therefore to him alone ought we to look, that he would put a blessing in any *means* and endeavours towards *Reformation*. Our help being only in the Lord does not exclude the use of *means*, but obliges us thereunto, with an eye to his helping hand. And surely, the Lord is calling us to some other thing, than the present judicatories are doing. Is it not duty at this day to go out, and do some things that the judicatories in Scotland will not do ?—Is it not duty before God at this day, to *assert* and vindicate openly, these truths of God that judicatories have been burying ; and to attempt, in his strength, to lift up that crown of our royal King Jesus, which is profaned on the ground ?—Is it not duty from the word of God to *confess* that *we and our fathers have sinned*, and to discover and lay open these sins and defections for which the wrath of God is coming on such a generation as we are ; and which yet the judicatories will not do, but rather cover and hide, declaring, that they will not return to God this way, by confessing all their particular defections ? And because judicatories will not do it, shall it be done by none ? When God says, *I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their iniquity, and seek my face* ; ought we not to go away when God goes away, and leave them whom God leaves ? At least till God's term-day, *till they acknowledge their sin, and seek his face* ; and, at least, so far as to take a contrary course, namely, of *fasting, humiliation,*

liation, and solemn acknowledgement of sin. When judicatories are saying they will not appoint any fasts; they see no occasion for it; is it not duty from the word of God to feed Christ's lambs, which the judicatories are starving; or to gather his flock, whom they are scattering and oppressing, by their violent measures in obtruding hirelings upon them, and opening the door to grievous wolves to enter in? And, is it not duty, not only to pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth faithful labourers to it, but also to join hand with these that are willing to be active in this matter; and to give help in this work, wherein the glory of God, and the good of souls is much concerned?—Is it not your duty to testify for Christ, as solemnly and judicially as providence gives occasion, when judicatories are unwilling to bear witness for Christ; yea, and have thrown faithful testimonies, offered to them, over the bar; besides their refusing *Instructions*, *Petitions*, and a multitude of *Remonstrances* these many years by-gone?—Is it not duty from the word of God, for these that bear a good-will to the cause of Christ, be they never so few in number, to do their duty, and to obey the command of their highest Lord, when the greater part are combining to disobey him?—Is it not evident, as with a sun-beam, that it is warrantable from the word, for the lesser part of the church, were it but two or three to whom the promise is made, (yea, were it but two or three in the whole catholic church) to do the work of God which the rest will not do, be the consequence what it will; and let men call their practice *separation*, or what they please?

3. Here is a door of hope cast open for *poor, perishing, self-destroying* sinners, even for the greatest of sinners, for *publicans*, and persecuting Sauls, for *Manassehs*, and *Mary Magdalenes*. God can make use of knotty timber, for building his temple: he can take brands out of the fire, that have the smoak of hell about them: O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help. Here is no room left either for despair or presumption.

(1.) Beware of *presumption*. Some presumptuously may say, If our help lies only in God, then we need do nothing in the use of means ; as if one should say, the wind only can make the ship to sail, therefore we need not ly at the shore and wait for it. Say not, If my works cannot save me, I may go on in my sin ; for though good works cannot save you, yet your ill works can damn you : though you cannot save yourself, yet you can destroy yourself more and more : therefore beware of presumption. And likewise,

(2.) Beware of *despair*, when such a door of hope is cast open. Though you be nothing but dead and dry bones, yet *God can make these dry bones live*. Yea, not only, notwithstanding your sin, can God save and help you, but because of the greatness of your sin, he can shew the greatness of his grace. Hence said the Psalmist, *Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great*. God *waits to be gracious*, Isa. xxx. 18. He can take occasion from your sinfulness, to magnify his mercy, saying, *I have seen his ways, and will heal him*. He can make your sin, though it be a good reason why he should damn you, yet he can make it a reason why he will save you, and pity you, Hosea ii. 13, 14. Therefore,

O *sinner!* that *hast destroyed thyself*, come and *accept of the offer of mercy*, the offer of God's help ; for in him only lies your help.—Accept of the offer of Christ the mighty helper, on whom God hath laid all your help ; all discouragements are out of the way ; all hinderances on God's part are actually removed ; the law is fulfilled, justice satisfied, *everlasting righteousness is brought in* : all bars and impediments on your part are virtually removed, in the purchase made by the blood of Christ. It will aggravate your misery for ever, if you refuse mercy ; yea, this is a treating God worse than the worst of men will treat the vilest of men : they will do good to these that do good to them : but will you spit in the face of mercy, and do ill to God, because he does good to you ?

God commands you to come to his Christ, and accept of his mercy, and take his help ; *This is his commandment, that ye believe in his Son*, and his command

is powerful to effect it ; *faith comes by hearing* his word, his command. Thus it shall be to some whom he hath a mind to help. Nor does he deceive others, by commanding and calling of them, because thus he touches their conscience, and discovers their *enmity*, while by the word they are convinced, and yet not conquered ; which shews the more that their ruin is of themselves.

O sinner ! thou hast destroyed thyself ; yea, thy unbelief is the sin that would destroy God, if it could. It destroys his truth, and makes him a liar ; it destroys his mercy, and says he is cruel, notwithstanding all his offers of grace. By unbelief refusing God's help, you, in an eminent manner, darken and oppose the glory of God ; his glorious perfections, that shine only most bright in the face of Jesus, on whom your help is laid ; and oppose his highest design for glorifying these perfections, Ephes. i. 11,—14. Your unbelief is direct murder, by which, more than all your other sins, you destroy yourself. Why, it is a sin that rejects the only remedy. There is *no balm in Gilead, no physician there*, but Christ, Acts iv. 12. and him you undervalue. It is a sin that binds all your other sins upon you. Tho' all sin be damning and killing, yet no sin shall damn you, if you add not thereto the sin of neglecting and refusing God's help and mercy, that he offers in Christ. Why are not these condemned that believe in Christ ? Is it because they have no sin to condemn them ? No ; but because, believing in Jesus, all their sins are done away : but *he that believeth not, is condemned already*. Why ? Is it because he is a sinner in general ? Or because his sins are many and great ? No ; but because he hath not *believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God*. Hence see, that the immediate cause of damnation is not this or that sin, but the refusing of Christ by unbelief. The man refuses a whole eternity of glorious and unspeakable happiness, and chuses rather sin and death. Unbelief leaves you without all excuse, or the least shadow and colour of excuse, John xv. 22. You must be speechless in the great day. You cannot say pardon and salvation was not offered to you ; you

cannot say the offer was not full and free ; you cannot say you had to do with a hard master. And as it will leave you without excuse, so without appeal. Here we may say, as in 1 Sam. ii. 25. *If a man sin against another, the judge shall judge him ; but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall intreat for him ?* If a man sin against the law, he may appeal to the gospel, and the grace of God in Christ ; but if he reject Christ, and the grace of the gospel, where then shall he appeal ? Truly there is no relief to be found for him. A sinner may appeal from justice to the mercy-seat : but if he slight the offer of mercy, he hath nothing to appeal to, that may administer relief to him. Nay, thus he, in effect, pulls down the mercy-seat.

Let me exhort you, then, to come to Jesus for *help* and *salvation*, O self-destroying sinner, that you may not be eternally destroyed. Is it like a reasonable soul, to live in that miserable case, to stand tottering upon the brink of *Tophet*, and dancing merrily away to *everlasting destruction* ? To be living at the mercy of death, or of every disease tending thereto, which, if it will but fall upon thee, will send thee into the burning pit ? Suppose you saw a condemned wretch, hanging over Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace, by nothing but a twined thread, ready to break every moment, would not your heart tremble for such an one : Why, but thou art the man, infinitely more miserable man or woman ; this is the very case, thou wast never yet drawn to Christ by all the preaching ever you heard. What if the thread of thy life should break ? You know not but it may, the next night, the next day, the next moment ; and where wouldst thou then be ? Whither wouldst thou then drop ? Behold, upon the crack of this thread of life, thou fallest *into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone*, where thou shalt ly, and die, and roar for ever, even as long as God hath a being, if thou diest in thy present case ; and yet does not thy soul tremble nor begin to *smite upon thy breast*, and bethink thyself, what need thou hast of this Jesus that is offered to thee, and who requires thee to come to him ? Oh ! what is thy heart

heart made of, that thou hast not only lost all regard to God, but all love and pity to thyself? Alas! if you knew your misery, you would cry out for Christ more than ever a wounded man did for a chirurgeon, or a drowning man for a boat. If there be any point of wisdom or reason in the world, it is that you return to God, and come in to Jesus, for life and salvation from sin and wrath. If there be any thing that can be called madness and folly in the world, any thing brutish, absurd, and unreasonable, it is that you live in your sin, and remain in a Christless state.

But if harsh arguments will not do, and indeed nothing but a *day of power*, will do the business; tell me, is there no power and virtue in a day of grace and mercy, or an offer of grace? I tell you therefore, you are welcome to come to Jesus, whatever you have done, or whatever you have been hitherto; *Whosoever will, let him come; and him that cometh, I will in no wise cast out.* The day of wrath is not yet come; the day of grace is yet continued, notwithstanding all the offers of grace you have slighted heretofore. Sometimes God makes them very gracious who have been very graceless, such as Paul, Manasseh, and Mary Magdalene; whatever, therefore, be your sinfulness and filthiness, there is a *fountain opened to the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.*—Though you had *crucified the Son of God*; here is his *blood that cleanses from all sin.* Though your heart be made of flint and stone, yet God *can of stones raise up children to Abraham.*

O young sinner, come to Jesus. He welcomes young seekers of him, saying, *They that seek me early shall find me.* Old sinner, that hast long been dead in sin, and rotting in the grave of corruption, and buried among the stuff of this world, Oh! wilt thou arise, and come out of thy grave? The Master calls upon you, Come, come, and seek to him, that he may glorify his name in your salvation. What think you is his reason in calling such wretched sinners as you are? It is just upon a design of glorifying himself in your salvation. It is, 1. To magnify the grace of God, that *where sin*
hath

hath abounded, grace may much more abound. 2. It is to magnify the blood of Christ, that can wash away such scarlet-coloured sins as yours are. 3. It is to magnify the power of the Spirit, that can convert and draw to himself such a stubborn sinner as thou art. O then wilt thou fall in with this design of God, praying, that God may glorify himself; that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost may be magnified in your salvation. Alas! wretched sinner! wilt thou neither let God have the honour he craves, nor your soul the happiness it wants?

Let none object, saying O this help is far off, when God says, *It is in me; in me is thy help.* God speaks here in the present time; and God is a *present help*. Christ the helper is not at a distance. He is IMMANUEL, *God with us*; and you need not say, *Who will ascend to bring him down?* and *descend to bring him up?* He is *near*, in this word, and you are called to take him at his word, and to take his help offered in this word; *In me is thine help.*

Neither let any object, saying, “O this help is not for me; may be it is not designed for me: perhaps he hath not a mind to give help to me.” Why, man, woman, how shall you know God’s mind, but by his word? And will you contradict the *truth of God* flatly, saying, It is not for me, when he is saying, *In me is thy help*; thy help, man, thy help, woman, thy help, O self-destroying sinner? Do not, through unbelief, make God a liar, saying, In him is not my help, when he is saying so expressly, *In me is thy help.* How will this aggravate thy condemnation, if thou *neglectest this great salvation*, when to thee is the word of this *salvation sent*? To thee is this help sent: O poor soul, put it not away from thee.

Let none say, How is it possible that I can be saved? when you see it is God that undertakes this work, saying, *In me is thy help. Look to me and be saved: for I am God, and there is none else?* Is there any thing too hard for me to do? And let none say, Alas! I am without strength, I can do nothing but ruin myself. It is true; and therefore God says not in *thee* is thy help, but in *me*. Never look for a ground of faith or hope

in thyself ; for thou shalt never find it any where, but *in me* : in my name, in my blood, in my promise, in my power, in my free mercy and sovereign grace, reigning through justice-satisfying righteousness to *eternal life* ; *In me is thy help*. Come and take what belongs to thee through my sovereign grant in this word of grace ; and take it by believing upon my divine testimony, and believing with particular application to thyself, that *in me is thy help* : he that thus *believeth shall be saved*.

May the Lord himself persuade you to come to him for help, who says, *O Israel ! thou hast destroyed thyself ; but in me is thine help*.

SERMON

S E R M O N C V.

CHAMBERS of SAFETY in TIMES
of DANGER.*

ISAIAH XXVI. 20, 21.

Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee : hide thyself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity : the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.

MY friends, it is a very hard matter for people to be made sensible of their *sin*, and *danger* by reason of sin, so as to flock in to Christ, before he come and apprehend them in their sin by his *judgments* ; and therefore before he comes this way to us, he again and again requires us to come to him, and take shelter in himself as the only hiding-place. O what a mercy were it, if, when we hear of the Lord's coming to judgment, we were fearing and *flying from the wrath to come* ! At the voice of the Lord the birds will cry, the beasts will roar, the hinds will calve, the cedars will shake, the mountains will tremble, Psal. xxix. ; but, behold, men and women, though endued with rational souls, and hearing his threatening voice in his word, yet neither fear his voice, nor tremble at his word, nor flee from his wrath to his mercy, nor from their sin to the Saviour, to save them from sin and

* This sermon was preached on a FAST DAY, at Evandale, September 19. 1739. It hath now undergone six impressions.

wrath : the most part will not hear on that side of the head. The wicked desire to be let alone in their wickedness, that they may live at peace therein ; while yet *there is no peace saith my God, to the wicked.* We are all, by reason of sin, under God's anger, and yet know it not ; and therefore are not seeking to go out of the way wherein God's anger burns, nor to be friends with him ; but here the merciful God is opening the door of mercy, and all the chamber-doors of the city of refuge, saying, Before the storm of wrath come on, turn in there. O may we hearken to his call ?

This text is a call upon the back of a song in the former part of the chapter. After singing, the church may prepare for suffering. It is said of the disciples, after their last communion with Christ, *When they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives,* the place of suffering and trial. The songs of the temple do not exclude sufferings ; but may be preparatory for them. The last part of the song here was with reference to a *spiritual resurrection*, pointing out also the *general resurrection*, ver. 19. *Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise ; awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust ; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.* It seems to be a prophecy of the spiritual resurrection of sinners, and particularly of the Gentiles, which was to take place upon the back of Christ's resurrection. *Together with my dead body shall they live ;* they shall be called after Christ's resurrection, and shall rise with him, and *sit with him in heavenly places ;* yea, as it is in the original here, where the words *together with* are but a supplement, *My dead body shall they arise.* They shall become the mystical body of Christ, and rise as part of him : and this will usher in the last glorious resurrection of the saints, of whom *Christ is the first fruits,* 1 Cor. v. 20.

Now, how and by what means, shall this spiritual resurrection be accomplished ? Why, even by the call of God, and the voice of Christ in the everlasting gospel, whereof here you have one in my text, *Come, my*

people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee : hide thyself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation be over-past.

In which words you have these four things more generally.

1. The *duty* to which they are called and exhorted ; that is, to *come and enter into their chambers, and shut their doors, about them, and hide themselves.* These are metaphorical expressions, drawn from the practice of peoples taking shelter before a storm ; and importing, that they would speedily come in to Christ for refuge, and make use of all these ways and means God hath appointed in his word ; particularly, by faith and repentance, turning from sin to God, through Jesus Christ. This is the duty.

2. The *extent* of the duty, *For a LITTLE MOMENT, till the indignation be overpast ;* importing, that they are to continue in the exercise of these duties till the effects of God's anger be over. And it is but a moment ; though it be all your life-time, it is but a moment in comparison of eternity. All their afflictions here, however tedious they may seem, are but short and momentary, when compared with the happiness reserved for them. The storm may blow very hard, but it will over, and come to a period.

3. You have the *persons* to whom this exhortation is given, *my people ;* that is, not only these that are mine by profession, and common federal relation ; but especially *mine* by special covenant-relation, by special adoption and participation of my Spirit, that know my will, and do it : for these seem here to be set in opposition to the rest of the world, that are called the *inhabitants of the earth*, in the next verse.

4. You have the *kindly arguments* and *familiar way* wherein this duty is pressed. The kindly way is, *Come, my people.* It is not, *Go in thither*, where I am not to be with you ; but, *Come in here*, where I am ; come to me, come with me : and so, while he proposes the duty, he proposes himself to be the Leader and Helper in the duty. It is not, *Go yourself alone ;* but, *Come ; come with me from Lebanon.*

The argument and reason is, there is a *storm coming* ; stay not without doors, lest the storm be upon you ; why, *Behold the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity : the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.* Where also you may observe four things.

(1.) The *certainty* of the thing, it is with a *Behold* ; *BEHOLD, he cometh* : it shall certainly be ; and you shall see God executing vengeance. It is certain, therefore behold it.

(2.) The *solemnity* of the thing ; *The LORD cometh out of his place, to punish.* It is spoken after the manner of man, like one rising in fury out of his place, to reach a stroke to his enemy ; as it is said, Isa. xxviii. 12. *The Lord shall rise up as in mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work ; and bring to pass his act, his strange act.* It is with a special solemnity he threatens to punish ; *Behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish.*

(3.) The *justice* of it : God comes to afflict and plague them that are the inhabitants of the earth, but it shall be in *righteous* and *just* punishment of their iniquity ; the cry of their sins brings God out of his place, to punish them. Besides the everlasting punishment which the wicked shall undergo hereafter, there are instances of remarkable punishments of sinful nations and churches, when their sin has come to a height.

(4.) The *necessity* of it : *The earth shall disclose her blood, and no more cover her slain* : that is, the very earth cries for vengeance on the sinners that live upon the earth ; the earth shall vomit up the blood that hath been unjustly shed, as the voice of Abel's blood *cried for the earth*, Gen. iv. 10, 11. See Job xx. 27. *The heaven shall reveal his iniquity, and the earth shall rise up against him.* These bloody sins that seemed to have been buried in oblivion, will be called to mind ; and the earth itself that seemed to cover and hide them, will discover and reveal them, and witness against the sinner. Omitting many doctrines take this one.

OBSERV. *That in shaking times, when wrath is threatened upon a sinful people, such is the care that God hath for the safety and security of his own, that he wills them to come into their chambers and not stay without doors, to be exposed to the violence of the storm that is a-coming.*

For proof and illustration of this doctrine, we shall confirm both the branches of it.

1. That God hath a care of his own, their safety and security, is plain here from his direction given to them, what they are to do, before he bring on a storm. And you may notice the respect he hath to their security, v. 1. of this chapter; *In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah, We have a strong city, salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.* See, to this purpose, Mal. iii. 16, 17. in evil times he will make up his jewels, and spare them as a man spareth his son that serveth him, Read also, Amos ix. 8, 9. *Behold, the eyes of the Lord God are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth; saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the Lord, For lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel, among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth.* It is said, Matthew xxiv. 24. *That false Christs and false prophets shall arise, and shall deceive, if it were possible, the very elect:* but it is not possible they can be either deceived or destroyed.

2. That God wills them to come into their chambers before the storm of wrath come on, as here and elsewhere. See Zeph. i. 1, 2, 3. *Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation not desired, before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the Lord come upon you, before the day of the Lord's anger come upon you. Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, seek righteousness, seek meekness; it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger.* To this purpose you may read, Joel ii. 12, 13, 14. *Therefore also now, saith the Lord, Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping,*
and

and with mourning. And rent your heart and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God; for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him, even a meat-offering, and a drink-offering unto the Lord your God? See some promises also to this purpose; For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion; in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock, Psalm xxvii. 5. Thou shalt hide me in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues, Psalm xxx. 20. See his name; The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee, Psalm ix, 9, 10.: and also his peoples practice; I flee to thee to hide me, Psal. cxliii. 9.

The method we would observe, for the farther prosecution of this subject, thro' divine assistance, shall be the following.

- I. Enquire when may the time be said to be a *threatening* time, so as a storm is evidently approaching?
- II. Why the Lord will take care of his people's *safety* and *security* in such times?
- III. What *chambers* he wills them to come into, in order to their safety?
- IV. Make *application* of the whole subject.

I. When is it evident that a *storm of wrath* is coming upon a land, and that the Lord is about to come out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth? To this we reply in the following particulars.

1. When *all manner of sins abound*, and these become *national*; such as these mentioned, Hos. iv. 1, 2, 3. *There is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land: by swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood touch-*
eth

eth blood. Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one therein shall languish, &c. Together with backsliding from God's covenant, hypocrisy, and lukewarmness; Isa. x. 5, 6, lviii. 1,—8. xxix. 13, 14. When people are lukewarm, God will *spue them out of his mouth*, Rev. iii. 16. Incurribleness, Deut. xxviii. 20. When they persecute the servants of God, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 15. When universal security prevails, as it did over the old world, Jer. v. 11, 12. Falling from their first love, Rev. ii. 4, 5. Obstinacy in sin, Numb. xiv. 41,—44. Oppression of the poor and fatherless, Exod. xxi. 22, 23, 24. Covenant-breaking, Deut. xxix. 24, 25. Loathing of the heavenly manna, and despising the gospel, the word of God, Jer. xxvi. 4, 5, 6. Scoffing at religion and good men, Psal. xxxvii. 13, 14. Jer. xviii. 20, 21. When error abounds, 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12. Unbelief, the mother-sin, Psal. lxxviii. 20, 21, 22,—33. cvi. 24. Pride, 2 Chron. xxxii. 25, 26. Corrupting the worship of God, 1 Kings xi. 5,—9. Disobedience to the call of God, upon whatever pretence, and following false light, 1 Kings xiii. 17,—26.

2. It is evident that a storm of wrath is coming upon a land, when people's sins are *aggravated*. When they are the sins of Jerusalem, of a professing people, then six angels were sent to destroy them, while only two were sent to Sodom; as you see, Ezek. ix. 2. *And behold, six men came from the way of the higher gate, which lieth toward the north, and every man a slaughtering weapon in his hand.*—When sins are committed against much light, against many checks of conscience, many beams of light, many means of grace, many calls of providence, many instances of mercy and divine goodness; and against the patience and forbearance of God, as you see, Rom. ii. 4, 5.

3. When the *patience* of God is not only *abused*, but *laughed at*, and *ridiculed* by a profane age, that begin to say, as it is said, 2 Pet. iii. 4. *Where is the promise of his coming?* Where is the threatening of his coming to judgment? Then is the Lord angry, and will let men know that he is not *slack concerning his promise*, as *some men count slackness*, though he is *long-suffering to us-ward*;

ward; and that he is not slack concerning his threatening, but will render vengeance to his enemies, Deut. xxxii. 41.

4. It is an evidence that the Lord is about to punish the inhabitants of the earth, when there are *few or none to stand in the gap*, and keep out the wrath that is coming in; *And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none. Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them, I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord God, Ezek. xxii. 30, 31.* Then it is the time for the birds to fly into their nests; the storm is approaching.—When good men are taken away, and there is great scarcity of them; *The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come. Isa. lviii. 1.* It is on this account the prophet Micah cries out, *Wo is me, for the good man is perished out of the earth, and there is none upright among men, Micah vii. 1, 2.*—In a word sometimes the *aspect of providence* prophesies this to all that have eyes in their head.

II. We come now to speak a little of the *respect* the Lord hath to the *safety* and *security* of his own people when a storm is coming. And here we may consider, 1. The *reasons* why; 2. The *manner* how he secures them.

1st, He will do so, as appears from these *reasons* following, among others.

1. Because he *loves* them with a peculiar love. Hence the Psalmist, Psal. cvi. 5. prays that the Lord would let him see *the good of his chosen*, that, says he, *I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, and that I may rejoice with thine inheritance.* The love of God is above all love; and it is a tender and a compassionate love. He loves his people, and therefore can protect them in time of danger; *As a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that love and fear him, Psal. ciii. 13.* Though

Though he *visit their iniquities with rods*, yet his *loving-kindness will be not utterly take from them*, Psalm lxxxix. 32.

2. He will take care of their safety, because of his *Relation* to them; he being their God, and they his people; he their King, and they his subjects. He is indeed Lord and King of all the earth, but theirs in a special sense.—He is their *Shepherd*, and they the sheep of his pasture; and, because he is their Shepherd, they shall not want protection or provision in straits.—He is their *Father*, and they his sons and daughters: Will he not take care of his children?—He is their *Husband*; and will he not take care of his spouse? *No man hateth his own flesh, but nourisheth it, even as the Lord the church*, Eph. v. 29.

3. The Lord will provide for the security of his people, because of the constant *intercession* of Christ for them in heaven; for he is their *Advocate*, appearing in the presence of God for them. There are some who have been given to Christ by the Father, whom he will take care of and protect by his prayers; *I pray not for the world, but for them that thou hast given me*, John xvii. 9. The preservation of the remnant is owing to Christ's prayer and intercession. See this clear from Zech. i. 12, 13. *Then the angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem, and on the cities of Judah, against whom thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years. And the Lord answered the angel, that talked with me, with good words, and comfortable words.*

4. The Lord will take care of his own, because of his *promise* engaged for their security; Psal. xxvii. 5. *For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.* Isa. xxxiii. 16. *He shall dwell on high; his place of defence shall be the munition of rocks; bread shall be given him, his water shall be sure.* Chap. xxxii. 2. *A man shall be a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest.* Mal. iii. 17. *And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels, and, I will spare them as a man spareth*

Spareth his own son that serveth him. He will set a mark upon them, Ezek. ix. 4. *Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark on the foreheads of the men that sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.*

2dly, How, and in what manner will he secure them, when they seem as much exposed as the rest of the world? Do not good men fall in common calamities as well as others? True, indeed; sometimes it is so: but then it is,

1. For their *compliance* with the sins of the time, and not coming into their chambers, but staying without doors, when the storm comes on. When they partake of the sins of the wicked, they partake of their plagues: when they are too much conform to the world, they suffer with the world. Good men may be careless in *sanctifying the Lord*, and making him their *fear and dread*; but, when they do so, then he is for a *sanctuary*, Isa. viii. 13, 14.

2. God sometimes suffers his own to fall in the common calamity, because there is *another world*, there is a *rest remaining for them*, a better happiness than this life.

Yet after all, there is a vast difference betwixt the *righteous* falling in the common calamity, and the *wicked*. 1. The godly man may suffer affliction, and yet have the *support of divine grace*, while the wicked know nothing of it. 2. The sufferings of the one *purge* him, the sufferings of the other *poison* him. 3. They are for a *chastisement* to the one, but for a *punishment* to the other. 4. Yea, *death* itself to the one but kills his *body*, but to the other it is the destruction of *soul* and body both*.

But, as to the *manner* how God secures his people in common danger.

1. He sometimes secures them by *death* itself, that they may not see the evil and farther calamity that is

* The difference between the afflictions of the righteous and the wicked, is more copiously handled, above Sermon XCI. p. 112.—125; and all the chastisements of the Lord's people shewn to be consistent with love.

coming upon the earth. Thus it is said of Abijah, 1 Kings xiv. 13. *He shall die : for he only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave ; because in him there is found some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel.* None in Jeroboam's family had any good thing in them but this child. Thus see what is said of good Josiah, 2 Kings xxii. 20. *Behold therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace, and thine eyes shall not see all the evil that I will bring upon this place.*

2. God secures his people in the storm, by *supporting* and *comforting* them in their trouble ; *Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God,* 2 Cor. i. 4. Who would not drink of that cup that is sweetened with the consolation of the Holy Ghost, sometimes making them say, *This trouble is no trouble ; this pain is no pain ; this rack is like a bed of roses, for the sense of God's love swallows up all ?*

3. In a word, he hath wonderful ways of securing them by his *presence* and *providence*. Thus Paul was secured by the merciful providence of God, when forty persons and persecutors had vowed his ruin, and that they *should neither eat nor drink till they had killed him.* Both scripture and ecclesiastical history are full of instances of his merciful protecting providence. Infinite Wisdom hath many ways to secure his own.

III. The *third* head proposed was, To shew what *chambers* he wills them to come into, that they may escape the storm when a-coming.

In general, when we speak of *chambers*, it supposes a *house*, where the chambers are. Now, as God himself, a God in Christ, is the house, Psalm xxxi. 2. *Be thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me :* and there are as many chambers in this house as there are attributes and perfections in God, to which we are called to fly by faith : so the church of God is called a house ; the church invisible a *spiritual* house : *Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house,* 1 Peter

1 Peter ii. 5.; *a habitation of God through the Spirit*, Eph. ii. 22. And here there are chambers that belong to the house, and to which all the household of faith will betake themselves.

More particularly, I shall name four sorts of chambers we are invited to come into, that are the chambers of the house of God, as belonging to every one that hath come into the house. *Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers.*

1. There are chambers of *distinction* we are invited to come into, even to our own apartments, so as not to be united with or conform to the world; *Come out from among them, and be ye separate*, 2 Cor. vi. 17. *Come out of Babylon; Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and so partake of her plagues*, Rev. xviii. 4. How are we to come out of the world? It is by *not partaking* with the world in their sins; *Be not ye therefore partakers with them*, Eph. v. 7.; and by being *not conform* to the world; *Be not conform to the world, but be ye transformed*, Rom. xii. 2. And thus we are to come out of Babylon, or out of the corrupt part of a church, by *not partaking* with them, or being *conform* to them, but rather *testifying against* them in the name of Christ. This is the way how the saints in scripture have overcome their enemies; *They overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony*, Rev. xii. 11. This is the way we are to distinguish ourselves for the Lord, in threatening times, by coming into the chambers of distinction, or apartment of the house, that it may appear we are on the Lord's side. If God hath *set the godly apart for himself*, they ought to set themselves apart from this world.

2. There are chambers of *defence* we are called to come into, where we may be safe in the worst of times. The name of God is a *strong tower*, a strong chamber, a chamber of strength, Prov. xviii. 10. into which we are to run for shelter. *They that know thy name will put their trust in thee*, Psalm ix. 10.—Every perfection of God is a chamber; *Trust ye in the Lord for ever*,

for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength. These are the secrets of his tabernacle, Psalm xxvii. 5. *He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.*—Every office of Christ is a chamber; and he invites us to come into him, and rest safely; *Come to me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*, Mat. xi. 28. —Every promise of the covenant is a chamber; and they are very sure, firm, and durable rooms and apartments, being all *Yea and Amen in Christ*. The word of the Lord endureth for ever; and we are to come in there by faith in his word, and holy confidence in a promising God—By faith, every believer finds a way to these chambers, and there he hides himself with pleasure, and triumphs, when he finds himself brought there; *The King hath brought me into his chambers, we will rejoice and be glad in thee*, Song i. 4.

3. There are chambers of devotion that we are called to come into; *Enter thou into thy closet, and shut thy door, and pray to thy Father which is in secret, and seeth in secret*, Mat. vi. 6. Recourse to these chambers of devotion, for seeking God in private and secret, as well as public, is always our duty, especially in times of danger, and of threatened wrath; therefore *seek righteousness, seek meekness; it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger*. And thus we may hide ourselves in the evil day, when we put ourselves in God's hand to hide us; *I flee to thee to hide me*, Psalm xliii. 9. And their *hearts shall live that seek him*. All that call upon him in truth shall be safe, and shall be hid, either under heaven, or in heaven; *The prudent man foresees the evil, and hides himself*. O come into the chambers of devotion.

4. There are chambers of action and business that we are called to come into. God's house is not only a house of prayer, but a work-house, wherein we are to do something for God in our day and generation; *Why stand ye here all the day idle?* Matth. xx. 6. And chap. xxi. 28. *Go work to-day in my vineyard*. God calls his people, not only to cry and pray to him, but also to action and diligence. When Israel were in great danger

danger at the side of the Red-sea, and their enemies behind pursuing them, God says to Moses, *Wherefore criest thou unto me? Speak to the people that they go forward*, Exod. xv. 15. We are not only to *cry* but to *go forward* in our work and service, in our several places and stations, as magistrates, ministers, or people, in all the duties incumbent upon us, when judgments are threatened.

IV. The *fourth* and last head proposed was, To make *application*. Is it so, *That in shaking times, when wrath is threatened upon a sinful people, such is the care that God hath for the safety and security of his own, that he wills them to come into their chambers and not stay without doors, to be exposed to the violence of the storm that is a-coming?* Then hence see,

I. What good reason there is to apprehend that a *storm of wrath is a-coming*, and that the Lord is about to punish the inhabitants of Britain and Ireland for their iniquity.—Scotland, England, and Ireland are guilty of breaking a Solemn League and Covenant they made with God for Reformation. And our bloody sins cry from the earth for vengeance to come down from heaven: our perjury cries for vengeance; the sins of civil and ecclesiastic courts, the sins of princes, pastors, and people, cry for vengeance; our bloodshed cries for vengeance; our unbelief and despising of Christ, cry for vengeance; our long contempt of the means of grace cries for vengeance; our defection and apostasy cry for vengeance; all the catalogue of sins, formerly mentioned, cry for vengeance. Before Jerusalem was destroyed, a terrible sword hang over the temple. My friends, the sword of the Lord hangs over us in these lands. Though there want not signs in the very heavens and earth portending sad days, yet we need no other signs than what the word of God declares to us, that national sins must be punished with national desolation. Many special judgments are we under already; and the glory of the Lord is far removed from the sanctuary, and the slaughter-weapons are ready: even
through

though France and Spain * were not so ready as they seem to be, yet God, who hath many arrows in his quiver, is ready, saying, Joel ii. 13, 14. *Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe ; come, get ye down, for the press is full, the fats overflow, for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision ; for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision.*

2. Hence see who they are that alone shall be *safe* and *happy* in the day of public calamities and common destruction, namely, the *Lord's people*, who shelter themselves in the chambers of safety and protection which God calls them to come into : his poor humbled people, who sigh and mourn for all the abominations done in the midst of Jerusalem.

But, leaving all other uses and inferences, I come to offer the *exhortation* in the text ; *Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee ; hide thyself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.* Come, as Noah into the ark, and shut the doors about you, when God threatens a flood.—Israel must keep within doors when the destroying angel is slaying the first-born of Egypt, else the blood upon the door-posts will not secure them ; so must Rahab and her family when Jericho was destroyed.

I shall offer a few *directions*, and then lay down some *considerations* out of the text.

1st, We are to tender some *directions* to you. Well then, Sirs, O be persuaded to come in,

1. To your chambers of *distinction*, and side yourselves for God. If *Baal be God*, then follow him ; but if the *Lord be God*, then follow him.

2. Come into your chambers of *defence*. There is *no other name given under heaven, whereby to be saved, but the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.* The name of the

† Britain, for a considerable time, before this, had been on the point of an open rupture with Spain : several acts of hostilities has already commenced by the Spaniards ; and this year war was openly declared by Britain against Spain, on the 28th day of Octob. France, ever watchful to embrace an opportunity to appear against the British nation, soon threw herself into the scale ; at first, by making captures of many of our ships, under Spanish colours ; and, at last, by a declaration of war, in favours of the Spanish court.

Lord is a strong tower, to which the righteous run and are safe.

3. Come into your chambers of devotion ; and, O pray, pray, pray. Let your carnal, formal, twice-a-day prayers be turned into David's seven times a-day : let your hypocritical howling be turned into praying ; and your praying be turned into wrestling and violence ; *The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.*

4. Come into your chambers of action, work, and business, in your several stations :

(1.) AS MAGISTRATES, by their authority, whether supreme or subordinate. See how the king of Nineveh behaved when judgments were threatened, Jonah iii. 6, 7, 9. *For word came to the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes : and caused it to be proclaimed and published thorough Nineveh, by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing ; let them not feed nor drink water : who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not ?* So did Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. xx. 3. *And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast.* Magistrates should solemnly execute judgment and justice, Jer. v. i. chap. xxi. 2. ; yea, they should solemnly reform themselves, and study the reformation of the land and places of their concern, so did Aza, Josiah, and Jehoshaphat.

(2.) MINISTERS are to do their duty ; partly by preaching boldly against all manner of sin, for the convincing and humbling of sinners ; *Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins,* Isaiah lviii. 1. : partly by praying and interceding in behalf of the Lord's people ; *Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest till he establish and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth,* Isaiah lxii. 6, 7. *Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say. Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine inheritance to reproach,*

Joel ii. 17. : and partly by using that *authority* God has given them for the *edification of the body of Christ*.

(3.) PEOPLE are to do their duty, by *humbling* themselves for all their own sins, and the sins of the land, sprinkling themselves by faith in the blood of the Lamb, Exod. xii. 13. ; *Ceasing to do evil, and learning to do good* ; and *sighing and crying for all the abominations done in Jerusalem*, that a mark may be set upon them.

We shall now offer the following *directions* to all in general.

1. O ! *agree with thine adversary while thou art yet in the way*. If God be your enemy, wo will be to you when you are in the midst of the storm, and have no friend's house nor chamber to go into.—O seek to have peace made up with God, by the mediation of your friend Jesus Christ, who is the friend of sinners.

2. See that thy *faith and repentance be evangelical*. In summer, a house with many holes and chinks may serve a man's turn to dwell in ; but, in time of winter, men desire a house that is tenable, and will keep out the violence of the cold : so, in the days of peace, any sort of a faith serves the turn with many ; but, in time of danger, distress, or affliction, *saving faith* will only stand in stead.

3. Endeavour to get *strength of judgment, and soundness in the faith of gospel-truths*, that in time of trial you may be able to give a reason of your faith ; and that might be an antidote, if popery were coming in, against your kneeling to the mass. Poor ignorant creatures have no antidote against any error in the world.

4. Seek not only to have a *strong head*, but a *courageous heart*, to stand the trial. Your cause is good, if it be the truth ; your master is great, if he be Christ. The captain hath gone before you.

5. Wean thyself from *all things in the world*, looking upon thy husband, thy child, thy goods and honour, as created things that must away ; and set your eyes upon what is permanent : and be ready to express the love you think you have to Christ, and to express it even in the most perilous times.

6. Beware

6. Beware of the *sins of the times*, and bewail them ; and seek to be affected with all the dishonours done God's name, both in former and present times ; that, being purged from the sins of the times, you may be preserved from the judgments of the times. Live a life of dependence upon Jesus : keep within your chambers : go not abroad to the world, lest the storm be upon you before you be housed again.

2dly, We shall next lay down some *considerations*, drawn out of the text.

Confid. 1. " That there are some, who, in a peculiar manner, are the *people of God*. My *People*, says God here, in contradistinction from the *inhabitants of the earth*, in the following verse." And, indeed, when God is about to bring judgments upon the wicked, he would have his people out from amongst them. They will not hearken to his voice ; but come you, who are *my people*. But probably you may ask, *Who are his peculiar people ?* Why, his people are called *the sheep of his pasture*. But, it may be still enquired, *Who are the sheep of his pasture ?* They are described to be such who know and follow him ; *My sheep hear my voice, and follow me*, says Christ, John x. 27. They are always bleating, so to speak, after him, and crying to him, saying, *Lord, let me see thy face*. They are not content with any thing in the world till they get a sight of him. They hear his voice, and regard it.—But when Christ speaks to others ; for example, to the *drunkard*, saying, *Will you come to me, and quit your drunkenness ?* No ; he will not hear on this side of the head. If he say to the *whoremonger*, *Will you come to me, and quit your whoredom ?* No ; he rejects the proposal ; he does not regard his voice ; he goes on in his lusts. Such cannot be his sheep, cannot surely be his people. But when Christ speaks to his own sheep, and requires them to quit their lusts, and come to him ; their answer is, " Lord, I cannot get it done ; though it be long since I began to do it, yet I think I am never the nearer my purpose than I was many years ago ; but, Lord, do it for me : Lord, make me come to thee ; and, O make me quit all my lusts and idols." This argues they are

his people, and evidence they are his sheep. They aim at obeying his voice, in his name and strength : and the day comes wherein he will save them completely.

Confid. 2. “ That his people are a *safe* people : they “ have the chambers that belong to them, for their “ safety in days of trouble : *Come thou into thy chambers.*” Besides the protection of their God, his name and arms, where they are, as in a castle, safe and sure indeed ; for, *as the mountains are about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people* : they have inward peace, and the testimony of a good conscience, which is a heartsome chamber, like a dry house in a rainy-day : *And the peace of God, that passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus*, Phil. iv. 7. : even keep them as in a garrison, as the original word signifies.

Confid. 3. “ That their safety from the storm lies in “ keeping *within their chambers*, and keeping their “ chamber-doors *shut*.” Whenever they go out of their chambers, they are exposed ; for, in that case, when God strikes the wicked, they shall not be spared any more than the rest. They must not only enter into their chambers, but abide *within* doors ; and not only so, but *shut* the doors, lest the pursuer, the devil, come into them : they are to bar him out, as it were. This points out the necessity, not only of having faith, but of living by faith, and living a life of close dependence upon a God in Christ.

Confid. 4. “ That the troubles and trials of the “ church and children of God are but for a *short time*, “ but for a *moment* ; yea, as it were, but a *little moment*, and the *indignation shall overpass* : the indignation of man against them, and the indignation of “ God ; his fatherly anger, and the effects thereof : “ and then you shall be set at liberty.” The longest period of time here is but a moment, when compared with everlasting life. And what the worse will he be who hath suffered longer, than they who have suffered a shorter time ? he that hath suffered seven years, than he that hath suffered seven days ? Nay, the gold glances the finer, the longer it hath been in the fire.— Therefore, this should make you not at all to grudge

or repine. You are not to think that it is good for you to be quit of affliction ; for then you would think yourself well, and would not desire another heaven ; but he orders affliction, that you may long for the place where there is no more affliction. But they who get all their pleasure, let them not look for another heaven hereafter ; for it will be told them, they have got their heaven here on earth ; *Thou enjoyedst thy good things.* But happy they who bear afflictions dutifully ! It is good reason you be used as your master was before you, yet your affliction will not last long : though you get many a stormy day, yet a fair one is coming, that will make you think little of all you suffered. When once you come to the upper chambers of God's house, it will be no grief of heart to you in heaven, that you suffered so long upon earth ; it will appear but a moment when the indignation is overpast.

Confid. 5. " That the fear of the Lord's coming to punish the earth, the world, for their iniquity, is a *good motive* even to God's people to fly into their chambers, and hide themselves. Do it, says the text ; *For, behold the Lord cometh out of his place.*" Because if they fly not out of the way, they may get a part of the shower and storm. When the Lord rained down the great hailstones upon the Egyptians, all that were out of their houses were destroyed ; and they that left their beasts in the field went not thither to bring them off, all was destroyed : so, if you be out of your chambers, God will not spare you ; therefore this should be a motive to fly. The fear of that hell that is coming upon the wicked, both in this life and the life to come, will be a motive to his people, who, though they be secured from hell, and ought not to have the slavish fear of that, yet are to fear that God *who can destroy both soul and body.*

Confid. 6. " That it is a *terrible thing* when God comes out of his place to punish men : *Behold the Lord cometh out of his place.*" It is observed by one, " That God's place is the mercy-seat ; there he delights to sit and dwell between the cherubims, and there he is all mercy ; but, when he comes out of his place, and, as it were, leaves the mercy-seat, and be-

takes himself to the judgment-seat, there he appears as an absolute God, a terrible God ; there he takes no pleasure to be ; *As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked*, Ezek. xxxiii. 11. But, when he is provoked thus to come out of his place, then he is all wrath, and nothing but a *consuming fire*." And, alas ! what a terrible thing is it, to see God out of his place, punishing and destroying sinners, raining the first drops of hell upon them here, to presage the everlasting storm of wrath that is to blow upon them ! Consider, O sinner, what case thou wilt be in, when *cast into the lake which burns with fire and brimstone* ! It is a bottomless pit ; and, when thou art cast into it, thou wilt constantly be falling down, and never find a bottom ; and always the farther thou goest down, the more hot, and the more unable wilt thou be to endure it. And, as long as God lives, thou art to live in that case, who live and die out of Christ. Alas ! *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God* ; and to behold him coming out of his place !

Confid. 7. " That few, *very few*, will escape when " the Lord arises to punish ; for, he is to punish the " *inhabitants of the earth*." Now, who are the inhabitants of the earth ? and, who are there amongst us that are not the inhabitants of the earth ? What, say you ! are none to escape ? To this we reply : A man is said to dwell where his heart dwells, and to be not where he is, but where he loves, and where his heart is. These are properly the inhabitants of the earth, whose hearts *inhabit and dwell fixedly* upon the earth ; and so they only escape that have their hearts in heaven, their *conversation in heaven*, their burghership in heaven, Philip. iii. 20 ; where these who have their conversation and burghership in heaven, are set in opposition to these who *mind earthly things*, and *whose end is destruction*. They then who shall escape the punishment here threatened, are not burghesses in this world ; their heart is not here below. But they who have their heart set upon earth, they will perish together with the perishing things their heart is set upon : they never desire to have their hearts elsewhere than upon the world ; nor are they uneasy because they want hea-

venly

venly hearts. I suppose this may be a trying thing to most part here. Perhaps, when you send your heart once to heaven, you send it twenty times to the world: if you send your heart heavenward on the Sabbath-day, it may be you scarce do so till Sabbath come again: and therefore I mightily fear you be of the *inhabitants of the earth* here spoken of, that are to be punished. A child of God may have much of a worldly heart, but then it is a burden to him, and a sore trouble; a disease he seeks unto Jesus for healing of. However, those inhabitants of the earth here spoken of, are opposed to the people of God spoken of in the former verse; *Come, my people.*

Confid. 8. “That God hath *just cause to punish* when he arises out of his place to do so. He comes to punish the inhabitants of the earth *for their iniquity.*” Wherefore is it? For their iniquity. He will not punish without just cause, *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?* He will declare their faults to them, and let them see it is for iniquity; that it is for their iniquity, their own wickedness; *Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee,* Jer. ii. 19. Observe then, that God’s judgments are just, and sinners shall be obliged to confess it; and none shall be able to say at the day of judgment, I have got wrong, I have got injustice: for that court is not like the courts among us, whether civil or ecclesiastic, from which some will come, saying, I have got a shameful wrong done me this day. But none shall have that to say here. As there is no appeal from God’s court, so none shall have cause of complaint that injustice hath been done to them: nay, rather shall they have it to say, Ah! it was highly equitable, and a righteous sentence upon me; for how often have I been warned of this doleful day by the ministers of Christ, and told of all that is now come upon me; but I thought nothing of it, and delayed and shifted the grand concern! Their conscience shall condemn them; *Every mouth shall be stopped, and all the inhabitants of the world become guilty before God,* and be forced to subscribe to the equity of their doom, and the justice of the sentence. He punishes for their iniquity.

Confid. 9. “That *heaven and earth* will join together
“ in

“ in condemning the wicked and ungodly, when God
 “ comes out of his place to punish them ; *For the*
 “ *EARTH shall disclose her blood, and shall no more co-*
 “ *ver her slain.*” All the wrongs and bloody sins that
 have been committed on the earth, from age to age,
 shall be disclosed by the earth itself bearing witness to
 the wickedness done in it, as it is said, Joshua xxiv.
 17. *Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us : for it*
hath heard all the words of the Lord which he spake unto
us ; it shall be a witness to you, lest ye deny your God.
 So it may be said, the earth hath seen and heard all
 the wickedness done upon it : and by the recognition
 of conscience it shall witness and testify against the sin-
 ner. As the *Lord*, the omniscient God, will reveal
 the whole matter, even the faults that men thought
 were quite out of mind, their twenty, thirty, forty, or
 fifty years old wickedness laid as fair and fresh before
 them as it was the hour wherein it was committed ; so
 the *earth* shall bear witness and disclose all the sins that
 seemed to be buried in it ; for, with the resurrection
 of the bodies of the wicked, there will be a resurrecti-
 on of sins. In a manner, the earth will vomit up what
 it swallowed down, and behoved to bear so long in its
 breast. God will tell you the place where you commit-
 ted your whoredom. The wall and timber of the
 house will bear witness against you. Take heed, *drunk-*
ard, the day will come when God will make the table
 you sit at stand up, as it were, in your view, and bear
 witness against you. Take heed *adulterer*, God will make
 the bed to rise and witness against you. None but they
 that have a good Advocate and a good conscience shall
 escape. The earth will disclose the blood that hath been
 shed in Scotland ; the bloody shambles will rise and
 witness against the persecutors. *The earth shall no more*
cover her slain, when the Lord comes out of his place.

Confid. 10. “ That the time of the Lord’s coming
 “ to judgment is not here *specified* ; not only to shew
 “ that we knew not how near hand the avenging stroke
 “ is, but also to shew that the Lord is not yet away
 “ out of his place ; he is not yet risen up in his wrath,
 “ but as yet upon his mercy-seat.” His judgments
 may be very near indeed ; for much barrenness is a-
 mongst

mongst us ; and he says, *Behold, the ax is laid to the root of the tree.* And there are few watery eyes for sin among us ; few sighers and mourners, that have the mark of preservation when the destroying angel comes about.

But as yet the chamber-doors of mercy are open, and the Lord is saying, *Come, come ; enter into your chambers : therefore, To-day, while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts as in the provocation.* O Sirs, come to Jesus for safety.

(1.) You who are *without*, and have never come in to these chambers, let me tell you, that yet a little while, and the calamity here threatened will be upon you : sickness or sorrow may be upon you in a little ; yea, death and judgment will be upon you in a little. Sword, famine, and pestilence may be hastening upon the land : many spiritual and temporal judgments are already surrounding us ; and, if by these we will not be reformed, we may expect that God will punish us *seven times more, and yet seven times more for our iniquities.* And since Reformation amongst the generality is going back, instead of going forward, either in church or state ; days of dreadful calamity, and storms, wrath and indignation are hastening on. O then, why stay you without doors, where it is impossible you can escape the indignation of God, and the damnation of hell ? O fly, fly for refuge, to *lay hold on the hope set before you.* Christ is the city of refuge, the chamber of safety, and all the doors of the chamber are yet open to you ; *Whosoever will, let him come.* Christ, as a *Prophet*, is an open door of hope for ignorant sinners ; O come in here, and be taught. Christ as a *Priest*, is an open door of hope for guilty sinners ; O come in here, and get remission of sin in his blood. Christ, as a *King*, is an open door of hope to captive sinners, under the power and slavery of sin and Satan ; O let such come in here, and share of the victory of Christ, who came in the flesh *to destroy the works of the devil*, and who comes in the Spirit by a preached gospel for the same end. O come into him by faith and believing in him : and, if you cannot come, pray, pray that he may draw you in ; for he stands ready to take you by the hand : he says not, *Go in without me ;* but, *come in and take my help.*

(2.) You who are *within*, and who have entered into these chambers, let me tell you for your comfort, that as you are in a place of safety, where you do well to stay and abide by faith; so yet a little while, and the indignation will be overpast, and all calamity will be over your head; yet a little while, and death itself will be a door of hope to you, so as you may sing there, and say, Farewel death, and welcome life: *Death shall be swallowed up in victory.* Farewel faith and hope, and welcome vision and fruition. Farewel fighting and war, and welcome victory, victory for evermore. Farewel sin and sickness, and welcome perfect holiness and perfect health; for, *the inhabitant of that land shall not say, I am sick.* Farewel vain world and ill neighbours, and welcome the innumerable company of angels. Farewel trouble, and welcome rest, *the rest that remains for the people of God.* Farewel sighing and sobbing, and welcome the *song of Moses and of the Lamb*, everlasting praises and hallelujahs. Farewel jars and contentions, and welcome peace, pleasure, and love. Farewel church militant, and false brethren, welcome church triumphant, *the general assembly and church of the first-born that are written in heaven.* Farewel sweet promises, and welcome full and glorious performance; *Not one good thing hath failed of all that he promised.* Farewel partial enjoyments, scanty, fleeting, and little tastes; welcome full meal, and the table that shall never be drawn. Farewel wants, and welcome fulness. Farewel darkness and doubts, and fears, and dangers; and welcome light, assurance, eternity, security, and everlasting embraces of my glorious Lord. Farewel base lusts and corruptions, you and I have kept too long company together, and, blessed be God, we will never meet again; but welcome grace in perfection, which is everlasting glory. Yet a little while, and you may sing these sweet notes upon the banks of the Jordan of death; for he that says, *Come, my people, enter into your chambers, and shut your doors about you, &c.* says also, *In a little moment the indignation shall be overpast, and all clouds and storms shall vanish.*

