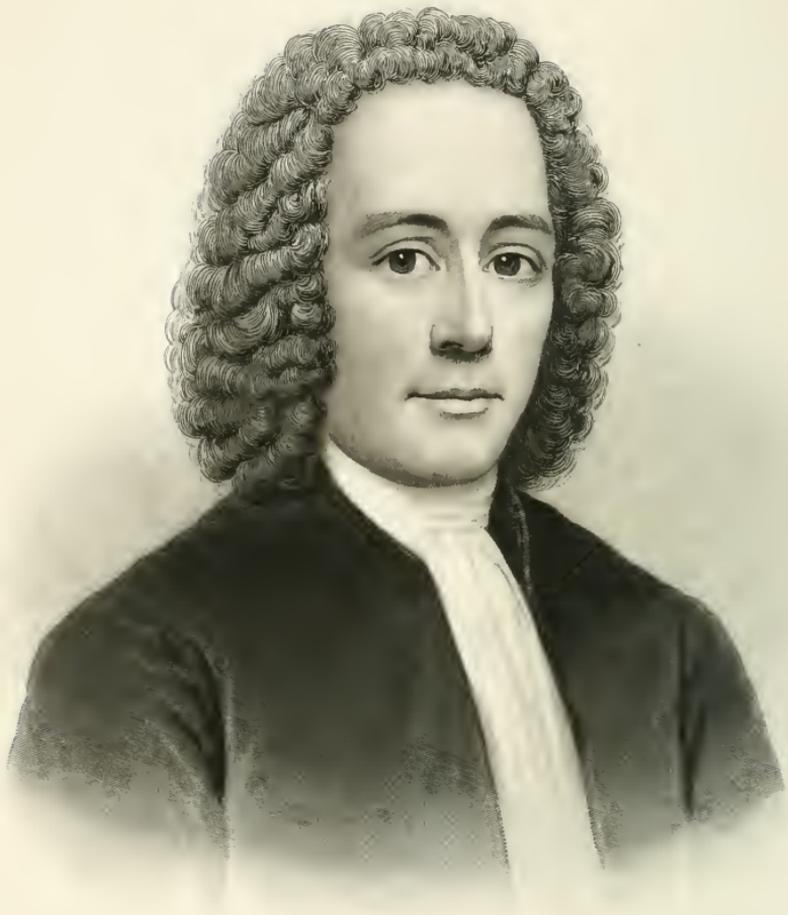


NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES



3 3433 06826649 7

212
Erskine



Rev. David ...

SERMONS

BY

REV. RALPH ^{ac}ERSKINE, A. M.
T

SELECTED FROM THE BRITISH EDITIONS OF 1777 AND 1821.

WITH A PREFACE.

BY THE REV. STEPHEN H. ^{igerson}TYNG, D. D.

RECTOR OF ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH, NEW YORK.

Volume First.

“Grace be with all them who love the Lord Jesus Christ
in sincerity.”—Eph. vi. 24.

OFFICE FOR THE SALE OF
THE LEIGHTON PUBLICATIONS.

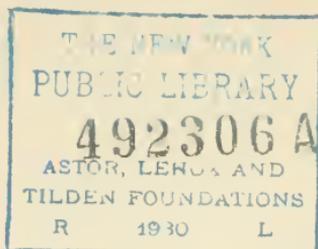
AT THE DEPOSITORY OF
THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL BOOK SOCIETY,

OF

PHILADELPHIA.

1224 CHESTNUT STREET.

MDCCCLXIII.



The selection of the sermons of RALPH ERSKINE, contained in the two volumes now published, was principally made by the Rev. John G. Maxwell, Rector of Emmanuel Church, Kensington, with some additions by the Rev. Addison B. Atkins, Rector of Christ Church, Germantown.

They are printed from the Glasgow edition of 1771, with the following alterations only:—

Passages having a local or temporary reference have been omitted, and these omissions are indicated thus: * * *

Many of the Scripture quotations appear to have been from memory, and whenever practicable, those of them so quoted have been corrected, and made to conform to the authorized version. These corrections were made by Mr. Samuel D. Wyeth.

A few, and only a few, obsolete words have been replaced by modern ones.

Philadelphia, October, 1860.

STEREOTYPED BY S. D. WYETH, AGT., NO. 209 PEAR ST., PHILA.

COLLINS, PRINTER.

CONTENTS VOL. I.

	Page
PREFACE BY THE REV. STEPHEN H. TYNG, D. D.	v
S E R M O N I.	
THE WORD OF SALVATION SENT TO SINNERS, - - - -	1
<i>“To you is the word of this salvation sent.”—ACTS xiii. 26.</i>	
S E R M O N I I.	
GOSPEL COMPULSION; or, ministerial power and authority, - -	16
<i>“Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.”—LUKE xiv. 23.</i>	
S E R M O N I I I.	
PREVENTING LOVE; or, God’s love to us the cause of our love to him, -	57
<i>“We love him, because he first loved us.”—1 JOHN iv. 19.</i>	
S E R M O N I V.	
GOSPEL HUMILIATION, grounded on faith’s view of Divine pacification, -	103
<i>“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.”—EZEKIEL xvi. 63.</i>	
S E R M O N V.	
REDEMPTION BY CHRIST, shewn to be of God as the first cause, and to God as the last end, - - - - -	119
<i>“Who of God is made unto us redemption.” “For thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.”—1 COR. i. 30, COMPARED WITH REV. v. 9.</i>	
S E R M O N V I.	
THE GREAT RUIN AND THE GREAT RELIEF, or, help from heaven to self-destroyers on earth, - - - - -	138
<i>“O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help.” HOSEA xiii. 9.</i>	
S E R M O N V I I.	
THE RENT VEIL OF THE TEMPLE; or, access to the holy of holies by the death of Christ, - - - - -	167
<i>“And behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.”—MATT. xxvii. 51.</i>	

S E R M O N V I I I.

COVENANTED GRACE for covenanting work. - - - 200

“Thou hast avouched the LORD, this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice: And the LORD hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldest keep all his commandments.”—DEUT. xxvi. 17, 18.

S E R M O N S I X.—X I I I.

THE NATURE AND EXCELLENCY OF GOSPEL PURITY, - - - 221

“There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.”—PROV. xxx. 12.

S E R M O N S X I V.—X V.

CARNAL CONSULTATION UNFOLDED; or, the great evil of being actuated by carnal principles, in the matters of God, evinced, - - - 296

“Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.”—GAL. i. 6.

S E R M O N X V I.

WITNESSES CITED FOR GOD; and all their witnessing work summed up in this one point, viz.: their attesting that he is God, - - - 348

“Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, that I am God.”—ISAIAH xliii. 12.

S E R M O N S X V I I.—X V I I I.

THE COMER'S CONFLICT; or, the beginner's battle with the devil, when essaying to come to Christ by faith. - - - 372

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

S E R M O N X I X.

FAITH'S PLEA UPON GOD'S COVENANT, - - - 394

“Have respect unto the covenant.”—PSALM lxxiv. 20.

S E R M O N X X.

FAITH'S PLEA UPON GOD'S WORD, - - - 408

—*“Do as thou hast said.”—2 SAM. vii. 25.*

S E R M O N X X I.

THE HAPPY VICTOR; or, saints more than conquerors, - - - 422

“Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.”—ROMANS viii. 37.

S E R M O N X X I.—B.

THE DAY OF EFFECTUAL CALLING, a levelling day; or, the heights from which sinners come down in the day of effectual vocation. - - - 444

“Zaccheus, make haste, and come down.”—LUKE xix. 5.

P R E F A C E .

THE works of Ralph Erskine have long been to me a mine of gold. The character of his sermons had been familiar to me before I was able to obtain a copy for myself. The last edition of 1821, had been accessible only in occasional copies for several years, when, in a book-store in Philadelphia, a copy was presented to me by the salesman, with the remark, that it had just been brought there by a clergyman, who found the contents "too Calvinistic" for his taste. I gladly caught the opportunity to add to the number of my personal companions, a friend whose conversation I had long desired, and that copy has been to me a chosen and valued companion since. I should be unable to point out a single writer, in whom would be found an equal combination of excellent and important qualifications for a Christian teacher. Many of the Church of England writers are thoroughly evangelical in principle, and full in statement, and clear in discrimination, like Bishop Reynolds, and Bishop Hopkins, and Bishop Hall. Many of the English nonconformists of the same century are also full and discriminating in their statements of Divine truth,—like Owen, and Goodwin, and Howe. Many of the later writers of the English Church have also followed in the same line of clear teaching of the Gospel; and nothing can ever be more beautiful and complete than the material and style of the Scotch Leighton. But no one of them all, and no other writer that I know, has heaped together so great a fullness of provision, and spread out such a display of evangelical wealth, as Ralph Erskine.

There is a fullness of statement of doctrine, a fencing off, and a fencing in, of truth in its relations, in a division like light itself, an earnestness of discussion and exhortation flowing out from the

principles declared, and a richness of terms and illustrations, that within my reading have no rival in theology in the English tongue. The nine volumes of his sermons and sonnets are a whole library of religious instruction to a young minister. Sometimes a single word brings to the mind a new power and guidance, in his particular employment of it, as when he calls the Saviour "the Father's TRUSTEE." Often a single line in his sonnets opens a gate of clear entrance to most valuable and new discernment of the truth,—as when he says of legal preachers, "they bury Christ in Moses' ground." Nor can any spiritual and Scriptural mind fail to gain from all his productions increased knowledge of Scripture truth, and enlarged views and pleasures connected with it.

RALPH ERSKINE was a minister of the Established Church of Scotland from 1711 to 1742, when he was ejected from that body, and became one of the founders of the Secession Church, in which he ministered until his death in 1752. He was born in 1685, and settled at Dunfermline in 1711. Here his whole ministry was passed, amidst many exciting and afflicting scenes, and with much usefulness to the souls for whom he labored in the Lord's work.

The course of his ministry, and the earnestness of his own mind, threw him into a variety of trials of temper and principles, and he wrote and said much upon points of question which were wholly local and temporary. The Scotch are not a people to take any thing lightly, which opens a fair chance of theoretical discussion, or possible practical application of principles to other more visible relations. To them words and signs are always of consequence; and among all his nation, perhaps there never was a *Scotcher* Scotchman than Ralph Erskine. Nothing in his habitual line of thought and action was a trifle. He took every thing seriously and hardly. He was always ready to say, like Jehu to Jonadab, but much more seriously, "If thy heart is as my heart, come up with me." And though his temper and heart were very far from unkindness or bitterness, and love really filled his soul towards all the people of God, he found great difficulty in conceiving that any really enlightened and conscientious persons should take views on religious subjects materially differing from his own.

He lived in an age of very peculiar earnestness and excitement for such minds. Scotland had just passed through the heavy trials which proceeded from the love of the people for their native Stuarts, from the thorough revolution which had cast that line from the throne, and from the hateful, though ineffectual, attempt to force upon their Church, a government and ministry which they had renounced, and regarded with abhorrence. During this whole period, political and ecclesiastical questions of the deepest application and import were the subjects of constant thought and consideration. Every event and every public agent seemed to stand in some special relation to the times, and none could obtain a fair and separate consideration upon the ground of individual merit. Accordingly, the habitual observation and conversation of the surrounding nation, from his very youth, combined to interest and excite an earnest mind like Erskine's to a constant seriousness of thought and feeling in the exercise of his own influence, and the contemplation of his own position.

The Church of Scotland, during this period, was manifestly entering upon a time of comparative relapse from the intense eagerness of their former protests and defences. To a certain degree, the indolence of man had become weary of disputing, and the wisdom of man had taken calmer and more rational views of subjects of contention, and the multitude of the ministers and people were naturally settling into a moderation of feeling and thought upon controversial subjects. The two-fold effect of such a process would be to make mere worldly and unspiritual minds become indifferent to points of doctrine, and to arouse the energy, kindle the jealousy, and sharpen the discrimination and watchfulness of minds so earnest, real, and instructed in the truth as Erskine's.

It was at this period that he commenced his work in the ministry, and its process and history were just what might have been predicted of such a person at such a time. He became distressed and disgusted with what appeared to him the increasing indifference to Gospel truth, and more and more unyielding in his own determined maintenance of the doctrines which others of the national clergy appeared to him to reject. Every event and relation

was viewed by him in the light of this one line of duty; and that which was in reality but a living love of the Gospel in his heart, and a solemn conviction of duty in maintaining it, often ran with him into intolerant zeal for subordinate points, and impatience with those, who could not in all things coincide in the conclusions and purposes of his intensely earnest mind.

At twenty-seven years of age, Mr. Erskine was inducted into the pastoral office at Dunfermline. It was a parish containing more than 6000 "examinable persons," in the peculiar language of Scotch designation, but had been for several previous years vacant and destitute. Mr. Erskine was ordained as a second minister in the parish, to a pastor who had been inducted within the year before. His whole youth and early maturity had been marked by increasing study, and enlarging Christian character. He was extremely modest and retiring in his native disposition, and had held himself back from public service. But he was earnestly alive to the spiritual demands of the great work he had undertaken; and he devoted his energies and mind, with increasing diligence, to its demands. He was from the beginning of his ministry an indefatigable student of theology, as all his sermons witness, and kept a diary through the whole duration of his pastoral labors. Indeed, his amount of study was very remarkable, when considered in connection with the faithful practical ministry he was daily accomplishing.

His sermons were habitually written, and with great care. Their length makes them a curiosity, when viewed by the standard of modern preaching; and their voluminous divisions and subdivisions give an exhibition of the intelligence and Scriptural instruction of his days exceedingly honorable to the people of his nation and time. Any one of these discourses would be ample for three or four that would be esteemed adequate and enough for a modern assembly.

In a short time after his induction at Dunfermline, his colleague died, and a new minister was called to his aid, now the chief minister of the parish. A very interesting exhibition of Mr. Erskine's Christian feeling was given in his affectionate and tender welcome

of his new assistant, and in a paper of mutual agreement, which he prepared, to govern them in their relations to each other. This paper is really so exemplary and valuable, that I would perpetuate it, if possible, as a pattern for others in similar relations. Thus these faithful men agree together,—

“First.—We will not receive or entertain any ill report of one another: no, not from the wife of our bosom, or dearest or nearest friend or acquaintance; and whatever we may hear that may occasion any jealousy, we will not give it any entertainment, till first we have made inquiry thereinto, by a friendly communication, for removing any mistakes.

“Second.—In all our public administrations and mutual helpfulness to one another in our work, we will not be under the management of our wives, nor any other’s counsel or advice, when it comes to interfere with, and run in opposition to, those duties of love and neighborhood, agreement and fellowship, that we owe to one another, especially in matters where we need one another’s help.

“Third.—Upon any call of Providence that may require our absence from any congregational work, we will endeavor to be mutually helpful to one another, whether in preaching, or in any other ministerial work on week day or Sabbath day, such as visiting the sick, catechising in our colleague’s quarter, as well as in our own, when there is a call of Providence thereto.

“Fourth.—Whatever respect or disrespect is shown by the people to one of us more than another, it shall not, though grave, have any influence upon our grudging or entertaining ill sentiments about one another, or diminish that regard and love that we should have towards one another, whatever difference may be in people’s carriage in preferring one of us before another.

“Fifth.—In matters of moment wherein we are both equally and mutually concerned, we will act by previous concert, particularly in all our public intimation about visiting, catechising, and the like, when it is possible for us to concert together; and in all matters of less moment, or indifferent, (wherein Satan may seek to get advantage of us, as well as in greater matters,) we will mutually yield one to another.

“Sixth.—We will not only keep up a good correspondence between ourselves, but endeavor to conciliate all that love and respect from the people to each other that is possible, seeing that it is for the furtherance of the Gospel that people entertain love and respect for us both; and therefore that neither of us will hear or give entertainment to any thing that may be spoken, either by good or bad, to the disadvantage of his colleague, without resentment, or endeavoring his just vindication in all proper ways; and therefore whatever we shall hear as ungrateful to people, either in method or manner of speech, or whatever is reckoned amiss, whether in our public ministrations or private communications, we will in a friendly manner communicate it to each other, without taking offence at one another’s freedom; and we will entertain no insinuations of people’s commending or applauding one of us beyond another which may tend to the detriment or discouragement of either of us, without endeavoring at the same time to drop what may have a tendency to make our fellows have the same respect that may be pretended toward ourselves by those who make such insinuations.

“Seventh.—Whatever we reckon amiss in any part of our ministerial management, whether with respect to doctrine, discipline, or any such thing, we will in a friendly way caution and confer with each other thereabout: also, we will bear with one another’s weaknesses, and in a friendly manner make each other, if possible, sensible thereof, in order to our and our people’s advantage; thus employing our endeavours to draw in the same yoke.

“Eighth.—That we will not keep up or attend any separate societies in the congregation, without mutual consent or endeavors to have each other the same way, stated or concerned thereabout, as we ourselves may be; and we will not indulge any keeping up a more close correspondence with one of us more than another, such as may tend to cause any thing of alienation in them to either of us, or to cause in us toward one another.

“Ninth.—We will allow no difference or distinction of one before another as to matters of our public ministry, or even as to matters of common civility; not taking away any honorary place

of another, except when necessity, order and decency obliges us, but being kindly affectionate one to another, with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another.

“Tenth.—We will endeavour to strengthen one another’s hands, not only in public in our praying and preaching, confirming what truth and safe doctrine our colleague hath advanced, but also in private, when occasion offers, we will endeavour to show ourselves concerned, as for the success of our own, so of one another’s labours ; studying to inculcate upon people the doctrine of the Gospel preached by our colleague, as well as that by ourselves.”

This fine statement of concord in the very difficult circumstances of an associate ministry was practically illustrated and maintained for many years. Erskine was a man of warm affections, and delighted greatly in communion of spirit with like-minded men. His friendships were strong and ardent, and he felt the more deeply and earnestly when, in subsequent life, not only difficulties arose for him in the Church at large, but also in his most personal relations. His days of controversy in maintaining the truth which he preached, brought out a separation from this beloved colleague, and even arrayed his own son, then in the ministry, in the Church courts against him.

It would be pleasant to contemplate good men apart from contrasts to their characters or their principles, and only in the light of their own positive adoptions and maintenance of truth. But controversy becomes, in the order of Divine Providence, not only the main instrument of defining and impressing truth in its positive discrimination, but also of describing and fortifying the individual characters who have been instructed by it. Beyond question, Ralph Erskine acquired the singular clearness of his conceptions and statements of Gospel doctrine in the very necessity of accurately defining and defending them, which the controversies of his day imposed.

A book published under the title of “The Marrow of Modern Divinity,” was the immediate occasion of the controversy which finally drove Erskine, with his brother and some others, from the communion of the Established Church. The doctrines of this book

were condemned by a vote of the General Assembly, and earnestly defended and adopted by Erskine and his friends. The condemnation of these doctrines led to a series of persecutions of those who held them. "Our escaping the lash of their highest censure," he says, "was more owing to prudential considerations among members than to the tendency of their acts; so their disposition appeared too evidently whenever any student or candidate was supposed to be tinctured with the 'Marrow,'—that is, with a Gospel spirit. There was no quarter for such. Queries upon queries were penned to discourage them, and stop their way, either of being entered on trials, or ordained into churches; while those that were of the most loose and corrupt principles were universally most favored and furthered."

Ralph Erskine remained for some time in the communion of the Established Church after his brother was ejected and deposed. With great unwillingness, he sundered the ties which bound him to the Church in which he was born. "I have many struggles in my mind," he says, "about secession from the judicatories, and joining with the free brethren." But at last, he was driven so far by the opposers of the truth which he loved, that he could resist with a good conscience no longer; and he united himself formally in 1737 to the SECESSION. In May, 1740, he was finally deposed with them from the ministry of the Established Church of Scotland, for maintaining the very truths which that Church has always professed to hold as its dearest treasure; and he went out with a good conscience, and with the Divine blessing evidently resting upon him. He was now 55 years of age, mature, considerate, and sufficiently experienced to find such a separation a very painful trial. But he was not of a temper to sacrifice the Gospel for worldly peace; and dark as seemed the prospect, he entered upon the new path which God had manifestly opened.

His way now was peaceful, but in the straits of new experiment. A large portion of his congregation seceded with him. Their first gathering was in a tent which they pitched upon the green. But their immediate attempt to build themselves a meeting-house was abundantly successful. They erected a building capable of accom-

modating two thousand people, and there Ralph Erskine preached to a numerous and cordially-attached congregation to the end of his life. He said to them on entering upon his new field, "I find at present in this congregation, the generality of the people therein, giving such an evidence of their favour towards me as I never expected, never desired, never proposed; nor did it ever enter my head or thought. And I own I should be very ungrateful if I did not entertain a kindly favour and affection for you. There is another token of your favour to me, that I would desire at your hand; and that is, that you will accept of my message that I have to you from my glorious Lord and Master Jesus Christ, by coming to him for salvation to your soul; that you match with him as your head and husband, your friend and father, and come to him for grace and glory, that you may be happy in him in life and death, judgment and eternity."

He now devoted himself to his work with increased ardour, and maintained in his new relations all the former services which he had established in his pastoral care of the whole town, though his congregation was composed of those only who voluntarily sought the benefit of his ministry. He was revered and beloved by them and by his brethren with very strong affection. And the whole style of his sermons is so directly and distinctly personal in their application, that we can well understand the reason of this. He was a deeply-experienced Christian, and his counsel and guidance could not but have been an eminent blessing to those who sat under his ministry. The concluding twelve years of his earthly labours were a constant recapitulation of spiritual blessings upon his flock. During these years he prepared his Scripture songs, and those many poetical works, which, with whatever want of the mere elegance of taste and polish, are, perhaps, more than any of his works, and more than the works of any one beside, full and flowing with the purest and clearest Gospel truth. His constant labours were uninterrupted till within a week of his departure in November, 1752. Among the last words which he was heard to utter were, "I will be forever a debtor to free grace!" His last testimony in departing was, "Victory, victory, victory!"

His published works have been always highly valued by those who know and love the truth of the Lord Jesus. As years pass, it is an encouraging feature of the religion of our day, that they are more and more desired and sought for. They present the completeness of the Saviour's work, the sinner's right through grace to an immediate access by faith to Jesus, the personal embracing and fast holding of the Gospel hope involved in saving faith, the believer's complete acceptance in the Saviour, his entire exemption from the law as to its covenant demands, in its precepts, its promises, and its penalty, the importance and the principles of true spiritual obedience, and the certainty of the covenanted salvation to all who are justified in Christ, with such clearness and freeness and power, that they must always be loved and valued by spiritual minds in the degree in which they are known.

That these works, in a copious selection of sermons, are now re-published under the sanction and by the responsibility of Episcopalians, beautifully displays the perfect unity in the great principles of Gospel truth which distinguishes and conserves the true Church of God. That our young ministers may study these treasures of knowledge, and be taught in that Apostolic and Reformation school which they present and identify, is one great purpose of the present edition—placing them within the reach of all. And in the simultaneous rescuscitation of evangelical principles and power in the two Churches of England and Scotland at the present day, and in the corresponding love for these great principles which distinguishes the advance of true religion in our own country, the re-publication of Ralph Erskine becomes at the same time a happy token and an useful instrument.

The great contests of our day are and are to be for these great principles of truth. The sacramental and the rationalistic theories, (that is, Popery and Infidelity, for they are simply and truly so,) starting in man's hostility and man's device, unite in easy accordance in opposition to the Gospel. In the Episcopal Church, we have them both, and both apparently spreading in extent, and enlarging in influence. They are the two-fold forms of the religion of the unconverted heart—the religion of man's fallen nature. While one

rejects the Word of God for Church traditions and human ceremonies, and the other for man's personal reason and individual authority, they cordially unite to sustain each other in a bold rejection of the supreme and single authority of the word of the Living God.

The Apostles fought the same battle with the ceremonious Jews and the philosophizing Greeks—the one living upon signs, and the other upon wisdom—using no other weapon than “Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God,” mighty through the Holy Ghost to overturn and to save. The Reformers fought the same battle with the Popery and the Infidelity of their day, like the Apostles, “ceasing not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ.” The real people and servants of God have fought it over again in every age and in every land, against the same antagonists. And our turn to “fight the good fight of faith,” has now arrived.

Armories of weapons are provided for us in the warfare of the ages past; and the Holy Ghost is always with us, ready with Divine power to succour the faithful soldier, and to give victory to the truth of God. But we shall find Sacramentalism and Rationalism, Formalism and Skepticism, the multiplying of ceremonies, and the contempt of all ceremonies, easily, readily, and constantly combining to oppose the truth in our day and in our Church. And nothing can be of greater importance, than that our young ministers should be taught in a clear and thorough manner the distinctions and land-marks of Evangelical doctrine, and Christian usefulness and power. The volumes to which this Preface is attached, are in my judgment a most important instrument for this purpose; and earnestness for the truth—for the maintenance of which I have sincerely spent my life past—leads me to rejoice in commending to younger brethren in the Lord's work a provision of teaching so scriptural, clear, and helpful to them in their coming responsibility, as the Sermons of RALPH ERSKINE.

S. H. T.

*St. George's Church Rectory,
New York, October, 1860.*

“TAKE HEED UNTO THYSELF, AND UNTO THE
DOCTRINE; CONTINUE IN THEM: FOR IN DOING
THIS THOU SHALT BOTH SAVE THYSELF, AND
THEM THAT HEAR THEE.”

I TIMOTHY iv. 16.

SERMONS

OF THE

REV. RALPH ERSKINE. A. M.

SERMON I.

The Word of Salvation sent to Sinners.

“To you is the word of this salvation sent.”—ACTS xiii. 26.

PAUL is here preaching CHRIST JESUS in this chapter; and in this verse he makes application of his sermon to his hearers, and that very close. More particularly in the words you may observe:

1. The nature of the gospel described, it is “the word of salvation.”

2. The indorsement or direction, shewing to whom it is directed or sent, “To you;” you men and brethren, you Jews or Gentiles. to whom it is preached.

The doctrinal proposition, natively arising from these words, is the following:

OBSERV. That the gospel, as a word of salvation is sent to every sinner that hears it.

Before I proceed to speak to this doctrine, I would obviate an objection that may be made against it.

OBJECT.—Is not the gospel call here limited to them that fear God in the text?

ANSWER, 1. If by these that fear God, is to be understood religious people, into whose hearts God hath put his fear; these are the persons that will most of all welcome the word of salvation; because they see most of their need of it: but the gospel message is not here limited to them, and others excluded; no: the apostle here speaks to all his auditory, both gracious and graceless, as appears not only in this text, “Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, to you is the word of this salvation sent,” but

also in the application of his sermon to the graceless as well as to the gracious, verses 40, 41, compared with the two preceding verses.

2. There is a fear of God that is the fruit of conviction, and a fear of God that is the fruit of conversion; the former is by the law, the latter is by the gospel: it is like that the former is especially intended here; for at this time the word was with power; it struck an awe and dread upon the apostle's auditory. And though no sinner, no not the most stupid that hears the gospel, is excluded from the call thereof, so as it can be said, the word of salvation is not sent to him; no, no: it is sent to every one; yet none but such as fear God, so far as to be filled with an awe and dread of God speaking to them in the word, and with a conviction of sin, and of their need of this salvation; none but such will receive and welcome the word of this salvation; for, if they have no fear of God, and of his wrath, no sense of sin, and of their deserving damnation, they will not value, but slight and despise the word of salvation. This text, therefore, doth not limit the word of salvation, as sent only to them who fear God, but only points out the manner and method wherein this word of salvation comes to be received and entertained, and how it will not be received by those who have nothing of the fear and dread of God upon them.

3. These who are awakened to any sense of sin, and fear and dread of God, are the persons that are most ready themselves, as if the word of salvation were not sent to them: therefore these in a particular manner are mentioned, and encouraged to take it to themselves, because they are afraid to apply the word. Others that are called will not come. And they that have this fear upon them, have a will, but want courage; and therefore the Lord says to them, as it were, Fear not to come; for, "to you is the word of this salvation sent."

4. That the "word of salvation" is sent to "all," even to them who, through the want of the fear of God, reject it, is plain both from this text and context, compared with other scriptures. See the commission, Mark xvi. 15. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Isa. xlvi. 12. "Hearken to me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness." 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 to him, and sup with him, and he with me." ANY MAN, be what he will. In short the word of salvation, importing all salvation necessary, looks to all sinners that

need this salvation. The gospel would not be glad news to all people, if any sinners were excluded. Hence the call is to all the ends of the earth; "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth:" hence the call also is, "Whosoever will, let him come, and take of the water of life freely." And again, "To you O men, do I call; and my voice is to the sons of men," etc. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters," etc.

The method we would observe, for the farther illustration of this subject, as the Lord shall be pleased to grant assistance, shall be the following.

- I. We shall speak a little of this salvation.
- II. Of the word of salvation.
- III. Of the sending of this word.
- IV. Make application of the whole.

I. We shall speak a little of this salvation, and consider what it supposes, and what it implies.

1. What this salvation supposes, namely, misery. Our miserable state by nature is a state of alienation and estrangement from God. We are "without God," and are "alienated from the life of God; aliens from the commonwealth of Israel."—It is a state of enmity; for, "the carnal mind is at enmity against God:" we are in actual rebellion against him.—It is a state of darkness and ignorance; we are "destroyed for want of knowledge."—A state of bondage to sin, Satan, and the world, and divers lusts; we are fettered and imprisoned, led captive.—It is a state of impotence; we are, by nature, without strength; we cannot so much as ask deliverance: "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves."—It is a destitute state, a pit wherein there is no water; a comfortless state, a bewildered state, a cursed and condemned state; for, "He that believeth not is condemned already:" he that believeth not the gospel, is condemned already by the law; "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them."—It is a state of death; spiritual death, and legal death.

2 What does salvation imply? It implies the whole redemption purchased by Christ, and the whole of the application of it by the Spirit. It is salvation from a state of estrangement, to a state of acquaintance with God; from enmity, to peace and reconciliation; from darkness to light; from bondage, to liberty. It includes pardon and justification, adoption and filiation, sanctification of nature, heart, and way, communion with God; afterwards a

glorious resurrection of the body, and eternal life and glory, in being forever with the Lord.

II. The second head proposed was, To speak of the word of salvation, which I may do by answering these four questions.

QUEST. 1. What is the word of salvation?

ANSW. Not the law, but the gospel; this is that which is the "power of God unto salvation," Rom. i. 16. Whatever discovers Christ, and salvation through him, is the gospel.

QUEST. 2. Why is it called the word of salvation?

ANSW. Because it discovers salvation; it describes salvation; it conveys salvation, as a charter does an estate, or as a testament does a legacy; it offers salvation; it establishes a connection betwixt faith and salvation to all mankind sinners; for, "He that believeth shall be saved;" and because it is the organ or instrument, by which the Spirit applies salvation.

QUEST. 3. How does the word operate in the hand of the Spirit, when believed unto salvation?

ANSW. It operates as SEED cast into the ground: it operates as RAIN and DEW; "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew:" as LIGHT; "They that sat in darkness, saw a great light;" it is light shining in a dark place: as FIRE; "Is not my word like a fire?" As WATER, as WIND, as a SEAL imprinting the divine nature: as a GLASS, through which we see God's glory: as a BALM for healing; "He sent his word and healed them."

QUEST. 4. What are the qualities of this word of salvation?

ANSW. 1. It is a divine word; the word of God. God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is the Author of it. Hence the gospel is called, "The gospel of God," Rom. i. 1. xv. 16.

2. It is a word of God in Christ, Heb. i. 1, 2. ii. 3. It is secured in the hands of a Mediator; Yea, and Amen in him. It is given to us by Christ, and sealed in his blood; "This is the New Testament in my blood."

3. It is a gracious word of God in Christ: it is free; it does not move upon our goodness or badness: our goodness does not further, nor our badness hinder it. It is a word that comes from pure grace, and springs from his free mercy, who is the God of all grace. It is such a gracious word, that it contains all grace. Hence,

4. It is a complete word, containing all our salvation; for it contains God in it, Christ in it, the Spirit in it. It contains a righteousness in it, founding a legal title to life eternal, viz. the obedience of Christ; and a legal security from eternal death, viz. the satisfaction and death of the Surety. It contains all the parts of life, and

may well be called the word of life: life in the beginning of it, in regeneration; "Of his own will begat he us, by the word of truth." The life of justification; we are justified in believing and receiving of Christ, our righteousness, as offered in the word. The life of sanctification, the life of consolation, and the life of glory hereafter.

5. It is a sure word; "The sure mercies of David:" Sure and more sure than a voice from heaven, such as even that which the disciples heard on the mount; "We have a more sure word of prophecy, unto which we do well to take heed," 2 Pet. i. 19.

6. It is a gracious, complete, sure word of God in Christ to sinners, as well as saints: it is to sinners of Adam's family; for it presents a remedy for their malady. This leads,

III. To the third general head proposed, viz. To speak of the sending of this word. Here it may be enquired, from whom, by whom, to whom it is sent? and for what purpose?

1. From whom it is sent? Why, it is a word of salvation sent from the God of salvation, to "whom belong the issues from death;" and it carries the impress of himself upon it. As the word is God's word, so it is of God's sending; "He sent his word and healed them," Psalm cvii. 20.

2. By whom it is sent? It is not sent by angels, but by men; "We are ambassadors for Christ," 2 Cor. v. 20. It is true, God sent his word first by Christ; "He so loved the world, that he sent his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, might not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 19. Then Christ sends it by men, that we may not be afraid at his appearance, as Israel were of old; "We have this treasure in earthen vessels," 2 Cor. iv. 7.

3. To whom is it that he sent the word of salvation? He sent it to all sinners that hear it. Whosoever look to the word of salvation, will find it looking to them. What was the gospel preached to Abraham? "In thee," or in thy seed, "shall all the families of the earth be blessed," Gen. xii. 4. Is not this a word of salvation to us also? It includes all; so as every sinner may take hold of it. See John iii. 16. 1 Tim. i. 15. Christ came to "call sinners to repentance." See Prov. i. 20. Isa. xlvi. 12. It is a word that suits the case of sinners: and therefore, if it be enquired,

4. For what purpose is it sent to sinners? Why, for the very same purpose that a healing remedy is sent to a deadly malady; for Christ comes in the word, and is presented there for "wisdom,

righteousness, sanctification, and redemption:" see 1 Cor. i. 30. Rev. iii. 17, 18. More particularly, it is sent as a word of pardon to the condemned sinner; "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, for my own name's sake." Hence may every condemned sinner take hold of it, saying: This word is sent to me.—It is sent as a word of peace to the rebellious sinner, saying, Christ hath received gifts for men, even for the rebellious. Oh! I am a rebel, may the sinner say; yet here is a word for me.—It is sent as a word of life to the dead; "The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live."—It is a word of liberty to the captives; "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath anointed me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound," Isa. lxi. 1.—It is sent as a word of healing for the diseased; for the word says, "I am the Lord that healeth thee."—It is a word of cleansing, or a cleansing word to the polluted; "I will sprinkle you with clean water; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you."—It is sent as a word of direction to the bewildered; "I will lead the blind by a way they know not, and in paths which they have not known."—It is a refreshing word to the weary: "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary."—It is sent as a comforting word to the desolate; it brings the good news of the river, "the streams whereof make glad the city of God;" and of Christ, "the consolation of Israel."—It is sent as a drawing word, and a strengthening word to the soul destitute of strength, saying, "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength." "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."—It is sent in short, as a word of salvation, and all sort of salvation and redemption to the lost soul, saying, "Christ came to seek and save that which was lost;" and that we "are not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ."

IV. The last general head proposed was, To make application of the subject. Is it so, That the gospel, as a word of salvation, is sent to every sinner that hears it? Then,

I. Hence see the kindness of God in Christ to sinners of mankind. Why hath he made such a difference between sinning men and sinning angels? There was never a word of salvation sent to angels that sinned? no, not one word; "They are reserved in chains

to the judgment of the great day:" but it was sent unto mankind; "To you O men, do I call; and my voice is to the sons of men:" "To you is the word of this salvation sent."

2. See what a valuable book the Bible is, which contains this word of salvation. O Sirs, how ought we to search the scriptures: for, in them we think, and think aright when we do so, "that we have eternal life" and salvation conveyed to us? Why, they testify of Christ: and we ought especially to search out the words of eternal life; the words of salvation that lie there.

3. Hence see what a valuable blessing the gospel is, and the dispensation thereof; and how welcome a gospel ministry should be unto us; How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace! Rom. x. 15; that publish the word of salvation? How sad is it when gospel-ministers have not beautiful feet, when they defile their feet by stepping into the puddle of defection and corruption, and so make poor souls to nauseate the very gospel preached by them! And how dismal is it, when these who profess the gospel of peace, have their feet defiled with the puddle of error! How desirable is it when they have both the gospel of peace in their mouth, and beautiful shoes upon their feet, and are "shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace," and with a gospel-conversation, declining to walk with others in a course of defection?

4. Hence see the inexcusableness of unbelief, in rejecting the gospel, since it is sent to every one that hears it. Men have no cloak for their unbelief; no ground to say, This word of salvation is not sent to me: yea, it is sent to thee, whosoever thou art: it is a rope cast down for thy drowning soul to lay hold upon.

5. Hence see how culpable they are who straiten the door, and hamper the call of the gospel, saying, in effect, If you have not such and such qualifications, this word of salvation is not to you; if you have not such and such marks and evidences, it is not to you; it is only upon such and such terms that it is to you: this is to make the gospel no gospel. It is as if Christ came to save saints, but not to save sinners. They contradict the very design of the gospel, which is a word of salvation to sinners of all sorts and sizes. "To you is the word of this salvation sent:" to you, O sinner, is the door of salvation opened. Whatever straitens this door; whatever doctrines you hear that hamper or limit the gospel-offer, and tend to make you suppose, that there is no room for you, no access for you, you may suspect that to be either no gospel-doctrine, or that has such a legal mixture accompanying it, as you ought to

shun like the devil; because it would keep you at a distance from Christ and salvation.

6. Hence see the ground of God's controversy at this day, together with an antidote against the errors and evils of the day. The great ground of God's controversy, at this day, with the generality we live amongst, is their rejecting the word of salvation. * * *

See here also an antidote against many errors of the DAY.—Here is an antidote against enthusiastic delusions, viz. If we take the word of God for the rule and the warrant of faith, and of every particular duty. * * * You are to aim at believing the word of salvation sent to you, * * * for the word of God is "the word of the Spirit:" and though we cannot fight without the Spirit, yet the Spirit will not fight for these, or with these that will not take his sword in their hand: though we can do nothing without the Spirit, yet the Spirit will do nothing without the word. But if once we take the sword of the Spirit in our hand; I mean, take the word for our rule, and essay duty, and the work of believing, which is the work of God, according to the direction of the word of God; then, and not till then, are you to expect God will work powerfully; for, out of his own road he will not, namely, if you turn away your ear from hearing his word; or, if he do, he will bring you to this road before he do any thing more. .

Here also see an antidote against all, or most of all the errors of the AGE wherein we live.—Here is an antidote against all practical error; against all profanity, looseness, and luxury, whoredom, and debauchery, that have been running down, like a mighty stream, through all ranks of persons, from the throne to the dunghill, in every corner of the land. What would remedy these evils? Even the receiving of this salvation that is sent in the gospel to us. Unbelief, in rejecting this salvation, which is a salvation from all sin as well as misery; this unbelief in slighting the Saviour and salvation, is the root of all the looseness and profanity in the age. Men do not see this root that lies hid under ground.—Here is an antidote against the Deism of the age. Why do men undervalue the scriptures, and deny the necessity of divine supernatural revelation? Even because they reject the word of salvation; they do not see that the gospel only is the word of salvation; and that there is no salvation but in the faith of it: but the faith of this word would cure the Deism of the age.—Here is an antidote against Arminianism; for salvation comes not of the free-will of man, but of the free grace of God in a word of salvation sent to us.—Here is an antidote against Arianism. Would any soul deny the supreme Deity

of Christ, and his proper Divinity, if they believed, that "with him are the words of eternal life;" and that a word from his mouth is a word of salvation? "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else," Isa. xlv. 22.—Here is an antidote against Antinomianism; for, by this salvation we are not saved to sin and to work wickedness, and break the law of God, but saved *from* sin and wickedness. The gospel being a word of complete salvation; the grace of God therein appears to all men, teaching effectively what the law does preceptively, namely, to "deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world."—Here is an antidote against Legalism, or Neonomianism, as some call it, which turns the gospel to a new law, and the covenant of grace, as it were, to a covenant of works. This text and doctrine shews that we are not saved by a work, but by a word; not by any work of ours, but by a word sent from God to us, even a word of salvation: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us," Titus iii. 5. See 2 Tim. i. 9.—Here also is an antidote against ignorant preachers of the gospel, that confound the marks of faith with the ground of faith, or the evidences of faith with the warrant of faith, or the condition of the covenant with the qualities of the covenanted, as if the gospel-call were only to saints, or to sinners so and so qualified; and so leading men in to themselves for a ground of faith, instead of leading them out of themselves to Christ, exhibited to them in a word of salvation sent to them. The gospel-method of salvation is the reverse of all the legal schemes in the world. The legal strain supposes some good quality about the sinner, before he be allowed to meddle with the word of salvation; and so shuts the door of the gospel, which it pretends to open. But the gospel-strain brings the word of salvation freely to every sinner's door, and supposes him to be destitute of all good qualities whatsoever, and leaves no room for any sinner to say, I am not allowed to come in.

7. Hence see how much it concerns all and every one to try and examine what entertainment they have given the word of salvation that is sent them. Have you received it or not in a saving way?

(1.) Have you received it as the word of God; the word by way of eminency; the word of God in Christ; 1 Thess. ii. 13, and received it not as the word of man, of this or that man but as it is in truth, the word of God?

(2) Have you received it as a word of salvation, or as "a faithful saying, worthy of all acceptation," both as a truth and as a

good? This reception of it supposes a view you have of your being a lost sinner welcoming a Saviour.

(3) Have you received it, as the word of this salvation, a present salvation, a particular salvation? This particular salvation from sin and wrath that you need, this near salvation; "I bring near my righteousness to the stout-hearted, and far from righteousness; my salvation shall not tarry," Isa. xlvi. 12, 13. This great salvation, this purchased salvation; this promised salvation, this offered salvation, presently offered. Faith fixes upon something present. You need not say, Rom. x. 6, 7, 8. Who will ascend to heaven, to bring Christ down? or descend into the deep to bring Christ up? "The word is nigh thee, even in thy heart, and in thy mouth." Again,

(4) Have you received it as a sent salvation; as God's send, as God's gift, sent by the hand of Christ, sent by the hand of his ambassadors, sent freely and sovereignly, without your seeking after it, sent out of the store-house of divine grace?

(5) Have you received it as sent to sinners, to sinners in general? For here is "glad tidings of great joy to all people." "And 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. xxv. 6.

(6) Have you received it as sent unto you in particular? To you, sinners, says the general dispensation: to thee sinner, in particular, says the particular offer; "Whosoever will, let him come." Hast thou then received it, as sent to thee, though a guilty sinner; to thee, though a vile sinner? Hast thou entertained it with a *me*, *me*, of particular application, saying, Here is an offer to *me*, a gift to *me*, a promise from heaven to *me*? Hast thou found thyself called by name, and said, I am warranted to take hold of Christ, and the salvation he brings with him, in this word of salvation, and even so I take him at his word; "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief?"—Have you hereupon found the virtue of this word, as a word of salvation, saving you from your doubts and fears, saving you from your bonds and fetters, saving you from your helpless and hopeless condition, and making you to hope for complete salvation from sin and misery?—Have you found salvation begun in the faith or the word of salvation, and been begotten to a lively hope thereby? And does this hope begin to purify your heart, and this faith begin to work by love to God and hatred of sin, and of yourself for sin? And is your continual recourse to this word of salvation, or to the promise of God in Christ, for all your salvation?

8. Hence see what matter of joy and praise believers have, who have been determined thus to entertain the word of salvation: for, when the word of salvation is received through grace, then the work of salvation is begun: and you need be in no uneasiness now, though you be called to work out the work of "your salvation with fear and trembling;" because "it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do." "He that hath begun the good work in you, will perfect it unto the day of the Lord." The word of salvation may be to thee, O believer, the word of consolation all the days of your life: for, it is a word of salvation, not only from the sinful state, and miserable state you was in, but is a word of salvation also bringing the good news of salvation in every case; salvation from the devil, the world, and the flesh; salvation and deliverance from the hands of all your enemies; salvation from the sting of death; salvation from the terror of judgment; salvation from the curse of the law, and from the guilt of all your sins; salvation not only from all evil, but salvation to eternal life; for the word of salvation, which you have received and entertained through grace, contains all the words of eternal life. The word of salvation is the word of life for you, when under deadness, and the word of liberty for you, when under bondage; a word of rest for you, when under weariness, a word of relief for you, when under distress of whatsoever sort. It is a word of salvation confirmed with the oath of God, "That by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, they might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them."

9. Hence see matter of terror to those who neglect this great salvation that is sent to them by this word: "How shall they escape, who neglect so great a salvation," and so near to them? O sinner, it is a salvation sent to your house; and will you reject it? Salvation sent to your soul; a word of salvation sent to your hand to receive it, and will you reject it? A word of salvation sent to your ear, saying, But hear and your soul shall live. A word of salvation sent to your heart, and by it God is knocking at the door of your heart: O sirs, will you refuse him that speaketh from heaven? "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." Heb. xii. 25. If you will not hear God's word of grace in the gospel, saying, "To you is the word of this salvation sent;" you must lay your account to hear his word of wrath in the

law, saying, yea, swearing in his wrath, that "you shall not enter into his rest." If you have no fear of God, as it is in the verse where my text lies, if you shall never be persuaded to fear the Lord and his goodness, manifested in the word of salvation, sent to you, you must lay your account to fear the Lord and his wrath, manifested in the word of condemnation, which the law pronounces against them who believe not the gospel; "He that believeth not is condemned already," John iii. 18. And there is no escaping this sentence of condemnation, but by receiving the word of salvation.

10. Hence see how much it is to the interest of every one to receive, and entertain, and welcome this word of salvation. O sirs, hear, that your souls may live. Hear the joyful sound of salvation, O lost, perishing sinner, before the door of mercy be shut, and the day of grace be over. To persuade you hereunto, we shall lay before you the four following considerations.

(1.) Consider what sort of a salvation is offered to you. It is a spiritual salvation; the salvation of the immortal soul: "What shall a man profit, though he gain the whole world, if he lose his own soul?" If you would not lose and ruin your souls, O receive the word of salvation.—It is a costly salvation; it comes running in the channel of the blood of Christ. It is bought to your hand, and free to you, however dear bought by the Redeemer. You have nothing to pay for it; the price of it is paid already; the condition of it is fulfilled. It is a complete salvation; salvation from everything you need to be saved from; salvation from unbelief, enmity, atheism, heart-hardness, heart-deadness, and everything that you make an objection against receiving of this salvation. You say you cannot believe, you cannot repent; but would you be saved from your unbelief and impenitence? This and all the other branches of salvation is sent to you, when the word of salvation is sent. Will you welcome a Saviour to save you from all, to be wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, and all to you. It is an everlasting salvation. Would you be happy after death, and have an eternity of happiness; "Life and immortality is brought to light" by this word of salvation. O poor, dying sinner, consider what an everlasting salvation this is.

(2.) Consider what need thou hast of this salvation. Thou hast a dark mind; and needest salvation from that darkness and ignorance. Thou hast a guilty conscience; and needest salvation from that guilt. Thou hast a hard heart; and needest salvation from

that hardness. Thou hast powerful and strong corruption ; and needest salvation from that. Thou hast a corrupt nature ; and needest salvation from that. Thou hast many heart-plagues ; and needest salvation from these plagues, and healing. Behold, all this salvation, and infinitely more, comes with the word of salvation ; no salvation thou needest is excepted. Thy need is great, death is at hand, judgment at hand : “ Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.” There will be no word in the day of judgment to sinners, but a word of condemnation : “ Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels :” but now, in the day of salvation, is sent to you this word of salvation ; now, now is the day ; and, perhaps, now or never.

(3.) Consider what a firm ground this word of salvation is for faith to build upon. It is the word of God ; the God that cannot lie. It is ratified by the oath of God. It is a word confirmed by the blood of the Son of God. It is a word attested by the Three that bear record in heaven. It is a word spoken by the inspiration of the Spirit of God, “ He that hath ears to hear let him hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.” “ The Spirit and the bride say, Come ;” come and hear this word of salvation ; come and believe ; come and apply to thyself what is offered to thee.

(4) Consider the good warrant you have to intermeddle with this word of salvation. It is sent to you on purpose that you may believe it with application to yourself ; and that every one of you, thou man, thou woman, may take it home to thy own heart ; for, to thee is the word of salvation sent. To thee is this love-letter sent from heaven. Read the indorsement, and see if it be not to thee.—It is backed to thee, O guilty sinner ! saying, “ Christ came to save sinners.”—It is backed to thee, O inhabitant of the earth, that are not yet in hell ; “ Look to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth.”—It is backed to thee, O scorner ! that hast hitherto been a mocker of God and godliness ; “ Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets :” “ How long, ye simple ones, will you love simplicity ? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge ? Turn you at my reproof ; behold I will pour out my Spirit unto you ; I will make known my words unto you,” Prov. i. 20, 22, 23.—It is backed to thee, O rebellious sinner. If thou wert excepted, all mankind would be so : behold, Christ hath “ ascended up on high, led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that God the Lord might dwell among them.”—It is backed for thee, O black and bloody sinner ; “ Come now, and let us reason

together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool," Isaiah i. 18.—It is backed to thee, O sinner, that art thirsting after other things than Christ; Isa. lv. 1, 2. Ho, every one that thirsteth, come. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread?" etc. Wherefore do ye thirst and pant after other things that cannot give you satisfaction?—Yea, it is backed for thee, O unhumbled, unconvinced sinner. Say not that it cannot concern thee, because thou art not convinced of thy sin: O! the word of salvation comes even to thee also; Rev. iii. 18. "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; eye-salve, that thou mayest see;" "and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed." Even to thee, that, as in the preceding verse, art saying, that "thou art rich and increased with goods, and standeth in need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Unconcerned sinner, to thee, even to thee, is the word of this salvation sent. Is this love-letter backed for thee? O then know, that though you have no will, you have a warrant to receive it, and Christ in it. If you reject this word of salvation, it is either because you will not, or dare not, or cannot receive it.

If you say, you will not take it to you, then remember you are subscribing your own doom. And I take instruments against you, that you will not have salvation; you will not come to Christ that you may have life; you are preferring some base lust to the Lord of glory, and so preferring, of consequence, damnation to salvation, DEATH TO LIFE.

If it be not a will of obstinacy, but of impotency, saying, Oh! if my will were subdued; behold, the word of salvation comes with salvation from that plague of unwillingness, saying, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power:" and, "To you is the word of this salvation sent," that you may welcome it; and so far as you welcome it, so far are you willing.

If you say you dare not take the word to yourself, as the word of salvation to you: why dare you not do what God enjoins you? Why dare you not take what God offers you? How durst you sin against God, when he forbade you? And now you dare not take his word for your salvation, when he requires you! How durst you venture on his fury against his command? And now you dare not venture on his favor, through Christ, at his call and command? Was it not enough to offend his justice? And will you now venture to slight his mercy! This is worse than all your

former sins, to refuse salvation that he freely offers from the guilt of all.

If you say you cannot, because of utter impotency, that shall be no stop. You cannot believe, you cannot come to Christ; but, as the word of salvation is sent to you, so salvation is come to you, because you cannot come to it. The Saviour is come to you, because you cannot come to him: are you for him? The word of salvation is a word of power, and drawing power is in it, to draw you that cannot come: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." Are you willing to be drawn? Then the word of salvation hath so far taken effect upon you, as to remove your unwillingness and make you willing. Look for another pull of omnipotency; for the word of salvation is a word of omnipotency: It is the almighty word of the almighty God. Saving power, drawing power is in it. Welcome it as such; and, in due time, you shall be able as well as willing. Your faith is not to be acted in the sense of self-ability and sufficiency, but in the sense of self-inability and insufficiency. Our sufficiency is of God; salvation is of God; saving faith is of God; "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation," 2 Cor. v. 18, and given to you this word of salvation: and it contains all your salvation. And if any part of it were left to you, it would not contain all your salvation. What you cannot do, this salvation can; therefore receive it, and bless God for it, that "to you is the word of this salvation sent."

A. D., 1739.

SERMON II.

Gospel Compulsion;

OR, MINISTERIAL POWER AND AUTHORITY.*

“Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.”—
LUKE xiv. 23.

MY friends, though the work of sequestering some to the MINISTERIAL OFFICE, be ordinary in the church of Christ, yet the occasion and circumstances of this work to-day, among our hands, is extraordinary in many respects. * * *

But my business at present, is to give a hint at the nature of that ministerial work to which one is to be set apart here; and the text I have read lays before us a sum of their work, as it relates to the sinners with whom they have to do; their orders are, “Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.”

These words are part of a parable, wherein the free grace of God, in Christ, is represented by a rich man making a great supper; that is, the rich and bountiful Lord providing all the treasures and blessings of the new covenant, and inviting all poor, indigent sinners, to whom the gospel comes, to come and share of these blessings of everlasting life and happiness, to be had in Christ Jesus.

The entertainment, that this kind offer gets, is various; some reject it, and others embrace it. The rejecters make trifling excuses, preferring their ground, their oxen, their wives; that is, their wordly possessions and sensual enjoyments, to all the blessings of the everlasting gospel.

Hereupon care is taken to furnish his table; Go, says he, to his servants, pick up the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind; by whom might be meant the despised outcast Gentiles, who were taken in when the Jews, who slighted Christ, were rejected of him.

But though many of this sort came in and embraced the offer,

* This sermon was preached at the ORDINATION of Mr. John Hunter, to the pastoral Office, in the united congregations of Morbottle and Stichel, by appointment of the Associated Presbytery, on the 17th of October, 1739. Mr. Hunter died January, the 7, 1740, not having been four complete months ordained minister. [See Appendix.]

yet the servant is brought in telling his Lord, saying, "It is done, as thou hast commanded; and yet there is room."

Ministers are to give account to Christ, relating to their ministerial commission: 1. Of the execution of it; "It is done as thou hast commanded." 2. Of the success thereof; "Yet there is room:" intimating, that though several were come in, yet there was entertainment for many more.

Upon this a new warrant is given out to the servants, to go to the highways and hedges, since none among the Jews, if it be not some of the despicable sort, the Publicans and sinners, the halt and the blind, but none of the Scribes and Pharisees will come in; "Go out into the high-ways and hedges," [*i. e.* to the open country; pick up the vagrant, the poor straggling Gentiles,] "and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled." Where we may observe the three following particulars.

1. A commission given to ministers, shewing what they are to do towards sinners, to whom they minister in sacred things, or to whom they preach the gospel, Compel them.

2. The design of this commission, what end they are to have in view and aim at by this compulsion, Compel them to come in.

3. The reason assigned for all this work, of compelling them to come in, namely, "that my house may be filled." As if the Master should say, These whom you have to deal with, will be very shy and backward, and will hardly believe that they shall be welcome: therefore, there is a certain kind of compulsion must be used towards them; you must be in earnest, and very importunate with them to come in to me, and share of the provision I have made for them, that by this means the number of my ransomed ones may be completed, the outcasts of Israel may be gathered, my table may be furnished, my church and house may be filled. But I refer the further explication of the words to the prosecution of the following doctrine.

Oserv. The ministers of Christ have a power and warrant to compel sinners to come in to him, that his house may be filled.

The doctrine being much the same with the text, I need not stand upon the proof of it. You have this matter very elegantly represented, Prov. ix. 1—5. "Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars. She hath killed her beasts, she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table. She hath sent forth her maidens, she crieth upon the highest places of the city. Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Come, eat of

my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled." Ministers have authority from their Master, to rebuke, exhort, command, and compel.

We shall endeavor the prosecution of this subject, through divine aid, in the following method.

I. We shall speak of the ministerial commission and authority, imported in this word, "Compel them."

II. Of the end and design of it, namely, that they come in; "Compel them to come in."

III. We shall speak of the reason, viz. "That his house may be filled."

IV. Make some application of the whole.

1. We are to speak of this ministerial power and authority, imported in this expression, "Compel them." And here we are to touch at three things; 1. Who are they that have this authority to compel. 2. Whom they have warrant to compel. 3. What is the nature and import of this compulsion.

1. Who are they that have this authority to compel. The context shows, that they are the servants of Christ; "The Lord said unto the servant, Go." Here is the office of the gospel minister; he is the servant of Christ and of his church; "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake," 2. Cor. iv. 5. Their station in the church is not as lords of God's heritage, but servants.

This does not at all detract from their ministerial office, while we consider that Christ "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister" and serve. If he was the Father's servant, and our servant in his Father's business, surely it is no small honor to be his servant, and a servant to immortal souls for his sake: only here we see, that the apostles themselves, did not pretend to be lordly Prelates, nor assume to themselves a domination in the church, as having dominion over their faith, but as helpers of their joy, 2. Cor. i. 24.

Nor can it be constructed a slavery, where it is for Jesus' sake, to promote the honour and interest of Christ in the church, and to act, not as an inferior, menial servant, but as one clothed with authority, in the Master's name, to compel.

This office of the minister, as a servant, imports both suitable abilities, and a call to improve them for the Master's use in his house.

I. It supposes and imports qualifications and abilities, fitting them for the discharge of this work in some measure; "Every

scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old," Matt. xiii. 52. And there is a threefold stock of ability that he should have: 1. A stock of grace; for, if one be not a good christian, he will never make a good minister. 2. A stock of gifts and learning, that he may be able to convince gainsayers, and may be apt to teach. 3. A stock of experiences, that he may teach what he knows himself, that knowing both the terrors and comforts of the Lord, he may persuade men; that also he may be able to say, *I believe, and therefore speak*; and what I have *heard and seen, and felt*, declare I unto you; otherwise his preaching will be, at best, but like cold milk in a vessel, and not like warm milk from the breast.

2. This office supposes and imports a divine call. It is not sufficient to warrant any man to meddle with the ministerial office, that he hath a competent stock of abilities and qualifications, fitting him for the work; except he hath also a ministerial power conveyed to him, either immediately by God, as it was in the apostles, which was such an extraordinary call, as we are not now to expect: or mediately, according to the order which God hath established in his church. This ordinary, mediate call is twofold, either outward or inward.

(1) The outward call by the church, (including both the judgment of the eldership or presbytery, and the election of the congregation, when the minister is to be fixed to any particular charge.) God hath given to his church, or to the lawful courts and judicatories thereof, a ministerial power, whereby, upon trial and knowledge of a man's abilities for that work, they make manifest that God hath called him: for it is not the church that makes the minister, but God himself by conferring ministerial qualifications; the church only declares and authorizes for exercise, these whom God doth qualify for such purpose. It is God himself, who makes any to be "able ministers of the new testament." 2 Cor. iii. 6.

(2) There is the inward call of the Spirit of God, of which I apprehend, that, as it lies in the Lord's qualifying a man with gifts and graces for that work; (for without these qualifications, God calls none, whatever men do) for it lies also in the Lord's quickening, inclining, and stirring them up to improve these talents which he hath given, for his service in the gospel of Christ; and in their having the testimony of a good conscience, that the motive that presses them is God's glory, and the edification of the church.

This outward and inward call and commission is declared necessary ; “ How shall they preach, except they be sent ? ” Rom. x. 15. Here then is the servant, but what the service is will fall in afterwards. Having then shewed who they are that have this authority to compel, I come to shew,

2. Whom they are warranted to compel, or whom does their office oblige them to deal with, by calling and compelling them to come in ? Why, upon the Jews their rejecting of Christ and the gospel, the commission here seems to respect the rustic Gentiles ; or all these who are represented to be, as in verses 21, 23, in the streets and lanes, in the high-ways and hedges, as to their situation ; and to be poor, maimed, halt, and blind, as to their condition. The first and leading part of the ministerial work, relates to the bringing in these who are strangers to Christ ; and afterwards the feeding and edifying of these that are brought in. But first they are to compel them to come in : THEM ; whom ?

1. Aliens that are without doors : Without, it is said, are dogs. But even such dogs as the Gentiles were, may come in when the door is opened to them. We are to open the door to these who are “ aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise,” Eph. ii. 12. Even those that are “ without Christ, without hope, and without God in the world ; ” if they were not without, they need not be called to come in.

2. They are warranted to call in the poor ; for, “ to the poor the gospel is preached : ” both these that are outwardly poor, and in mean outward circumstances in the world ; the rich generally condemn the gospel offer : and also these who are inwardly poor ; that is, destitute of all spiritual good and excellences ; destitute of grace and righteousness ; let them be called in to share of the grace and righteousness that is in Christ.

3. They are warranted to call in the maimed ; that is, these who want legs or arms, unable to walk and unable to work. The call of the gospel is to be extended to maimed souls, as all naturally are, being by nature without strength, and destitute of all ability to walk, or work spiritually, that they may come where they will be furnished with power.

4. They are warranted to bring in the halt ; the poor cripple souls, who, if they have received any strength to walk, yet cannot go without halting. They are, like their master, to take up in their arms the poor lame sheep, that cannot follow the rest of the flock ; for, “ he shall feed his flock like a shepherd ; he shall gather the lambs with his arm,” Isa. xl. 11.

5. They are warranted to bring in the blind; representing how blind souls, that have now eyes to see, but are ignorant of God and Christ, and the way of salvation, are called to come and receive their sight; for Christ is given "for a covenant of the people," "for a light of the Gentiles," "to open the blind eyes," Isa. xlii. 6, 7. And the great design, upon which God sends out a gospel-ministry among people, is to open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Acts xxvi. 18.

6. They are warranted to bring in wanderers; these that are in the high-ways and hedges: as if he should say, The straggling vagrants, yea, the highway-man, the thief, the robber, the debauchee, the wicked and graceless, who are walking on the broad way to hell: for, as God, by the gospel, "brings near his righteousness and salvation, even to the stout-hearted and far from righteousness," Isa. xlvi. 12, 13; so Wisdom and her maidens, Christ and his servants that he sends forth, are warranted to stand upon the high places of the city, and to "cry without, to utter their voices in the streets, to cry in the chief places of concourse, in the opening of the gates, How long ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and ye scorers delight in scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn ye at my reproof," etc. Even the wicked mockers of God and religion, the most wicked and wretched, and abandoned like sinners, are to be dealt with, and compelled to come in.

Thus you see whom they are warranted to compel. But now I come to consider:

3, What is the nature and import of this compulsion. Here we may consider, 1, What sort of compulsion it is; and, 2, What power and authority it imports.

[1.] What sort of compulsion it is. I would explain what I take to be the nature of this compulsion, in the following particulars.

1. It is not an outward, but an inward compulsion; it does not mean a dragging of their body, but a drawing their heart and soul to Christ: and when once the heart, or the internal man, is drawn, then it will draw the body to the external part of religion also. But what draws the heart? Why, says the apostle, "With the heart, man believeth unto righteousness;" and this believing, or, "faith, cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God:" that is, by the preaching of the gospel the heart is drawn to Christ.

2. It is not magisterial, but a ministerial compulsion. As external compulsion hath no foundation in the text; so the ministers

of the gospel, who are thus spoken to, have not, by Christ's commission, any civil power committed to them. It is not a compelling of men's consciences, far less a compelling men against their consciences, in matters of religion: as for example, in the business of the sacramental test, you shall be fined, imprisoned, ruined in your estate, if you take not the Lord's supper: no such compulsion is here intended. Ministers are not Lords over God's heritage. Hence,

3. It is not a carnal, but a spiritual compulsion. It is not by force of arms, but by force of arguments, men are to be compelled; for, the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. It is not by cudgels, but by considerations, that the will can be compelled: when the Lord concurs with these considerations that are spiritual, then they are cogent and compelling to the soul. The very opening to men the riches of divine grace, fitted to their lost and undone state, is, through grace, a compelling of them: for,

4. It is not a natural, but a gracious compulsion. It is not by the power of natural abilities and free-will, * * * that men are compelled; but by the power of free grace: therefore, in compelling sinners to come in, we are not to tell them what they can do; (for, indeed, they can do nothing spiritually, nothing acceptably; they can do nothing but destroy themselves;) but we are to tell them what grace can do, and how all their help lies here; "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thy help."

It is not a legal, but an evangelical compulsion. It is true, by the law is the knowledge of sin and misery. By the command of the law applied, is the knowledge of sin; and by the curse of the law apprehended is the knowledge of misery: and so, by the law we may have the knowledge of the need we have of Christ. The law, therefore, is to be used in a subserviency to the gospel; but the law, though it may compel sinners to come down, down from their lofty thoughts of their own natural power and ability to help themselves; yet it is only the gospel that will compel them to come in: for, the more they see of their sinfulness and misery by the law, the more will they stand at a distance from coming to God; but will run away hopeless from him, until once the grace of God, manifested in the gospel, and the love of Christ constrain; and "compel them to come in." Hence,

6. It is not a rigid, harsh, and unpleasant, but a kindly and affectionate compulsion. It is a drawing with the cords of love,

and the bands of a man. Here we may say the kingdom of heaven "suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." The minister is to use violence and force; but it is not the force of fire and sword, but the force of love, and the violence of reason, spiritual and scriptural reason. And because man's reason now is out of reason, therefore,

7. It is not a merely rational and argumentative, but a divine compulsion, in the "demonstration of the spirit, and of power;" 1 Cor. ii. 4. "My speech, and my preaching was not with the enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit, and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God:" that it might not be merely rational faith, standing upon a human testimony, or human reasoning, but a divine faith, standing upon a divine testimony, a divine demonstration. Many have no other but a merely rational religion, and a faith grounded only upon rational arguments, by the force of which they are compelled to own and acknowledge this or that gospel-truth: but what comes of that faith, when a better arguer appears on the other side? Down their faith must go, that stands upon such a sandy foundation as human wisdom and reason. You may get a poor illiterate man or woman, that never learned philosophy, nor any thing of the art of arguing, that will have a better faith, a firmer persuasion of the truth as it is in Jesus, than all these rational believers, and learned Rabbies ever could be masters of. Why? because these poor, unlearned, yet true believers, are *θεοδιδασκτοι*, "taught of God;" and the gospel hath come to them, "not in word, but in power, and in the holy Ghost, and with much assurance."

This, then, is the compulsion that gospel-ministers should aim at, in preaching and teaching, namely, that it be "in the demonstration of the Spirit, and of power;" but without this, men's essays and flourishing harangues, whereby they think to compel men with the mere force and strength of their reasoning, will be found but a carnal weapon, not mighty through God, but weak or unavailable, "Not by strength, nor by might, but by my SPIRIT, saith the Lord of hosts." Let us never expect, that the exterior call in the ministry of the word will avail, without the efficacious operation of the Spirit of God. And therefore, let us seek to pray in the Spirit, and preach in the Spirit, that through him we may do valiantly, in conquering sinners, and compelling them. Hence,

8. It is not a despicable, lawless and unwarrantable, but an authoritative compulsion. "Go," says the great Master, "and compel them." It is in his name and authority, who is the great King in

Zion, that they are to do it. As they are to deal with sinners with all sincerity and earnestness, so with all authority and boldness: both these are joined together, 2 Cor. v. 20. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." While they present his bowels and compassion, they are also to represent his authority, as ambassadors for him. But this leads to another question on this head.

[2.] What power and authority doth this compulsion, they are warranted to use, import? I think it imports all that power and authority that belongs to them as the servants and ministers of Christ. I cannot enlarge upon all the particulars here, that might be treated; I shall only mention what occurs.

The ministerial power is either that which they have jointly, in conjunction with one another, or that which they can exercise separately, when invested with that sacred office.

1. There is a power they have jointly, in conjunction with one another, and with the other officers, or office-bearers in the church, when judicially met, and constitute as courts of Christ; such as a power of ordaining ministers, * * * "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery," 1 Tim. iv. 14.—A power of discipline and government, they being such servants as are also rulers, and said to have rule, Heb. xiii. 17. according to the commission given unto them, Mat. xvi. 19, and xviii. 18.—A power, hence resulting, of administering ecclesiastical censures, excommunications, etc.; clearing up marches wisely between the kingdom of Christ, and the kingdom of Cæsar.—A power of making laws for the good of the church, agreeably to the law of Christ, and relating to the orderly government of his house, that all things be done decently and in order.—They have no power indeed, or authority to do any thing "against the truth," but only for it, 2 Cor. xiii. 8, 10; and for the edification of the church. When their power is otherwise employed, it is not to be regarded, but to be reckoned void and null. * * *

2. There is a power and authority, here also imported, that ministers have, which they can and may exercise separately: such as, not only in general, that of administration of the word and sacraments, Mat. xxviii. 19; public preaching, praying, praising, 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2, 3. Acts vi. 4. James v. 13. Col. iii. 16: but also particularly, they have a power declaratory; to declare "the whole counsel of God."—A power instructory; to "go and teach all

nations."—A power hortatory; to exhort, and to give much exhortation, as it is said, Acts xx. 2.—A power reprehensory; to reprove, as John did Herod; and to exhort and rebuke with authority, Titus ii. 15.—A power refutatory; to refute error and heresy, to confute and convince gainsayers, Titus i. 9. and shew them their sin.—A power mandatory; to command them in the name of the Lord, to turn from sin to God, through Christ, by faith; for, This is his command, that "we should believe in the name of his Son;" and this command they are to give forth in his name.—Again, they have a power minatory; to threaten the unbelieving and impenitent, saying, "He that believeth not, shall be damned;" and "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." They have a power minatory; to warn them to "flee from the wrath to come."—They have a power consolatory; to "comfort the broken hearted, and bind up their wounds."—They have a power ligatory and solutory; that is, of binding and loosing, according to the threatenings or comforts of the word.—A power desponsatory; that is, as co-workers with Christ and his Spirit; a power of espousing sinners to Christ, "I have espoused you to one Husband," says the apostle, 2 Cor. xi. 2.—A power regeneratory, and of begetting them by the word, 1 Cor. iv. 15. "In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel."—There is a power edificatory they have; to edify the body of Christ, and build them up in the most holy faith.—A power adjutory; to help them much, who "have believed through grace;" and to be helpers of their joy.—So much concerning this spiritual compulsion, and the power and authority imported in it, both for beginning and advancing the good work, and how ministers may be said to compel. This is the first general head, the ministerial compulsion and authority, Compel them.

II. The second general head proposed was, To speak of the end and design of this compulsion, namely, To come in; "Compel them to come in." I shall here only shew, what I take to be the import of this coming in, in a few particulars. The general import of coming in, is believing in Christ, who, so many times in scripture, calls sinners to come to him, "Come to me all ye that are weary;" "whosoever will, let him come;" "him that cometh, I will in no wise cast out." But more particularly, this coming in imports,

1. That sinners are without, otherwise they needed not be called to come in. Now, ministers being called to compel them to come in, is a warranting them to shew, and to cause them know, they are without doors. And this is the first mean to be used for bring-

ing in souls, to convince them of their estrangement from God; their cursed state while without God, without his image, without his favor, without his fellowship; and that, being without a covering from his wrath, they are exposed to eternal death and damnation: that so they may be compelled to cry out, "What shall we do to be saved?" What shall we do to be housed, and sheltered from the wrath of God.

2. To come in, imports, That the door is open; and to compel them to come in, is to cause them to know, that there is an open door of access to God; that the door of faith is open to the Gentiles; the door of faith is opened by the gospel; the door of mercy is open; the door of life and salvation, "Life and immortality being brought to light by the gospel;" and that Christ is "the door," John x. 9. The door of the old covenant of works is a shut door; the door of personal righteousness of ours, the door of Pagan morality, the door of natural endeavours, these are all shut doors; "there is no name under heaven, whereby" any can "be saved, but the name of Jesus:" but this door is open; "I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture:" ANY MAN, any person whatsoever. Hence,

3. "Compel them to come in;" it imports, a full warrant to come; and a hearty welcome; and that ministers must both warrant and welcome them. They are to warrant sinners to come in, by the command of their Lord and Master; "This is his commandment, That we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ," 1 John iii. 23. They are to welcome them by his promise; "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out," John vi. 37.

4. "Compel them to come in;" it imports, That notwithstanding of the warrant and welcome they have to come in, yet sinners will have a strong aversion and unwillingness to come in; and that therefore the utmost pains must be taken with them to conquer their prejudices, and gain their affections. There must be "line upon line and precept upon precept;" call upon call, and one offer upon the back of another, one motive and argument upon the back of another; and all is insufficient to overcome the enmity of sinners against a Saviour, till power come along with the means; yet these are still to be used in dependence upon his blessing, not knowing when, or in what mean, a prosperous gale may blow.

5. "Compel them to come in;" it imports something they are to come in to, which ministers are to inculcate upon them; namely, that they are to come in to himself, who is the door by which, and the house to which they are to come in. Christ is called, "An

house of defence," Psal. xxxi. 2. Sinners are to be taught, that they must come in to his arms, which are stretched out, even "unto a disobedient and gainsaying people," Rom. x. 21. That they must come in to his heart and bowels, which yearn toward them, as they did toward Ephraim; "My bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord," Jer. xxxi. 20. That they must come in to his blood and righteousness, and come in to his grace and fulness.

6. "Compel them to come in;" imports something they are to come in for, as well as what they are to come in to: and so they are to be taught the errand, as well as the object of faith. Christ is the object, and salvation is the first errand of faith. It is a receiving and resting upon Christ alone for salvation; they are to come in for a feast at his table; and surely salvation is a good feast for a lost soul. They that are aliens, and without, are to come in for acquaintance with God in Christ; for "This is life eternal, to know God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." They that are poor are to come in for riches, even durable riches and righteousness. They that are maimed are to come in for the supply of all their defects, that out of his fulness they may receive grace for grace. They that are halt are to come in for healing and strength, that his grace may be sufficient for them, and his strength may be made perfect in their weakness: Then shall the lame man leap as a hart. They that are blind are to come in for light and sight; for, then the eyes of the blind shall be opened. They that are straggling in the highways and hedges are to come in for rest and satisfaction in him, which they are in vain seeking among their lusts, and in the broad ways that lead to death and hell.

In a word, sinners are to be compelled to come in for life and happiness; for pardon of sin, for peace and reconciliation with God, and for all the privileges of the sons of God; to come and hear, that their souls may live; to come and see the salvation of God; to come and handle the word of life; to come and taste that the Lord is gracious; to come and smell the sweet savour of the Rose of Sharon, that perfumes heaven and earth, and puts away the stinking savour of sin and corruption. And, in short, they must be taught, that they *may* come in, and that they *must* come in, and share with him in his grace here, and glory hereafter. "Compel them to come in."

7. It imports, That he is before them, ready to help them in, and to take them in. It is not compel them to go in, but to come in. We are not to require them to go where he is not, but to come in

where he is, and where they shall have his presence, aid, and assistance. Christ's invitations to sinners by the gospel are not go, but come; come to me, and come with me; "Come to me all ye that labor, and are heavy laden;" "Come with me from Lebanon;" importing the strongest encouragement, and anticipating all objections drawn from weakness and inability, saying, I cannot come: why? there is no fear if you come. If I were commanding you to go without me, you might be afraid; but when I desire you to come to me, and come with me, and come in, you may be sure I am at the door of the house, ready to take your hand, and help you in: Hence it is said, Heb. viii. 25. "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him:" BY HIM; that is, not only by him as the way, but also by him as the leader, to take your hand. "Compel them to come in."

8. It imports, That he would be joined to them, and would have them joined to him; and that it is the most intimate union to him, and communion with him, he would have them brought into. "Compel them to come in;" it is not only to him by an outside profession, but to come into him by faith. Though the people of the old world had come to the ark, and taken hold of the outside of it, they would have been washed away with the waters of the deluge; none were safe but these that come in. Our safety lies in coming in: and ministers must not rest till they get sinners brought in, so as to be joined to the Lord Jesus, and married to him. We are to compel them, saying, "All things are ready, come unto the marriage," Mat. xxii. 4, and thereupon to the marriage-supper; "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage-supper of the Lamb," Rev. xix. 9. Ministers are warranted to court a bride for their Master, and to compel sinners, by all means, to come in to him, and join hands with him, and join hearts with him.—So much for the import of this phrase, "Compel them to come in."

III. The third general head proposed was, To speak of the reason here given for this work, viz. "That my house may be filled." This metaphorical expression, in a suitableness to the parable, supposes that Christ hath a house, and that his house must be filled. I might here consider, 1. What is his house? 2. What is the import of filling his house? 3. How full his house should be 4. Why his house must be filled.

1. What is his house? By his house we may understand his church and people, whether the church visible or invisible. In several respects they are called his house, where he dwells and resides; symbolically, by the external symbols of his presence in

the church visible, Psal. cxxxii. 13, 14; and graciously and spiritually in the church invisible on earth; therefore called the habitation of God through the Spirit, Eph. ii. 22. and a spiritual house, 1 Pet. 2. 5. This house, in scripture, comes under several names and designations.—It is his pleasure-house; for “the Lord takes pleasure in his people;” there he delights to dwell.—It is his treasure-house: his people are his treasure and his portion; he gives out of his treasure there.—It is his magazine-house; being built for an armory, where hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men: and there he lays up his magazines for military provision, the whole armor of God, which we are called to put on.—It is his “banqueting-house,” where he feeds and feasts his people; “He brought me to the banqueting-house, and his banner over me was love.”—It is his hospital-house, where he hath cures for all maladies, and all sorts of diseased persons, the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind.—It is his washing-house, where he hath a laver for cleansing of polluted souls, and a “fountain opened for sin, and for uncleanness.”—It is his house of prayer, and his house of praise, where he is worshipped and adored.—It is his own house, and his Father’s house: Shall my Father’s house become “a den of thieves?” The church of Christ is God’s house, he founded it; “The Lord hath founded Zion.” It is Christ’s house, for he is the foundation of it; and, Other foundations can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. He is the builder, and the bearer of all the charges of the building, and of all the honor of it; “He shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory.”——Thus much for a hint at what the house is.

2. What is imported in filling his house? That my house may be filled; that is,

1. That the elect may be gathered in; “Compel them to come in,” that the election may obtain, as indeed it shall obtain; for, “all that the Father hath given me, shall come to me; and him that cometh, I will in no wise cast out.”

2. That my house may be filled; that is, that my saints may be gathered together, these who, “have made a covenant with me by sacrifice,” Psalm l. 5. And that they may gather themselves together before the decree bring forth, before the day of the Lord’s anger come, that they may seek righteousness, and seek meekness, since in this way it may be they shall be hid in the day of the Lord’s anger. This is the call of God to his people, in such days of threatened judgments as these are wherein we live. * * *

3 “That my house may be filled; that is, that the church tri-

umphant may, in due time, be completed, and all the mansions of glory may be filled up; for, "in my Father's house are many mansions; and I go to prepare a place for you;" and you must prepare for it, and must, in my name, endeavour to prepare all, that are to be heirs of glory, for these heavenly mansions: and therefore, "compel them to come in, that my house may be filled;" first here below, and then above, that being once brought in, they may be brought up stairs, to the place where I am, to be forever with the Lord.

3. How full should his house be? Why, he would have every corner, every seat, every chamber, and every story of his house filled.

1. Every corner of his house should be filled, there being all kinds of supply for all kinds of sinners; and, if I may so express it, a corner for every kind, an apartment for every sort of sinners. As all kind of creatures had a place, a corner, or apartment in the ark: so all sorts of mankind sinners, Gentiles as well as Jews, have a place or corner for them in his house, according to Peter's vision of a sheet, "Wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air," Acts x. 12, representing sinners of all sorts upon earth, from all winds and airts, east, west, north, and south, from whence his house is to be filled, Isa. xliii. 5, 6. He would have every corner of his house filled from every quarter of the habitable earth; and, we hope, the time cometh when, according to his promise, "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters do the sea; and that his dominion shall extend from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth." "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth," Isa. xlv. 22.

2. Every seat of his house should be filled; "Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled:" that as there may be no empty corners, so there may be no empty seat. There are seats in his house for every one, according to their rank, order, and station.

* * *

3. Every chamber of his house must be filled. We read of the chambers of the king, Song i. 4, "The King hath brought me into his chambers:" and all the Lord's people are called to come in to the several chambers of his house, Isa. xxvi. 20, "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers." Here we shall tell you four sorts of chambers in his house he will have filled.

(1.) There are chambers of distinction he wants to be filled so as we may not be mixed with, or conform to the world; "Come

out from among them, and be ye separate," etc. 2 Cor. vi. 17. "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her plagues," Rev. xviii. 4. In a day of general defection we ought to side ourselves, by coming out from the corrupt part of a church, and testify against them: this is the way how saints in scripture have overcome their enemies; "They overcame him 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 declining times.

(2.) There are chambers of defence in his house, which he would have filled, where we may be safe in the worst and most threatening times; "The name of the Lord is a strong tower;" a strong chamber of strength, Prov. xviii. 10. Every perfection of God is a chamber of defence; "Trust ye in the Lord forever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." Every office of Christ, every promise of the covenant is a chamber.

(3.) There are chambers of devotion in his house, he would have filled; "Enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly," Matth. vi. 6. There are chambers of public worship and devotion; societies meeting for spiritual edification; chambers of family worship and devotion, every family apart; and chambers of secret devotion, every person apart, like doves in the valleys, mourning every one for his own sins, as well as the sins of the land in general; he would have all those chambers filled. And, indeed, every chamber of your house should be a chamber of devotion; and so far as it is so, it is a part of the house of God. Let every convenient apartment be a praying place; for, "their hearts shall live that seek God."

(4.) There are chambers of action and business he would have filled. Christ's house is not only a house of prayer, but a work-house, wherein we are to do some things for God in our day and generation; "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" "Go, work to-day in my vineyard," Matth. xx. 6, xxi. 28. The Lord calls his people not only to pray, and cry to him, but also to action and diligence. When Israel were in great 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." We are not only to cry, but to go forward to our work and service in our several stations as magistrates, ministers, or people; every one to the work and duty of their station, that they may glorify God therein.

4. As every corner, every seat, every chamber, so every story

of his house must be filled. There are two stories of his house, the lower story upon earth, and the upper story in heaven; and he will have both filled: both the church militant and church triumphant. They are but two stories of the same house; and hence all believers, that are said to be come to Mount Zion, "the city of the living God," Heb. xii. 22, are said also to be come to "the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly, and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven; and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect." Why, who are come to this house? Even all believers in Christ, who are said, in the following verse, to be come "to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." That every story of his house, therefore, may be filled, sinners must be compelled to come in.

In a word, he will have his house so full, that there may be no empty room. There is access for sinners as long as the servants have occasion to say, So many are already come in, and "yet there is room." There is room for all the innumerable number mentioned, Rev. vii. 9, out "of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues." O that sinners would come in! Let there be no empty corner, no empty seat, no empty chamber, no empty story of his house; for he would have all filled.

4. Why, or for what reason must his house be filled? I offer only these two reasons.

1. The more full his house is, the more advantageous to the guests. Happy they that throng in to him, and fill his house.—The more full it is, the more useful and helpful they are to one another: When they are converted, they strengthen their brethren.—The more full it is, the more pleasant and heartsome it is, while joining together in prayer and praise: they are also the more encouraging to one another, as iron sharpeneth iron; and the more encouraging, even to these that are without, to come in; for then they are ready to say, We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you.—The more full, the more safe, and free from hurt; for an empty house goes to ruin. It is the greatest curse when it is said, "Behold your house is left unto you desolate" and empty; but it is a great blessing when the house is full; full of guests, and full of provision for them: and truly in his house "there is bread enough and to spare."

2. The more full the house is, the more glory redounds to the master of the house. The more God's house is filled, the more

and the greater revenues of praise will be paid to him by the inhabitants of it; for "blessed are they that dwell in thy house, they will be still praising thee," Psal. lxxxiv. 4. He will then have his house filled, that he may have many to sing forth the praise of his grace and mercy, power and pity, to all eternity. —So much for the third general head, viz. the reason assigned for the work, "that his house may be filled."

IV. We come now to the fourth thing proposed, viz. To offer some inferences for the application. It is so, that the ministers of Christ have a power and warrant to compel sinners to come in to him, that his house may be filled? Hence see then,

1. That the ministers of Christ, who are sent of him, are clothed with authority: they are, as it were, the the "mouth" of Christ, 2 Thess. ii. 8. They are the stars in his right hand, and co-workers with him. They are Christ's ambassadors; and as God sends Christ, so Christ sends them. They have the keys of the kingdom of heaven put into their hands. And the greatness of their ministerial power is evident from the great charge given to them, Jer. i. 17, 18. "Gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at all their faces, lest I confound thee before them. For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls, against the kings of Judah," etc. The power and authority committed to them is, that of the Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Cor. v. 4.—The greatness of their power is evident from the great challenge they get for not executing their office, and using their authority against seducers and erroneous teachers, Rev. ii. 14, 20.—It is evident also from the great glory they are to have from God, who faithfully execute the ministerial trust; they "shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away," 1 Pet. v. 2, 3, 4. People ought therefore to regard their authority; for Christ hath said, "He that despiseth you despiseth me."

2. Hence see the due limits and boundaries of church power and authority. It is to be used for the good and edification of the body of Christ, and for compelling sinners to come in. Church-power is unlawfully used, when it compels men to go out, and not to come in. It is the greatest rebellion against a king, when his arms and artillery are employed against himself and his family; so it is the greatest rebellion against the King of Zion, when a church makes use of the power and authority he hath given her, even against himself, and his children, his cause and interest. Ministers and judicatories have no power to do any thing against the truth,

or against the edification of God's children, See 2 Cor. x. 8. where it is said.—“Our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction.” See also chap. xiii. 8, 10. The church-power that is exercised against the truth, and for the destruction of the people of God, or the ruin of their souls and spiritual privileges, is to be declared void and null, and by no means to be acknowledged.

3. Hence see the efficacy of the word and ordinances of God, when duly administered in his name; Mat. xviii. 18. “Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.” Notice the power and efficacy thereof from Mat. xxviii. 18, 19, 20. Great is the power of the word of God, and of a gospel-ministry in the hand of the Spirit. It hath a power of illumination and direction, a power of conviction and conversion, a power of humiliation and consolation; “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.” Psal. xix. 7, 8. It is dangerous to despise the word; for, it is the power of God unto salvation.

4. Hence see the enmity of the world against Christ, that they must be compelled to come in to him; and consequently what hard work that of a gospel-minister is. If he be faithful to his trust, he cannot but meet with opposition from earth and hell. Ministers must lay their account with the contradiction of sinners against themselves, and of being every where opposed, every where spoken against. If they be faithful, they must be reckoned men of contention to the whole earth; troublers of Israel; and such as turn the world upside down. If their testimony be faithful and honest, it must torment them that dwell upon the earth; and the earth will seek to torment them again, and to kill the witnesses: but they must seek the ruin of Satan's kingdom, and the repairing of Zion's desolations; and the maintaining and defending the truth, however men and devils rage.

5. Hence we may learn how culpable they are that straiten the door, and hamper the call of the gospel, instead of compelling sinners to come in. The erroneous and legal teachers drive men in to themselves, instead of bringing them in to Christ. They say in effect, there is no room for such and such sinners, in Christ's house; no room for you that are not humble and penitent, and so and so qualified: no room for the poor, the maimed, the halt, the blind, the vagrant sinner. How contrary is that strain of preach-

ing to the design of the gospel, which is to compel those very sinners to come in, whom the legal strain of doctrine would keep out and exclude?

6. Hence see the nature of faith; it is a coming in as we are; poor, maimed, halt, blind and wicked as we are, without tarrying and waiting for better qualifications, which we shall never have till we come in to Christ for them. Faith is expressed in scripture according to our natural situation, because we are naturally high in our own esteem; therefore it is expressed by a coming down; "Come down, and sit in the dust," Isa. xlvii. 1. "Come down, Zaccheus; salvation is come to thy house."—Because we are naturally low, and earthly in our affections; therefore it is sometimes expressed by coming up; "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness leaning upon her Beloved?"—Because we are naturally far from God; therefore it is sometimes expressed by a coming nigh; "He will be sanctified in them that come nigh to him,"—Because we are naturally engaged in departing and backsliding from God; therefore it is called a coming back and returning; "Return ye backsliding children."—Because we are within, as to fellowship with the world; therefore it is called a coming out; "Come out from among them, and be ye separate."—And because we are without, as to fellowship with God in Christ; therefore it is called a coming in; Compel them to come in. Again,

7. Hence see that the Church is Christ's house; "That my house may be filled." MY HOUSE; he is the Lord of the house. The law of the house is Christ's law; and therefore must not be violated. The ordinances of the house are Christ's ordinances; and therefore must not be abused. The servants of the house are Christ's servants; and therefore must not become the servants of men, as men-pleasers, in any way that is displeasing to Christ. * * *

8. Hence see what a heavy and lamentable matter it is, when Christ's house is empty. What a pity is it, that his house should be empty, who is such a kind and liberal Lord, that he loves not to have an empty house? Nothing is more displeasing and dishonouring to him, than to see his house empty of incomers, and few thronging in to it. He looks upon his house as a desolate house, when it is empty of comers, that come in by the door; and full of thieves and robbers, that come not in by the door, "but climb up some other way." Hence it is one of the heaviest dooms he passes against a church, when he leaves it empty and desolate, because of their unbelief, in not coming in to him at his call; "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are

sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children?" etc., "but ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." Mat. xxiii. 37, 38. Heavy is the case of a church, when it is left empty of sound professors, empty of faithful ministers, empty of pure ordinances, empty of precious influences; such emptiness and desolation is a heavy doom; and when it is left in the hands of robbers, that rob Christ of his honour, and the royalties of his crown and dignity, and rob his people of their rights and privileges; then his house comes to be alienated from him, as it were, to them, so as to be no more his house, but theirs; "Behold your house is left unto you desolate." Wo to that church that is given up of Christ, and left into the hands of enemies and robbers! What will they do with the doctrine, discipline, and government of the church, but rob on, and raze on to the foundation?

9. Hence see, that it is matter of praise and thankfulness, and a great mercy in declining times, when there is any to come in and fill his house, that it be not altogether left empty. It is a mercy if there is a remnant, that keep up the name of his house, and favour the dust of Zion; Psal. cii. 13, 14. "Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah." Some cry out, O division, division; such and such men are for nothing but schism and division! But when defection becomes general, then division becomes a necessary duty, and a great mercy; otherwise all would run down into the gulf of defection together, making peace and pretensions to brotherly-love, a GRAVE for burying all zeal for God, and his truths and interests. If Christ's householders have not salt in themselves, as he commands, Mark. ix. 50, how can they have peace one with another, unless it be a peace without the salt of truth, like the peace of a dunghill, where every particle doth but corrupt another? Peace without truth being but a confederacy against heaven; suspect their honesty who cry out, O the schism and division of the day! but never a word of the corruptions and defections thereof. Who are the schismatics and dividers in Scotland? These that adhere to the covenanted Reformation thereof, founded on the word of God, or these that are razing a covenanted work of Reformation to the ground? * Suppose a

*The witnesses for the truth, have usually, in all periods of the church, been treated with the greatest contumely and reproach, by the enemies to Reformation. Whenever the corruptions, defections, and tyrannical measures of a church came to such a height, that the bond of union could no longer be kept, in a consistency

company walking on a road by the side of a ditch, most of them fall into the ditch, and then cry to their fellows, If ye come not here, and join with us, we will charge you with schism and division; how ridiculous would that accusation be! Surely, these may be said to go out of the house, who go out of the way of the house, out of the order, rule, and government of the house: but these may be said, properly, to come into the house, and abide in it, who abide by the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the house: and, I say, in declining times, it is a mercy there are any to come in and fill his house, and to abide in it, and keep possession of it, by zealously testifying and contending for the faith, when others are going out by the door of defection and apostacy; and perhaps, Christ hath some disciples among them, to whom he is saying, "Will ye also go away?"—May the Lord awaken all the virgins that are asleep in our day.

10. Hence see the duty both of ministers and people. The duty of ministers, and their work: their work is not only driving work, while they preach the law as a schoolmaster to lead to Christ; but it is also drawing work, while they preach the gospel of Christ, who was lifted up to draw men to him by his love and grace. Their work is winning work, seeking to win souls to

with truth, the opposers of these deviations, have been calumniated as Separatists and Schismatics. The Associate Brethren when making a stand for truth, against the torrent of defection, got their own share of this obloquy. The charge of Schism, as laid against them, would soon vanish, if the nature thereof was duly considered. "SCHISM, in the scripture sense of the word," says a late grave and judicious divine, "is when the members of a particular organical church put a DIFFERENCE amongst their FAITHFUL ministers and teachers, who are holding the SAME testimony of the Lord Jesus. In this sense the apostle used the word several times in his first epistle to the Corinthians, as Chap. i. 10. xi. 18. There were divisions, differences, and janglings amongst the members of that church, who still remained joined together in external church-communion, or in the same church-order, discipline, and worship. The apostle gives a particular instance of these divisions and janglings, 1. Cor. i. 12. iii. 4. "One said I am of Paul: another I am of Apollos." There was a siding amongst them about their ministers and teachers, who held the same testimony of Jesus." Mr. WILSON'S Defence of the Reformation Principles, p. 198, 199. The worthy and pious Mr. RUTHERFORD says, "When the greatest part of a church maketh defection from the truth, the lesser part, remaining sound, the greatest part is the church of Separatists. Though the maniest and greatest part, in the actual exercise of discipline, be the church; yet, in the case of right discipline, the BEST, though FEWEST, is the church." Divine right of Presbytery, p. 225—To the same purpose the Reader, if he pleases, may consult the learned and judicious Dr. OWEN'S Humble Testimony, Pref. p. 7. Treatise on Schism, p. 265. And the celebrated Mr. FORESTER, Rect. Instr. dial. III. p. 7. Also CLAUD'S Defence of the Reformation, part III. pp. 17, 18. And the famous Mr. SHIELDS, in his preface to Mr. RENWICK'S Life.

Christ, compelling them to come. And their work is filling work, that their Master's house may be filled; that every corner, every seat, every chamber, every story of his house may be filled. As long as the gospel is preached, his house is a-filling; and as long as there is room in his house, there is work for the minister; his work is never over, so long as his Master's house is empty; "Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled."

Further, their duty is, as the context points out,

(1) To go out, verse 21, into the wide world, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," Mark xvi. 15. And, as they must go out to the world, so they must go out of the world, and out of themselves.

(2.) To go out quickly, verse 21; to lose no time, for sinners are in hazard of perishing eternally: and we must hasten to pull them as brands out of the burning; "Now is the accepted time:" now is the Spirit promised.

(3.) To let them know we are in earnest for our Master; and endeavour not to tickle their fancy, but to touch their heart; to compel them by importunity, and take no refusal.

(4.) However many have come in, we are to tell them, That "yet there is room" for more; and, that Christ's heart is open, and his riches inexhaustible; and, that in his house "there is bread enough, and to spare."

(5.) The zeal of his house must eat us up; for our concern must be, that his house may be filled; the number of the elect must be completed, and the rest left inexcusable; "All that the Father hath given him, shall come to him; yea, these he must bring, and they shall hear his voice." Let this encourage us when many believe not. Yet,

(6.) We must shew them the danger of refusing, and making excuses; verse 21. The Master of the house was "angry:" we must tell them what a terrible thing it is to offend Christ; and, that they must "kiss the Son lest he be angry," and they perish: grace despised, is grace forfeited, like Esau's birth-right.

(7.) Ministers must remember the accounts they are to give; here the servant gives account, verse 22. "Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room." Ministers must give account of the success of their ministry; they must give account of what they do, and how it prospers: they must do it now at a throne of grace; if they see the travail of their soul, they must go to God with their thanks; and if they labour in vain, they must

go to God with their complaints. They must give account hereafter also, at the judgment-seat of Christ, they will be brought as witnesses against these that persist, and perish in their unbelief, to prove that they were fairly invited; and as witnesses for these that, through grace accept of his call; Behold I, and the children which the Lord hath given me. The apostle urges this, as a reason why people should give ear to the word sent to them by his servants; "For they watch for your souls, as they that must give account," Heb. xiii. 17.

(8.) Ministers must be as he-goats before a flock, by a good example and compel them to come in; to come, not to go in without us; but to go in, so as we go in with them, or go in before them. Ministers little need to be as the carpenters that built the ark for others, and yet were drowned themselves; that preach the gospel to others, and yet themselves to be cast-aways: people have eyes to see what we do, and how we walk, as well as ears to hear what we say, and how we speak.

Again, hence see the duty of people that hear the gospel. Have ministers authority to compel you to come in, that our Lord's house may be filled? Then, O Sirs, be persuaded to come in; come in to our Lord Jesus; and if you have any objection, any aversion or unwillingness, O! suffer yourselves to be compelled. Do not resist the ministerial compulsion that God is pleased to make use of; surely willing souls are welcome, when these that are unwilling must be compelled. If God hath made you willing, it is well; the day of power hath made you so: if you be presently willing, peremptorily willing, pleasantly willing, and universally willing; presently willing, without offering to delay; peremptorily willing, saying, I must have him, or I perish; pleasantly willing, content joyfully to sell your all for the pearl of great price; and universally willing, willing to have Christ in all his offices; to be a Saviour to save you from sin, as well as to save you from hell: I say, if you be made willing, and can be active in coming, the willing soul is the welcome soul. But if you find difficulties and objections, and cannot be active; then, oh! yield yourself passive, if you cannot be so active as to come in without compulsion, then yield yourself passive; that is, willing to be compelled and drawn in: do not resist the Holy Ghost, and his drawing motions and influences; do not resist the call of the gospel; but lay yourself open to be compelled, that is, to be convinced, to be converted, to be turned, to be persuaded, to be exhorted, to be entreated to come in, that our Lord's house may be filled.

O! come in, poor sinner; let me compel you to come in to Jesus Christ, who is ready to welcome you into his house and heart, both at once. Come in: how? O come in believing; and, if you cannot believe, come in looking to the author of faith, saying, "Lord, I believe: help thou mine unbelief." Come in repenting of all your former sins: and, if you cannot repent, come looking to Christ, as exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins. Come in praying: and if you cannot pray, come to him looking for the Spirit of grace and supplication promised in the gospel. Come in running: and if you cannot run, seek that he may draw you, saying, with the spouse, Draw me, we will run after thee.

By what arguments shall I compel you to come in? There are some awful arguments I might make use of.

1. Consider, enemies are coming in upon you like a flood; and what will become of you if you come not in to Christ? * * *

But, though God had no controversy with the church and land in general, yet he hath somewhat against thee in particular: O man, woman, that hast never yet closed with Christ and come to him; you are under condemnation by the law, as long as ye have not believed the gospel. May I compel you by the curse of the law you are under, to cry out, Oh! what shall I do to be saved? If you saw your need of Christ, and the everlasting wrath you lie open to, while you are out of Christ, you would cry out more than a dying man ever did for a physician, or a drowning man for a boat. What! are you content to lay, and die under that everlasting wrath of the everlasting God? Knowing the "terror of the Lord," we would persuade men to come into Christ. Alas! it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God! But,

2. I would rather compel you by the blessings of the gospel: and, O that God himself would draw you, with the cords of love and grace!

Consider therefore, O sinner, that the call is unto you; "To you is the word of this salvation sent." We are required to go out and bring in, ver. 21, of this chapter where the text lies, "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind:" go out and preach the gospel to every creature. And now, in providence, we are come out as far as this place, to compel you to enter in. You that are poor, come in and be enriched.—You that are maimed, come in and be supplied.—You that are halt come in and be restored.—You that are blind, come in and be enlightened.—You that are

wandering in the high ways, and running in the broad way to hell, come in and be saved both from sin and wrath.—You that never came to Christ before, O come in now; whatever you have been formerly; whatever atrocious crimes you have been guilty of; yet all by-gones shall be by-gones, if you come in this day; From this day will he bless you: if you come in this hour, from this hour will he bless you: and, O may this be the happy hour when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live.—You that fancy ye have come in to Christ formerly, and yet may be deceiving yourselves, and debarring yourselves from believing, by the notion you are believers already: O come, and make it sure work: come and take a better grip of Christ, a faster grip than ever, such as death itself shall not loose.—You that are young, come in, and get grace to remember your Creator, and grace to be early seekers of him who says, “I love them that love me, and they that seek me early shall find me.”—You that are old, come in to Jesus, and get your gray hairs crowned with righteousness, that, when death comes, you may be among the blessed dead that die in the Lord.—You that come here only to gaze upon strangers, O come in, and ye shall get a view of the King in his beauty.—You that came here to satisfy your curiosity, come in and ye shall get satisfaction to your souls, and food to your heart, and not to your fancy only.—You that came here for some trifling reason, like Saul going to seek his Father’s asses, some carnal beastly errand or other, O come in, and ye shall get a kingdom before you go; for, “He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life.”—You that came here to mock, and to scorn, O come in to Jesus, who says, How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and scorners delight in scorning? Turn ye at my reproof; and I will pour out my spirit unto you; I will make known my words unto you.—You that come here under the heavy load of the guilt of sin, O come in, and get pardoning grace; God’s indemnity is offered unto you; I, even I, am he that blotteth out thine iniquity, for mine own name’s sake.—You that came here under the power of sin, and the pollution of it, O come in, and get sanctifying and purifying grace; for, here is a “fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness.”—You that came here, and know not for what you came, O come in to Jesus, and ye shall know wherefore he brought you here in his providence: ye shall know, whatever your designs were, that God had a design of mercy in it to you.—You that came here only to see a minister ordained, in these extraordinary circumstances of the church, O

come in; we would compel you to come in to Christ, and ye shall see a greater sight, and a more extraordinary ordination; ye shall see Christ ordained of the Father to be a Minister and a Saviour unto you; a Prophet, Priest, and King for you; for, Him hath God the Father sealed.—You that came here only to get a minister amongst you, O come in, come in, and get the best minister first, our Master to be your minister. Take Christ first, and then Paul and Apollos are yours: ye shall then have the minister, and God's blessing with him.

Consider again, for compelling you to come in, that every door of his house is open to you to come in, that his house may be filled; "I am the door," says Christ; and in this everlasting gospel this door is opened, and there is no impediment to hinder your entrance. All impediments, on God's part, are actually removed; the law is fulfilled, justice is satisfied, wrath appeased, death vanquished by this JESUS: and all impediments, on your part, are virtually removed; faith, and all grace, and glory is purchased; "All things are ready, come to the marriage." The door is open, come in, and take him by the hand of faith, give your assent and consent to the bargain; here the door of grace and mercy is opened: the door of hope is opened to you in the vally of Achor: the door of life is opened to you that are dead sinners; O come in that you may have life: the door of pardon is open to you that are guilty sinners: the door of peace is opened to you that are rebels; Christ hath received gifts for men, even for the rebellious: the door of sanctification is opened to you that are polluted sinners; "The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin;" and he is made of God to you sanctification: the door of faith is opened to you, faithless sinner; Christ is the author of faith, as well as the object of it; O come in and get grace to believe: the door of repentance is open to you, impenitent, hard-hearted sinner: Christ is exalted to give repentance: the door of salvation is opened to you, lost sinner; Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost: the door of consolation is opened to you, dejected sinner; come in to him who is the consolation of Israel: the door is opened to you that do not think, and cannot think it is opened to you; "My thoughts are not your thoughts neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts, than your thoughts."

Our master's house is like the New Jerusalem, that hath th ee gates to every airth, Rev. xxi. 13. "On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west

three gates;" and all the gates of his house are open. Where dwell you, man, woman? In Scotland, or in England? In the east, or in the west? In the north or in the south? O come in, come in; for the gates are open to you; "I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west: I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back; bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth," Isa. xliii. 5. If you, or any of you, go away thinking or saying, that there was not a word said to you, I take all the four quarters of heaven, east, west, north, and south, to witness, that you are called to "come in."

This is the first offer that ever the present speaker made of Christ to the most part of you, and it is like it may be the last. It is the first sight that ever we all had of one another, and it is like we shall never all hear or see one another again, till it be before the awful tribunal of our Lord Jesus Christ, when he comes in the clouds of heaven: and, in the view of that awful day of judgment, I would now compel you to come in to him, who will then say to the wicked, Depart from me, ye cursed; but now is on the throne of grace, saying, Come to me, ye cursed sinners, and get a blessing. O Sirs, let me compel you by the awful authority of the great God, and by the blood and bowels of the Lord Jesus Christ, to come in to him for all the ends I have mentioned.

Consider how empty his house is, and what room there is in it, and how few are coming in; and shall this house be left empty for you? Every corner of his house stands empty, every seat of his house, every chamber of his house, every story of his house stands empty for your part, though you be called to come in, that his house may be filled: Oh! Tell it not in Gath, nor publish it in the streets of Askelon.

Will you tell me what displeases you at Christ? Is his person contemptible, who is EMMANUEL, God-man, God with us? Is his purchase contemptible? Is his grace and glory, and a happy eternity nothing to you, and unworthy of your regard? Yet a little while, and time shall be no more; and, if time be gone before you come in, in vain will you cry, Oh! call time again. What a terrible sting will that reflection give you, Alas! I had once a fair call to come in to Christ, but I slighted it! I had convictions of sin, but I crucified them! I had warm desires to come to Christ, but I quenched them, by returning to my lusts, and sinful diversions! Oh! what madness possesses me, that I did not accept of Christ as well as others; that I refused Christ, and choosed perishing vanities?

Consider, and be compelled to come in, by the greatness of the grace of that God, whose orders we are executing, when we endeavour, in his name, to compel you to come in. The word of a God is a compelling word. The poor man that speaks to you cannot compel you; but the God that speaks by him can. And, if you can hear this word, not as the word of men, or of the poor worm that is speaking to you, but, as it is indeed, the word of God; if you can believe, that God is speaking to you, then the word will work effectually in you that so believe. O Sirs, could you believe, that this Almighty Speaker is present, speaking to you, you would hear a sound of omnipotent power in his word going through your heart.

What! is the power of the spirit to be expected to go along with the word, in this day of clouds and darkness, in this day of shaking and commotion? Yea, he can make the clouds his chariots for riding in to your heart. He hath said, He will shake all nations and the desire of all nations shall come. And, even in the midst of these shaking times, he is coming to you in this kind offer of himself; and shall we not hope he is coming to some in the power of his Spirit? For the gracious offer of the gospel is the channel, wherein the powerful influences of the Spirit run. Oh! shall any heart here resist the grace and kindness of Christ, saying, Come in. He doth not say, Go in without me, but come in to me; importing, if you would gladly come, and want my help, there is my helping hand.

May the Lord himself effectually persuade you, and Compel you to come in that his house may be filled.

A P P E N D I X.

Directed more especially to the united Societies in and about Morbottle and Stichel, upon occasion of the much lamented Death of the Rev. Mr. John Hunter, lately ordained Minister among them; and at whose Ordination the foregoing Sermon was preached.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

THIS awful dispensation of providence, in the speedy removal of this worthy pastor, cannot but be most afflicting to all the Lord's people through the land, that ever enjoyed the benefit of hearing the joyful sound of the glorious gospel out of his pleasant, edifying lips; but more especially to you, that had the prospect of enjoying the advantage of his fixed ministry among you, and who are so quickly bereaved of such a blessing. To you the stroke must be very heavy and smarting.

He was indeed a "burning and shining light," that burnt so fast, and shone so bright, it is the less to be wondered at that he did not burn and shine long. The precious oil that was in this lamp, being once lighted, by a license to preach, burnt so intensely, that the lamp itself behoved to waste: for, beside the appointments that were laid upon him, after his license, and before his ordination amongst you, which appointments he might have accomplished more easily, considering his great abilities; besides these, I say, his heart was so much set upon the great work of feeding Christ's lambs, that he could not refuse the constant solicitations of poor starving souls, crying for more and more of the bread and water of life from him, in the several corners of the land where he went; insomuch that, as I am informed, he would have preached upwards of thirty times in the space of fourteen days. And though what was the gain of others, may be supposed to be your loss, that this bright candle was so far burnt and wasted, in this manner, before it was set up amongst you; yet you also shared as liberally as others, of that circumambient blessing, so as to enjoy more of it before than since his ordination: however, you ought to adore that holy providence, that made such a bright star to shine among you, though but a little. He that hath the stars in his right hand, may give or take them when he pleases.

It was, no doubt, a great loss to the generation, that such a

gracious person, endued with such great and useful gifts, as he was, should have lived so long in such a retired and obscure way: and, as this was mostly owing to the corruptions of the times, with which his zealous soul could never mingle itself, and against which he always, in his station, testified; so, having once joined himself with the Associate Presbytery, and having been once licensed by them to preach the gospel, it may be a matter of conviction to the corrupt age, by which such excellent talents were so long smothered, that, whenever they came to be occupied, they were universally taking and edifying, insomuch that he became the darling of the little flock, "the followers of the Lamb." His preaching and praying gift was reckoned, by many, to come nearest, of any we have heard of, to that of the great and eminent Mr. SAMUEL RUTHERFORD; being so full of homely similies and metaphors, tending to convey the truth with such pleasure and evidence into the hearts of his hearers, that few or none who heard him once, but were fond to hear him again. These things considered, together with his holy, humble, and meek conversation, his great learning, profound judgment, aptness to teach, and ability to convince gainsayers, with other great and excellent endowments, wherewith he was blessed of God, contribute, no doubt, to heighten your grief, that have lost such an eminent, well-qualified pastor, and that in such a sudden manner, which screws up the trial to a very great height, in the holy, wise, and adorable providence of God.

It is more than probable there will be various commentaries upon, and interpretations people will make of this trying, and afflictive providence, according to their various sentiments concerning the public differences of the times. Many are apt, too soon, too rashly and hastily, to explain the works of the Lord, which yet remain inexplicable, till the vision, which is for an appointed time, speak out the mystery, and explain the mind and design of God therein: "What I do thou knowest not now," says Christ; "but thou shalt know hereafter."

Meantime, till the mind of the Lord more fully appear, let all murmuring and mutinous thoughts be silenced by these two following considerations.

1. Consider the sovereignty of God, and his absolute dominion over you, and all his creatures, as the potter hath over the clay. It is the Lord that giveth, and the Lord that taketh; and therefore we are to say, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." It is the Lord, who can do us no wrong, and who hath undeservedly done us much good; Let him do to us what seemeth good in his sight. Let not

too much thoughtfulness about your affliction and loss divert you from an humble enquiry at this sovereign Lord, what he aims at by this dispensation? What he would have you to learn out of it? What he reproves and contends with you for? What he would have amended in you? What he would have you weaned from, and mortified to? You may humbly ask him, What have you to do? And what he means by this hard beginning; that you, who were first provided in this manner, should be first laid desolate? That the Lord should seem to give you, in his providence, a deliverance from the bondage and oppression of church judicatories, and yet, on a sudden, withdraw the deliverance, and increase your grief. You may think, Can such a case be exemplified in scripture? While many, through the land, are of the mind, that the Associate Presbytery are raised up of the Lord, in his holy providence, to give some relief to his oppressed people in Scotland; now, here is one instance, in the entry of their ordaining work. Some relief was thought to have been given, but behold it is blown up; we are in as great straits as ever, and our grief is doubled. God hath not smiled upon the means of deliverance that have come this way.

My dear friends, if you search your Bible, you will see how God may, by such sovereign steps as this, be even carrying on his great work of delivering. Moses was sent to deliver Israel out of their Egyptian bondage, Exod. iii. 7,—10; but, behold, instead of present deliverance, on a sudden, their hopes are dashed, their bondage is increased, and they come crying to Moses and Aaron, saying, “The Lord look upon you, and judge,” etc. Ye have “put a sword in their hands to slay us.” Wherefore Moses returned to the Lord, saying, “Wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? Why is it that thou hast sent me?” “Thou hast not delivered thy people at all.” Exod. v. 21, 22, 23. Yet how gloriously God delivered in the issue, the sacred history shews. Now, after this one instance is adduced, let none, in their commenting upon the providence that hath befallen you, conclude, that your case is desperate, and that the work, which the Lord wrought among you, in beginning your deliverance, was not of God; because your hopeful prospect was so suddenly dashed. Nay, what if, from such instances as that I have mentioned, it look more like the very way of our sovereign God, in delivering his people from their thralldom.

2. Consider the infinite wisdom of God, that knows much better what is good for you, than you yourselves do. He knows what to be most needful for you, which you may judge to be most hurtful

and dreadful: to this purpose you may put a remark upon the words of Christ to his disciples, John xvi. 7; where, having spoken of his leaving them, upon hearing of which, Sorrow had filled their heart; he says, "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away." What! (might the shallow wisdom of the disciples say) can that be true, that it is good and expedient for us, that our great Lord and Master go away from us? This is a thing that hath the most dreadful aspect. What will become of us if he leave us! It seems utterly impossible to us, that this can be for our good and advantage. Nay, but says he, who is truth itself, and who is the wisdom of God, "I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away." Now, could the loss of the great Master's presence be made up? and could his departure be needful and expedient for them and us? And will you think it strange, if he be saying to you, with respect to a servant, however eminent, It is expedient for you, that he should be taken away? God can do no needless thing: even when what he does is awful, yet still it is needful. Whenever we are in heaviness, through any or many trials, it is always and only "if need be," 1 Pet. i. 6. And if ye, at present, are in heaviness, through this awful blow of his hand, you may be sure it was needful: though you cannot see it, infinite wisdom knows the necessity and expediency thereof. And, if you stand in need of what you are trysted with, in all its sad and sorrowful circumstances, which must be the case, since God, that cannot lie, hath said it, surely, you ought to submit to his pleasure, which hath your profit inseparably joined with it, Heb. xii. 10. Nor have you reason to complain of God's ordering that for you, whereof you stand in need, even the quick removal of such a precious and desirable pastor: for, if you did but exceed in overvaluing or doting too much upon him, and in reckoning yourselves happy in having him, as Micah did in another case, Judges xvii. 13. It was needful, that by his being taken away, you should be made to see, that your good and happiness lay elsewhere, and be brought to a blessed necessity of crying more ardently than ever, with the tear of godly sorrow in the eye of faith, to our glorious Lord and Master, CHRIST, that he himself may come and fill up the room that he hath made void. And, indeed it is a great vacancy, that he, In whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead, cannot fill. A few moments of his gracious presence, and a few drops of his special love, is sufficient to fill up the greatest void, that is made by the removal of the choicest, and most desirable of all earthly comforts. "And happy they," as one says, "who, when they lose

any near friend, or dear idol they are fond of, are helped of God to make Jesus Christ succeed to it as its heir, by taking that loss as a summons to transfer and settle their whole love to him, as the object incomparably worthy of it; he being altogether lovely, and infinitely more amiable and fairer than the sons of men." Say not, "There is no sorrow like our sorrow," no trial like ours; and if it had been anything but this, we could have borne it; for your heavenly Father sees that this, even this very cup, with all its bitter ingredients, was fit to be given you to drink; and that this, this very trial, in all its heavy circumstances, was necessary for you, even the sudden death of a lately settled minister among you: might not the Lord see it needful for you, thus to correct you for your former iniquities? And needful that, after so many sweet sermons he had preached to you, before and after his ordination, you should have this one very bitter sermon, to help you, through grace, the better to digest the former? Might he not see it needful for you, that before his departure, he should be brought into a pastoral relation with you, that not only his widow and fatherless children, being thus entitled to a share of your kind and generous concern, you might have occasion to shew it, so far as that may be requisite; but also, that you, in particular, might have the special benefit of a louder sermon by his death, than ever you heard from him in his life. And if this last and loudest sermon be blessed and sanctified to you, for awakening you to seek the Lord more earnestly, and for compelling you to come in to him more speedily, then it will be sweetly verified in your experience, that it was expedient for you, that he should be taken away.

When you so earnestly entreated the publishing of the foregoing Ordination sermon, I suppose you little expected, that it would need to be subscribed, as it were, with a Funeral-sermon: but, since holy providence hath made this addition to that exercise not unsuitable, I hope it shall not, though in this rude and unexpected address to you, be unacceptable, notwithstanding the occasion be mournful: as I would therefore presume, that the preceding considerations shall not be reckoned unseasonable, and hope they will be duly pondered by you; so I shall conclude this discourse to you with some advices suitable, I think, to the present occasion.

1. Think not strange that your minister should die, and be so quickly called away. As the prophets do not live forever, Zech. i. 5; so they may live but a very short while: for some may be called to work but one hour in God's vineyard, and yet be rewarded equally with those that have wrought the whole day, Mat. xx.

12. Some may think, that, if any could be exeemed from death and a dark grave, it should be they who are the lights of the world; that, if any should escape the house of silence, it should be they who are to convey the joyful sound of the gospel to the ears of men: but yet they must die, as well as others, and may be called off very quickly, especially in two cases.

1. When their work is done, that God hath allotted to them in this world. Some ministers live longer than others, because God hath appointed them more work than others. Some live a shorter time, because either God hath appointed them less work, or enables them to dispatch a great work in a short time.

2. When desolating judgments are hastily advancing towards the place, or land, wherein they live, even as Noah, that famous preacher of righteousness, entered into the ark but a few days before the old world was destroyed by a deluge. Such righteous men are often taken away from the evil to come, though few observe and lay it to heart; even though terrible judgments may be at the door.

As these are two sovereign reasons, so I shall mention two sinful causes, that may hasten the death of faithful ministers. Though their days are determined by that God, in whose hands all our times are; yet men may be instrumental in shortening their life, either by undervaluing, or overvaluing of them.

(1.) By undervaluing them; slighting and contemning their persons, their gifts, their message. If we do not prize our mercies when we enjoy them, God may make us know the worth of them by the want of them. Much contempt was poured upon your pastor, now dead in Christ, by many of this generation: therefore God hath said, They are not worthy of him; they shall not enjoy him long.

(2.) By overvaluing them; people may shorten their days, when they give that honour to them which only belongs to their great and glorious Master, who will not give his glory to another. If people fall down and worship these bright and glittering stars, no wonder if the Father of lights remove them away. If, in any respect, they be advanced to God's throne, he will quickly lay them in the dust. It is true, gospel-ministers, that have the divine mission and message, ought to be highly esteemed for their work's sake; and there can be no sin in honouring these whom God honours; or in loving these very dearly, whom God makes the happy instruments of our conversion, or spiritual edification: but yet, if these instruments get more of our heart than is due to them, or

any share of the room that Christ only should have, then he may justly hasten them out of our way. How far, as I said above, any might have exceeded in doting too much upon your eminent pastor, I know not, unless it was evidenced by the great following of people that he had flocking to him, which yet I dare not wholly condemn in them, lest I should reproach our blessed Master, who never reprov'd the multitude for flocking to him, even when they thronged him and pressed him, Luke viii. 45; except when they followed him only for the loaves, or the bread that perisheth, John vi. 26, 27. Nor did ever John the Baptist, nor any of the apostles, challenge the multitudes for thronging to them. But if any were guilty of immoderate doting upon this short-lived pastor of yours, they may acknowledge the Lord to be righteous, when they robbed him of his honour, that he robbed them of their idol. The best of ministers are but mortal men: though the rich treasures of spiritual gifts and graces are poured into these vessels, they are but earthen ones, and will soon be broken by the blow of God's hand. These gourds may be very delightful to us, and we may find great refreshment in sitting under their shadow; yet the worm of death will make them to wither. And we do not well to be exceeding or excessively glad of them, while they grow; nor do we well to be angry, when they wither.

II. Endeavour to make a right improvement of this awful providence: in order to which I shall recommend a sixfold study, with relation to your minister's death.

1. Study to be sensible of the hand of God in this providence. Be not insensible of the stroke: though you must not murmur at it, yet you ought to mourn for it, and for your sins that provoke the Lord to take such labourers out of his vineyard. Insensibleness of God's hand is interpreted by the Spirit of God a despising of it, Heb. xii. 5. "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord." Yea, it is accounted a high provocation, Jer. v. 3. I have "stricken them, but they have not grieved." It argues stubbornness in a child not to cry when his father whips him. When God chastens by the loss of a dear friend, it is very smarting; but when he does it by the death of a dear minister, a soul-friend, it is yet more heavy and grievous.

2. Study to profit by what is past. Hath God taken away your minister? Endeavour to recollect and retain these excellent truths that were delivered by him while he was with you. Call these blessed sentences to mind as far as possible, in order to feed upon them, as the prophet says, "Thy words were sound, and I

did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart," Jer. xv. 16. So far as you can remember them, and reduce them to practice, so far will you profit by them. The voice delivering these truths to you was a passing voice; but the word delivered is an abiding word. Though he is dead, the word of the Lord liveth, and abideth for ever. These counsels which he gave you from the word of God, are binding upon you, though he he is bound with the chains of death.

3. Study to know Christ, as the only minister who lives for ever, and that can make up your loss. It is he who says, Rev. i. 18, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for ever more, Amen; and have the keys of hell and death." It is he, Rev. ii. 1. who "holdeth the seven stars in his right-hand; who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks:" and it is he who when he ascended on high, led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, and gave gifts to them, Psalm lxxviii. 18. compared with Eph. iv. 8, 11, 12. These gifts, are gifted persons, and his powerful presence with them, for the benefit of his church and people, he hath promised to the end of the world, Mat. xxviii. 19, 20. This living Jesus can make up your loss, by raising up others. When Moses died, the Lord sent Joshua to lead Israel into the land of Canaan. When Elijah is gone to heaven, he that hath the residue of the Spirit with him, can make a double portion thereof to rest upon Elisha. When God hath work to do, he will never want instruments. He can perfect praise out of the mouth of babes and sucklings: and therefore,

4. Study to employ this glorious Lord Jesus, both to provide another pastor, or pastors, for you, and to bless the provision he shall make for your saving good. When God calls any labourers out of his vineyard, then supplicate the throne of grace, and cry mightily to the Lord of the harvest, that he would thrust out more labourers into it, that there may be a succession of faithful ministers, who may rightly divide the word, and faithfully break the bread of life to you, and to your posterity, when your places shall know you no more. Endeavour also to depend upon our exalted King of Zion, for his blessing upon, and continuing of the provision he may make for you; and for grace to make a due improvement of all the spiritual waterings he shall allow you, whether more transient or fixed. And since he is now teaching us, that what we call a fixed ministry is, at best, but transient; as these that are ministers should hence learn to be diligent in bringing in as much glory and honour to their Master's name, as they can, while they live; for

when they die, they can do no more, but give an account of their stewardship; though, alas! many that enter upon the work of the ministry, little consider that awful account they have to give unto the "Judge of all the earth," when they depart hence, Ezek. xxxiii. 7, 8. 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2. So you, that are the people, should hence learn how much it concerns you to endeavour, through grace, to get as much good as you can, from gospel ministers, while they live; for, when once they are entered within the gloomy shades of death, they can be no further beneficial to you, by their warning, entreaties, counsels, comforts, or prayers. As death stops the ear of the hearer, so it lays the tongue of the speaker. The offers they make of Christ, and salvation through him, should be speedily embraced; for you know not how soon the feet of those, who bring these glad tidings, may go down to the grave, and you be left only to lament and bewail your own misimprovement of them. Yea, as ministers must die, and appear before the divine bar, to give an account of their ministry; so you must also appear there, to give an account of your proficiency: and therefore,

5. Study to improve your minister's death, as a mean of preparation for your own; that so you may extract meat out of this eater, and gain out of this loss: which you would do if this mournful death should subserve the good purpose of stirring you up to consider your latter end, so as to be restless till you be ready for it, by a readiness both of state and frame. By a readiness of state, I mean, a being brought out of a state of nature into a state of grace, or a getting in to Christ, and being found in him. By a readiness of frame, I mean, an habitual walking in Christ, and living by faith upon him, both for righteousness and strength. In this case, as the death of your minister was his gain, while he hath exchanged the cross for the crown, the pulpit for the throne, a militant for a triumphant state; so his death now, and your own death afterwards, will also be your gain. You will go but the same way that the most eminent servants of God have gone, and must go to the glorious society of Jesus, and of all his holy prophets and apostles, that are made perfect in holiness, and shall eternally reign with him. Could they, who are rejoicing above, speak to you who are mourning below, they would say to you, as Christ said to the women that followed him to the cross, Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves; weep not for us, who are happily come to our journey's end, but weep for yourselves, who are travelling yet through a waste and howling wilderness; weep not for us, who have arrived at the happy haven of rest; for, Blessed are the

dead that die in the Lord ; they rest from their labour ; but weep for yourselves, who are yet tossed to and fro upon a tempestuous sea, and are still labouring and toiling ; weep not for us, who stand upon the mount of triumph, and have obtained a complete victory in Christ Jesus over all our enemies : but weep for yourselves, who are still on a field of battle, wrestling not only with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers : but yet a little while, and ye, who are prepared, as I have said, for your own change, and who have reaped spiritual profit and gain, by your minister's doctrine and death ; yet a little while and you shall meet with him again, never to be separated from him, and enjoy his society in another manner, and in a more glorious place, where you, who joined with him in worship here, shall join with him in a triumphant song of praise, To him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever ; and where you will see the great minister of the sanctuary, our Lord Jesus Christ, sitting on his majestic throne ; and all the other ministers of Jesus, like so many bright stars surrounding the Son of righteousness for evermore. And, that you may be the more prepared for that happy state, to which your minister is, by death, removed, I add another advice.

6. Study to imitate your departed minister in all these things that were good and commendable in him. It is true, the best of ministers, even these that are gone, have had their failings and imperfections ; Moses and Elias were men subject to like passions as we are. The most eminent saints are to be followed by us no further than they followed Christ ; but when they are gone, all their failings should be buried with them, and their excellences should be kept alive in our memory, in order to our imitation of them. And, indeed, there were several things of this nature very evident in your late pastor, wherein you would do well to follow his example ; such as,

(1) His blameless and circumspect walk, wherein he endeavoured (though sinless perfection is unattainable in a mortal state) to have a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man. Such was his caution herein, that his greatest enemies had nothing against him, except only in the matter of God, as it is said, Dan. vi. 5.

(2) His meekness and humility. He never appeared to be of a proud and lofty temper, notwithstanding of his eminent gifts, and the great popular applause he had, which he seemed rather to be ashamed of than to affect ; but like his Master whom he served, was meek and lowly, stooping and condescending to all men, and passing by these injuries, he received from any of them.

(3) His laborious concern for the spiritual profit of immortal souls. Such was his love to the souls of men, that he loved to spend and be spent for them: having little pity upon his own body, in comparison of the pity he shewed to their souls. And hence it may be said of him, especially after his mouth was opened to preach the gospel, that he was not weary in well-doing, but went about doing good. He not only wasted his bodily strength in this spiritual work; but when his flesh and heart seemed to fail, and his body so weak, that he could hardly bear to stand in a pulpit or tent, yet his affections were so much engaged in his work, that he was very unwilling to leave it.

(4) His love to the saints. He especially embraced these, in the arms of his love upon earth, with whom he thought he should join in singing the song of the Lamb in heaven. His love of benevolence extended unto all, as appears in the foresaid concern he had for the salvation of sinners: but his complacence was with the saints, the excellent ones of the earth, in them was his delight.

(5) His readiness to suffer for his Master, and for the gospel's sake, and his willingness to take up the cross, and follow Christ, in the thorny road of tribulation, persecution, contempt, and reproach for the name of Christ, of which sometimes he had his share, even in some of the idle public prints; which yet he never resented, but generously disregarded, as one that rejoiced to be counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus, whom he preached.

(6.) His zeal for his Master's honour, cause, and interest, which made him to witness, even in his private station, before ever he entered upon the public ministry, against the corruptions and defections of the times; and induced him to come out to the field of battle, and join himself with the Associate Presbytery, as a society which he judged to be contending for the faith of the gospel, for the liberties of God's people in Scotland, and for a covenanted work of Reformation, which he saw the judicatories, by their proceedings, were razing. Thus he appeared, we may say, and died in the wars; and herein also he ought to be imitated by all these that desire to come forth "to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty," Judg. v. 23. This likewise should be matter of encouragement to you, that were under his actual ministry before his death. I read of Xenophon, who having a crown upon his head, the news came to him that his child was dead, and he presently puts off his crown in token of sorrow; but then enquiring how he died? Answer was made, that he died in

the wars; then he called for his crown again: even so, your dear minister is dead; and therefore you have cast perhaps the crown of joy off your heads; and are under discouragement; but if you consider how he died, in the spiritual wars, and is now a conqueror, you may put on your crown of joy again, and study to take courage, and to follow his example, in fighting the good fight of faith, against all inward and outward enemies, which he did to the last, and then died in the faith he preached, witnessing a good confession to the end of his life. Though the particulars of his death have not as yet so fully reached me; yet, I am informed, that among his dying words, some dropped from him to this purpose, "I have had many adversaries, both within and without, to wrestle against; but now mine head is lifted up above all mine enemies; and I would not change my lot for the heaviest crown of gold."

In a word, as your minister commended his Master, Christ Jesus, to you, and set life and death before you; so now, his Master hath set your minister's life and death before you, that, by all these means you may be COMPELLED TO COME IN THAT HIS HOUSE MAY BE FILLED. * * *

SERMON III.

Preventing Love;

OR, GOD'S LOVE TO US THE CAUSE OF OUR LOVE
TO HIM.

"We love him, because he first loved us."

1 JOHN iv. 19.

THE great design of the gospel, gospel-ordinances, and sacraments, is to commend the love of God in Christ. The sacrament of the supper is a love-feast; and they that have their senses spiritually exercised therein, will find readily all their senses filled with love. What do they hear, but love! What do they see, but love! What do they taste, but love! What do they feel, but love! What do they smell, but love!—It is a sweet account we have of God, ver. 16. "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us." O happy they that have so learned the gospel-catechism, from their experience, as to be able to answer to that question, What is God? And to say, God is love! He is essential, boundless, bottomless, infinite love. It is true, if we look to him in the glass of the law, we will see him to be all wrath; a consuming fire out of Christ; but look to him in the glass of the gospel, and you will see him all love; a God in Christ reconciling the world to himself: and the sight thereof produces love: for "we love him, because he first loved us."

The text give us a short account of the whole business betwixt God and a believer: they love one another. Here is love descending, God in Christ loving his saints; and here is love ascending, the saints in Christ loving God; and the former begetting the latter. When love hath descended from heaven to earth, it hath finished half of its course; but when it ascends from earth to heaven again, then the circle is completed.

Here is, 1. A description of God's love; he loved us first.
2. A description of our love to God; we love him for this cause.
And,

1. We have God's love described; He FIRST loved us. If we were to make a critical division, we might notice how it is de-

scribed. 1. In the act, loved. O wonder that ever the heart of God should have acted that way towards any sinner of Adam's race. 2. The subject loving; He loved: O! a glorious He, the infinitely holy and just God. 3. The object loved; He loved us; poor wretched apostate us. 4. The quality of this love, he loved us, and first loved us; intimating, both that it is an ancient love, for it is in the preterite time, he loved; yea, loved from eternity; and also that it is antecedent love; he FIRST loved us, before we had a being, before we were capable to love him; yea, while we were yet enemies.

2. We have the saints' love described; we loved him because he loved us; which is also described in these four: 1. The act, love; and indeed this love of ours is but a drop of the ocean of his love. 2. The subject loving, we; we believers, we that got a taste of his love. 3. The object beloved, him; we love him, who deserves our love above all things in heaven and earth. 4. The rise and source of this love of ours, We love him, because he FIRST loved us; his love is the incentive and productive cause of our love. But I refer the further explication of the text to the prosecution of a doctrine. Many things might here be observed: As,

1. None can truly love God, but such as are beloved of him, Many speak of the love of God, as if it were natural to them; but as true love is a spark of heavenly fire: so there is no love natural to man but the love of sin.

2. That God hath a people in the world that love him, because they are loved of him. There is in God a common love, whereby he loved the whole world; and a special love, whereby he loves the saints: and so there is in the saints a common love, by which they love all God's creatures; and a peculiar love that belongs to God only, whom they prize above all other things.

3. That divine love works freely. God does not trade with us upon any terms, conditions, or valuable considerations in and about us. We can neither buy heaven nor beg it; it must be given. Let not the greatest civilian presume; let not the greatest prodigal despair: God's love is first on the field.

4. That as God and his saints love one another, so the reason of saints loving God, is God loving them: there is no reason of God's love, but because he loves. But there is reason enough for our love because he loved us. The believer loves God upon God's account, and for good reason; God loves us without any reason, or any cause from without himself; but we have all the reason in the world, why we should love God. Many say, they love Christ, but

they have not any reason for it; they that love him know why they do so. There are three things create love, viz. Beauty, interest, love. 1. Beauty; and O, but Christ is white and ruddy, and altogether lovely. 2. Interest; the more a man sees Christ to be his own, the more he loves him. 3. Love; the love of God is the great parent of love; it begets love; We love him, because he first loved us.—But having taken this short view of the text, the doctrine I fix upon is this,

OBSERV.—God's love to his people is the source of their love to him. Their love is influenced by the faith of his love: his love is the cause of theirs; we love him, because he first loved us.

Now the general method that seems most native is,

I. To speak of God's love to his people.

II. Of the saints' love to God.

III. The influence his love hath upon theirs as the cause of it.

IV. Apply the whole in sundry uses.

I. To speak of God's love to his people: and indeed to speak of it is to speak of that which is unspeakable and inconceivable, for it passeth knowledge; only we may notice a few things that the scripture says of this love. I would offer some remarks concerning this love of God; and then shew more particularly, the import of this expression, He first loved us.

1. I would offer some remarks concerning the love of God.

Remark 1. That the fountain of this love is GOD the Father. Love begins in order of nature with the Father; hence, says Christ, "I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father himself loveth you," John xvi. 26, 27. Christ prays for all the fruits and emanations of the Father's love to his people; but not for the Father's love itself. You mistake greatly, sirs, if you do think that Christ doth purchase and pray for the Father's love to his people; nay, it was the Father's love that sent Christ to purchase all the fruits and communications of his love. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." The love of God cannot be purchased; there is no need of any mediation here; "I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father," in this respect, "for the Father himself loveth you." Here is the fountain of the love. But,

Remark 2. That the channel through which the love of God does run, from this fountain, is the LORD JESUS CHRIST. God's love does not vent itself towards any sinner, to the disparagement of his infinite holiness and justice; and therefore it vents and flows in and

through Christ, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, for the remission of sins that are past," Romans iii. 25. God hath taken a marvellous way to manifest his love: when he would shew his power, he makes a world; when he would shew his wisdom, he puts it in a frame and form that discovered vast wisdom; when he would manifest the grandeur and glory of his name more, he makes a heaven, and puts angels, arch-angels, principalities, and powers therein; and when he will manifest love, what will he not do? It is a pity we should deny this love; because God hath taken such a great and mysterious way of manifesting it in Christ; his death, his blood, his righteousness; here is the channel.

Remark 3. The streams of divine love that flow from this fountain, in this channel, are vastly great; viz. Pardon, peace, safety, adoption, justification, sanctification, audience of prayer, a blessing on all providences, and everlasting triumph in heaven. I cannot enlarge upon these, or any other of the streams that flow from the love of God; the streams are so many, so great, that we should lose ourselves there, as well as in the fountain, if we were to dive therein; only we are blessed in Christ with all spiritual blessings; and this love of God, and all the fruits of it, is to be enjoyed in the fellowship of the Spirit, 2 Cor. xiii. 13; where we read of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Spirit; where Christ is first mentioned, because he is next to us, as being the channel through which the love of God is vented; and this love of God, and grace of Christ, is enjoyed in the communion and fellowship of the Holy Ghost; and that this love is from the Father, as the fountain; in the Son as the channel; by the Holy Ghost, as the immediate conveyance.

Remark 4. The vessels into which these streams are vented, or this love is poured, are sinners; even to them it is declared that he is the Lord, "The Lord God merciful, and gracious," "forgiving iniquity and transgression, and sin;" and that "God is love." This motto, that God is love, is inscribed on the gates of heaven; and none will think strange of that, because the love of God, in bringing any sinner of Adam's race there, is manifested to the highest. But we would think strange, if one should say, that this is even the inscription written upon the gates of hell, that God is love; why? his love to himself, and his own justice, is manifested there; yea, not only so, but millions are damned, because they slight redeeming-love; and their consciences gall them, for contemning

all the offers of love. But that which concerns us especially, is, that we may read this inscription daily upon the beautiful gate of the temple; I mean, in gospel-ordinances, that God is love; for therein he manifests his love to sinners, even to sinners of Adam's family, in the general dispensation of the gospel; and particularly to the vessels of mercy, in the special operation of the Spirit upon them in the fulness of time; wherein he hath designed to pour out his Spirit, and so to pour in his love. But to omit many things here, I come,

2dly. To shew the particular import of this expression, He first loved us. And,

1. It says, That his love is eternal love, and from everlasting: "He first loved us." "I have loved thee with an everlasting love," Jer. xxxi. 3; as it is to everlasting, so it is from everlasting; as it will never have an end, so it never had a beginning, but it is as ancient as the eternal God is. O! what an amazing thought is this, that God should have had thoughts of love towards any poor sinners, like you and me, from the beginning of his being, which is without a beginning!—But, to prevent mistakes, you would know that the love of God is twofold; his love of destination, and his love of approbation: his love of destination and purpose, whereby he is said to have chosen us in Christ, "before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy," "having predestinated us unto the adoption of children," Eph. i. 4, 5; and this love he is said to manifest even before a man's conversion, 1 John iv. 9, 10. "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."—Again, there is his love of approbation and friendship: such as that spoken of, John xiv. 23. "If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Now, the object of the former love, to wit, the love of destination, is every elect soul, and that from all eternity, as well as in time, even before their conversion and union to Christ; the object of the latter, to wit, his love of approbation and friendship, is every believer united to Christ, to whom he begins to manifest his everlasting love personally; for, though he loved and approved of them from eternity in Christ, yet they cannot be said to be actually loved and approved in their own persons, till once their persons are united to Christ. Though God's love be everlasting and immutable as himself

is, yet there is a time wherein he begins to manifest his love: there is no variation or shadow of turning in God's love; all the change is in the person beloved, not in God. It is mere blasphemy to say, that God begins to love them whom before he hated, in a proper and strict sense. It is true, the elect are children of wrath, even as others, by nature, whatever they are by divine destination, being ever the object of God's love in this sense; yet in some sense, he begins to love them, in respect of the manifesting of his love to them, and the outletting of his love upon them; when his love is taken, not so much for his immanent act, as for his transient act, not for any thing in himself, but for what flows from him to them; the love that is in himself, is still the same, but the acts of love that flow forth to them, these begin to appear, when he manifests himself to them, as he does not to the world; when he comes to them for their salvation, and reveals his Son in them: and here also he is still before-hand with them; "He first loved us."

2. "He first loved us;" it says, that his love is antecedent love; as it is first in point of time, yea, from all eternity, so it is first in point of order of time. We cannot manifest our love to him, till first he manifest his love to us. Men may feign love to God and Christ, before they know any thing of God's love in Christ towards them, but they truly have no love to him; even the elect themselves have no love to him by nature, they are enemies, and without God, and without Christ in the world; buried in the grave of sin and corruption even as others; dead in trespasses and sins, and slaves to divers lusts; the devil dwelling in them, working in them, reigning in them, as a man dwells in his house, or works in his shop, or reigns upon his throne; they have no more acquaintance with him, or love to him, than others, till by grace they be regenerated, and made to come to God in Christ, and be raised up to a new and lively hope. Common favours indeed, they may have, and God is always sure to notice his elect, and to have a care of them; and many remarkable deliverances will they meet with, even while unconverted. You will find few gracious persons but they will have even good things to tell of the Lord's kindness to them in their youth; but yet love and hatred cannot be known by these things that are seen; for bad men have had the like deliverances, and manifold common mercies, and common grace perhaps also; but all this while they are strangers to true love to God, till once some rays of his everlasting love go before them, and make way for the breaking of their enmity, and engaging them to love him.

3. "He first loved us;" it says, that his love is absolutely free love. If he first loved us, before we have any love to him or loveliness in us, O how free is it! His love is free in several respects. It is free love in that it is without force or constraint; we must even put ourselves in his reverence, and not think to compel God, as if he could be obliged to do it; nay, if we get any thing, we must be in grace's debt, and lay at grace's door, as poor beggars, for an alms for Christ's sake.—It is free love in that it is without reluctancy; it is with all his heart. There are some objects come to our door, and though we give them alms, yet it is with some reluctancy; we are not so free-hearted towards them as to others whom we have a kindness for; these we will give to, with all our heart; we give them with as much pleasure as if we were getting to ourselves; so God's special gifts are given with all his heart; he takes pleasure in giving; he delights in shewing mercy.—It is free love, in that it is without merit and motive; his love is neither desired nor deserved, and yet he loves: I will love them freely: I will do it undeservedly, even while they deserve to be thrust down to the lowest hell; Not for your sakes do I this, be it known unto you.—It is free love, in that it is without price; he seeks nothing for what he gives, he takes nothing for it; nay, he deals with us as poor beggars that have nothing to offer for what he gives, and nothing wherewith to recompense his kindness, after he hath given.—It is free in opposition to all proper terms and conditions. Papists tell us of the merit of congruity, and the merit of condignity; and many ignorant protestants think they do enough when they exclude the word merit, but in the room of merit they bring in a world of conditions; and tell us, upon condition you do so and so, then God will do this and that to you; telling us, God hath made a covenant with us, not like the covenant of works, but upon easier terms, requiring only some little things accommodated to our weakness: "It cannot be called merit," say they, "for there is no proportion betwixt what we do, and what we get; it is," say they, "but as if one should hold out a penny, and get a kingdom for it." Many such subtile reasonings of men there are, that tend to exalt self, and self-righteousness, which would all vanish before the light of this very text, if viewed in a spiritual and evangelical manner. "He first loved us."

4. "He first loved us;" it says, that his love is a preventing love; it prevents our love, and all the good that can be about us; for he prevents with the blessings of his goodness. I might here illustrate this by shewing, 1. The object of his love, whom he prevents.

2. The time of his love, when he prevents them. 3. The dawning of his love upon them, whereby he prevents them. 4. The fruits and effects of his love in them, wherein he prevents them.

(1.) The object of his love, whom he prevents. If we view whom he loves, we cannot but see it to be preventing love. The love of God lighted upon fallen men, not fallen angels, though much more noble and spiritual beings; and why? even because he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy: "his love falleth upon the poor, foolish, weak nothings of this world for ordinary; not upon the wise, noble, and mighty; not many such are called; he reveals these things to babes, not to the wise and prudent of the world. We must not think, that outward things, such as wisdom, and learning, and worldly advantages, move God to set his love upon any; "Even so Father for so it seemed good in thy sight;" yea, his love vents ordinarily upon the most stubborn and rebellious sinners in the world, more than upon the most civil and moral persons, that had led a better life than the generality of their neighbours; who have had more of the righteousness of the law than other people; who have been better-natured, in respect of their pleasant natural disposition, than others; and who have had a liberal education, so as to be trained up, not only in manifold arts and sciences, but in manifold religious duties from their childhood. Grace many times passes by such persons as these, and falls upon more knobby, rugged persons. The young man in the gospel may be put to say, All these things have I done from my youth up, and yet go away from Christ, when a bloody Manasses, and persecuting Paul are received into favour and mercy. In a word, whomsoever he makes the object of his manifested love in time, they are persons unworthy of his love; they are full of enmity against him, and bent to backsliding from him, wofully averse from returning to him. That God should love sinners, and great sinners, O what preventing love is it!

(2) The time of his love, when he prevents them, does also illustrate this. Many a time he makes his grace to reach them, not when they are in their best frame or mood; but behold a Paul going to Damascus, with the knife in his hand, ready to cut the throats of the saints; grace out-runs him, seizes him, lays hold upon him, and the love of a God in Christ overcomes him; he is made Christ's prisoner, vanquished, and brought to subjection. I do not say, that it always holds, that a person gets the revelation of grace, when going on in sin; but the first efflux of grace towards them is many times, when in a very bad case: the Lord arrests them, many

times, when they have been about some wicked act of sin; the Lord will fall in at such a time upon their conscience, fill them with terror, and humble them under his mighty hand; and never leave them till he hath quickened them, and made them live; "I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live." But what need we say more concerning the time of his love, to show the preventing nature of it, than what God himself says, Rom. ix. 9, 13. "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated;" "the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth?" Before the man was born, or had done either good or evil, behold he is an object of divine love; "Jacob have I loved."

(3.) The dawning of his love upon them, whereby he prevents them, may further illustrate this, That he first loved us. By the dawning of his love, I understand not only the love and grace that is objectively displayed in the glorious gospel; but especially in the first glimmerings of the subjective light, or the dawning of the day of power, wherein the person is made willing when the gospel comes, Not in word only, but in power; when he girds his sword upon his thigh, even his glory and his majesty, as that word may be read, Psal. xiv. 3, for the display of the glory of his grace and love, is the sword whereby he subdues and conquers his enemies: and till this will-conquering day of power take place, what is in the will but impotence and insufficiency, to think anything as of ourselves? and not only impotency, but aversion from every thing that is good; and not only aversion, but opposition and contrariety to the holy nature and will of God; "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." This dawning then of the day of power, to make them willing, must take place before there can be any gracious motion in the soul towards God: for all the legal conviction and humiliation that goes before this, works only from a principle of self-love, and self-preservation, till this great master-faculty of the soul, the will being conquered, carry the rest of the faculties of the soul towards God.

(4.) The fruits and effects of his love in them, wherein he prevents them. And here I will tell you some of these things that his love prevents, in regard that they are fruits of his love. And,

1. His love prevents our holiness; for that is a fruit of his love. I hope you know that sanctification and holiness is a work of God's

free grace, and so an effect of his free love; and yet, I fear, you bewray your ignorance of the gospel in thinking, O must I not be holy before ever God love me? Must not a man be somewhat holy, and therefore God will love him, and give him more? O great ignorance to think so; What hast thou but what thou hast received? Is not the very first beginning of holiness from God? Is it not he that infuses the habit of grace, and takes away the heart of stone, and gives the heart of flesh; and so his love prevents our habitual holiness, and also our actual holiness, and all our good works? Surely you may know this; for you have learned to say, that as it is by his free grace, that we are renewed in the whole man, after the image of God, so it is by the same free grace that we are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness. If any good work, truly good, be wrought by you, is it not the fruit of God's creating power? For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, unto good works.

2. His love prevents our faith; for that is a fruit of his love. You will say, it is true, he must make us holy, but must we not come to him for it? Is it upon condition that we believe, that he loves us, and saves us? My dear friends, whence is it that we get faith? If ever we have any true faith, is it upon the account of foreseen faith that God loves any man? * * * Is it because we had faith before? O! does faith come out of our own shop? Or, is it spun out of our own bowels, and forged upon our own anvil? Can we bring faith out of our own head or heart? Can dry bones live, or raise themselves out of the grave? Nay, it is as impossible for us to believe, and raise ourselves up to the life of faith, as it is for a carcase of clay to put life in itself; nay, is not faith the gift of God? Is not Christ the author and finisher of faith? Who says, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." It requires the same power that raised Christ from the dead. O then! Let not your imagination in this matter cross the very first principles of religion, so as to think that your faith, if you have any, is the cause of God's love, while his love is the cause of your faith; "He first loved us."

3. His love prevents our repentance; for that is a fruit of his love: Why, say you, must we not repent and reform, before God set his love upon us? And ought we not, by the exercise of our common gifts and abilities that God hath given us, to work up ourselves to something of this, in order to our obtaining the favour of God? Alas, for such ignorance, and such a gospel-darkening religion, as is like to come in fashion in this generation! O! is

not repentance as much the gift of God, and fruit of his love, as any other graces and fruits of the Spirit? Acts. v. 31. "Christ is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, by the right hand of God, to give repentance to Israel, as well as forgiveness of sins." We have a great deal of noise made about the necessity of gospel-repentance before, and in order to justification, and that even as a condition and qualification; here is indeed a new scheme of divinity, of which there is no foundation in our standards of doctrine. It is true, repentance is so necessary, that none can expect pardon without it; and so say I, holiness and sanctification are so necessary, that none can expect pardon without them: but is therefore holiness and sanctification necessary in order to justification? I think it is hard to maintain this without running to Rome, and making sanctification before justification, and in order to it: for if actual gospel-repentance be not a part of sanctification, I know not what it is; yea, as described in our Catechism, it comprehends the whole of sanctification.—But to return; why, may one say, may we not repent of our sins, in some measure, and reform our lives, and humble ourselves, and mourn? At least, can we not shed a tear? Can we not leave off our tippling, and quit our lusts, and think upon death, judgment, and eternity, so as by the meditation of these we shall get ourselves wrought up to a strong and strange mortification to all things in the world; yea, become as eminent in this as any saint in all the country, for all their boasting? Well, much good may your repentance do you; and would to God that you were doing more than you do. But I would have you suspect your repentance, yea, I tell you assuredly, that even by the utmost use of the highest common gifts and graces, you cannot repent; and when you have brought yourself by these means to the greatest measure of legal repentance, yet there is no promise in all the Bible to that repentance; For all the promises are yea, and amen, in Christ Jesus; and till you get in to Christ, by a faith of his operation, your common legal repentance is a sinful repentance; For whatsoever is not of faith, is sin; and so it is a God-displeasing repentance: For without faith, it is impossible to please God. In a word, your repentance, which you so much magnify in your heart, for I suppose you are not so destitute of sense, as to speak thus before the world; this repentance, I say, is so far from disposing you for Christ, that it tends effectually to make you oppose Christ; why? you find heart-melting and mourning, tears and sorrows, great flashes and love-floods of affection, and then you think all is right: you see no more need of Christ, and come short

of him, instead of being drawn into him. "A man in this case," as one fitly expresses it, "is like one that comes to court a lady; but having got a sight of the hand-maid, he falls in love with her, courts her, and marries her, who yet was but the person that should have led him to the lady, he was proposing to match with: so here, Christ is the match, the law and the duties thereof are the handmaid; well, thou falls to duties, sorrowing for sin, and the like; you have fallen in love with that, and seek no further." Why, you will say, by this means you would have no preparatory work at all. It seems by this doctrine, say you, a man must come to Christ at the first leap, reeking out of his sins, before his life be reformed; nay, Sirs, I must tell you, in the Lord's name, that the design of a right preparatory work, is to force you out of your feigned repentance and reformation, and out of your false hopes and confidence, and to sweep away your refuge of lies: and if ever God prepare you for Christ, he will bring you to say, "O, I cannot repent, I cannot reform, I cannot mourn; and give me a world I cannot command a hearty sigh, or a sob for sin; I can do nothing; I am hard like a stone, and black like a devil; and unless Christ help, I am utterly and eternally undone." And this tends to give the soul a great demonstration of the freedom of his love, that it prevents our repentance: "He first loved us."

4. His love prevents our prayers; for that is also a fruit of his love. You will say, though we cannot attain to be holy, and cannot believe and repent, yet we must pray, and seek, or else we cannot get his favour and love. Wo is me that people should have such dark and dangerous notions of the method of salvation! Pray, whence comes our prayers, if they be worth the name of prayers? Do they not come from heaven, and from the Spirit of grace and supplication? If you have any desires that are worth the naming, they come from above: and if they come wholly out of your heart, or head, they are not worth; yea, whatever desire you have out of Christ, and whatever prayer is not put up on this altar, the name of Christ Jesus, and by the help of the Spirit of Christ, there is no promise made to it: for, however several promises are made to God's ordinances and institutions, which oblige you to be about his hand in the use of means; yet no promise is made to your performance out of Christ. Expect then no favour for, or upon the account of your duties; for if that be your way of doing, you need to pray that God may force you out of your prayers. Let none think now that I am discouraging any from the use of means, and the performance of duties; nay, I take

witness that, in God's name, I call you to the use thereof; and declare you are obliged thereto by the command and authority of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. But, in the same name, I call you to the right use of the means, the gospel use of the means; for that legal notion of praying and seeking, that I find for ordinary among people, as if their seeking would prevent God's love, and procure his favour, is derogatory to the goodness of God; and hath a tendency to make a Christ of their prayers, yea, more than a Christ; in regard it would be ascribing a causality to our prayers, which is not even done to the merits of Christ in this matter: for, as I said before, the love of God in itself, cannot be procured; Christ himself did not procure it; for God's love prevented Christ's mission, and sent him to procure all that he did procure and purchase: and therefore, if you think your prayers will purchase God's love, you make more than a Christ of your prayers; and they are offensive to God, dishonouring to Christ, and prejudicial to your own souls. The saints themselves know that it is not by their duties that they obtain his love; but in duty sometimes they get a sense of his love. Why, may some say, we need pray none at all, if we get no good by our prayers. Really, man, these prayers which you make your righteousness, and for which you expect to be loved, and justified, and saved, they are the most abominable to God, and unprofitable to the world. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices?" Therefore "bring no more vain oblations: incense is an abomination unto me;" "I cannot away with, it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting," Isa. i. 11, 13. See Isaiah lxvi. 6. Therefore you have need to pray, that God would learn you the mystery of prayer; for you will never find it a pleasant, comfortable, and profitable exercise, while you set it before his love, as a cause of it; whereas it follows after his love as a fruit of it. Hence all that ever prayed to purpose, or wrestled with him for the blessing, have found that they could not pray, more than they could move the earth from its centre, until his grace prevented their prayers; and they can all set their seal to that word, Isa. lxv. 1, "I am found of them that sought me not." None ever sought him aright, till free grace sought them out, and found them in some respect.

QUEST. But is it not said, Ezek. xxxvi. 37, "I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel?" True, betwixt gracious seeking and finding, there is a certain connexion; for gracious and spiritual seeking presupposes grace to seek, and that his love hath already prevented our prayers; and when he gives grace to seek,

to be sure he will give more and more, not for our seeking, but for the sake of his promise in Christ Jesus, and upon his account. But if we understand that word as an encouragement to all, whether gracious or graceless persons, "I will yet for this, be enquired of by the house of Israel," then the meaning is not, I will give you none of these things, to wit, the new heart, the new spirit, there promised, and the Spirit to be put within you; I say, the meaning is not, I will give you none of these things, but for the sake of your prayers, and till your prayers produce them; nay, that exposition would be cross to the very context, which says, "Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel," you may be ashamed of your prayers and duties, as well as your sins and iniquities; and therefore it is not for the sake of your persons or prayers either, be it known unto you; and therefore the meaning of the word is, that as all Israel hath a right of access to these promises; and all poor sinners that hear tell of them, may come to a throne of grace, and plead for the accomplishment of them to themselves, in a way of free grace; so in the diligent use of all these means and ordinances of my appointment, they shall find, that I will yield myself exorable and easy to be entreated; and so it is an encouragement to prayer, in expectation that God will confer the promised blessings, and not that our prayers will obtain them; and therefore the more that a man turns such a scripture to a covenant of works, as if he were upon terms with God, that upon condition that he pray and seek, God will give him the promised blessings; the more he does so, I say, the further is he from all these blessings; whereas the less hope and expectation that a poor soul hath from his prayers, he will always find, that he will come the more speed.

In a word, the prayer you speak of, man, is either a natural or a spiritual prayer; if it be a natural prayer, then, as the natural man is bound to pray, and yet hath nothing to expect, but of sovereign free grace; so there is no connection betwixt his prayer and the promise, unless we turn * * Arminians: If it be a spiritual prayer, then to be sure, the promise hath prevented his prayer; for to say that none of these promises are given, till a man pray in the Spirit for them, is cross to the whole current of scripture, and spiritual reason; for, how can a man pray in the Spirit till that promise be accomplished in some measure upon him, I will put my Spirit within you? Thus his love prevents our prayers, it prevents our desires and endeavours: "He first loved us."—And so much shall suffice for the first general head.

II. The second thing proposed was, to speak of believers' love to God and Christ; "We love him:" This is but a small stream that flows from, and runs again to the ocean of his love. We may take up this love of the saints towards God in the following considerations.

1. We may consider this love in its nature. It is not a spark of natural kindling; it is not from natural reason or common grace, no; it is from the saving operation of the Holy Ghost, circumcising the heart to love God; the fruits of the Spirit are faith, love, and the rest of the graces: it is altogether supernatural; for the natural mind is enmity against God: we naturally hate God. Sirs, though the worst person in the world will say they do not hate God, yet they really do it; and their hatred appears in their aversion from him and his ways, opposition to his commands and counsels, their contempt of his promises, and neglect of his salvation, and his Christ; for they will not come to him, that they might have life, It is God's prerogative to turn the heart from enmity to love, from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God: no man can turn himself more than the "Ethiopian can change his skin, or the leopard his spots," Jer. xiii. 23. Men, by their improvement of their natural faculties, and by common grace, which most part of men having something of, come to a sermon, and go to their knees, carry somewhat of morality and modesty, but they are not able to command themselves to love God; nay, duty is a burden; the word is a weariness to them; they are mad upon idols; they make the Lord to serve with their sin; and their duties to serve as a covering to their lusts; and make use of duty for this, that they may be looked upon as good men, and not Atheists: but let them do their best, they cannot expel that cursed habit of enmity, nor introduce the contrary habit of love, till the power of God come along discovering the bounty and glory of Christ, and transforming the soul after the same image; for this love imports a saving knowledge of this glorious object beloved, a high esteem of the object thus known, a hearty choice of him whom we so esteem, and a sweet recumbency in this choice. The understanding is made to see, the judgment to esteem, the will to choose, and the soul to acquiesce in him.—But these things I cannot enlarge upon.

2. We may consider this love in the kinds of it. And here I would speak only of two kinds in general, namely, a more common and a more special love.

(1.) There is a more common love, which even hypocrites may

have, and may have it as a fruit of God's Spirit in this common operation, while yet they are not renewed in the whole man. As they may have a temporary faith, so they may have a love proportioned to this. The seed of the word falls into the heart, as into stony ground, and it quickly springs up in some flashes of affection, and fair flourishes of a profession, so as they may seem, to themselves and others, to be among the best of Christians, while yet it is not any special work of God's Spirit, but a common gift and grace. The Lord designs to tame and civilize some, as well as to save and convert others. Now this love however great and vehement it may be in appearance, yet it is but a land-flood: at the best it hath not a spring; it is nourished as a pool of water, not as a well of water; the water which the Lord, gives to his people, it is in them as "a well of water, springing up into everlasting life," John iv. 14. But the hypocrite's love is a returning to the Lord, but not with the whole heart. It is a love as described in the Jews, They served the Lord, and they served Ashtaroth; to pacify their consciences, they will serve the Lord; but to satisfy their affections, they will serve their lusts: they never sell their all for the pearl of great price; they never rest upon him as their present, only, and greatest good, nor find full satisfaction in him. They never come to that with it, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." There is something beside Christ that they desire; they have some esteem of him, when he smiles on them in his providences, when they get ease to their consciences; and, by their false hopes of heaven, apprehend matters to be well enough with them. But when the Lord begins to frown, and the course of his providence is turned, then their love is turned into hatred; and the hatred wherewith they hate him, is greater than the love wherewith they loved him. As John's hearers rejoice in his light for a season, and but for a season; and Christ's hearers cry this day, Hosanna and the next day, Crucify him; and, as many people followed Christ for the loaves, because he fed them; so many still follow Christ, some for outward things, and because of his general merciful dispensations; yea, some for inward things: O, say they, ordinances are pleasant; it is a sweet thing to get a tear at a sermon, and to be ravished with something of the glory of heaven, and privileges of the saints: no doubt the joy with which the stony-ground hearers received the word, had its sweetness and pleasure, and thereupon their hearts are aloft, and they think they love Christ above all things; but yet their root is rottenness; they never truly come to Christ, to get rest

to their hearts and consciences from the filth and guilt of sin.
But,

(2.) There is a special love, whereby the whole soul is carried out towards the Lord, as the chief, present, and only good, and whereby the soul sees nothing in heaven or earth desirable in comparison of him; and that acts towards a present Christ, in rejoicing in him; and towards an absent Christ, by lamenting after him: it acts by cleaving to him, when they have the greatest temptations to go away, and it appears most when Christ threatens to depart; and it cleaves most to him, when many are departing from him; To whom shall we go, thou hast the words of eternal life. It counts all but loss and dung for him: Christ gets the throne of their hearts, the cream of their affections, the very soul of their souls, their most vehement love; whatever other things they love, it is but in a subordination to him; whatever other things they rejoice in, he is their chief joy; "Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy;" Psalm xliii. 4. Their joy in him exceeds the joy that they have in any thing else in the world.

3. We may consider this love in the degrees of it. I would not be for the breaking a bruised reed, or quenching a smoking flax; my heart's desire is, that all that love Christ, even in the weakest degree, if it be a special love, may go away rejoicing in him; therefore I tell you of these four degrees of this love,

(1.) There is a love of desire after Christ, that is not yet arrived at a full complacency in him; The desire of our soul is to thy name, says the Church. A poor creature may have a rooted desire after Christ, that is not yet come the length of a rooted delight in him; because through unbelief they question their special interest in him: but "blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." If a gracious desire after Christ be rooted in the soul, there is true love. Yea, further, this desire hath several degrees also: sometimes the desire is like a smoking flax, hardly can one discern the spark of red fire, only they see smoke as a sign of fire; a smoking flax.—This desire may be strangely choked, sometimes through the prevalence of unbelief: even the children of God, that have sound and saving desires, may become so heartless, as that they have no boldness to come to the Lord, and express their desires; all they can say is, that there is something about the bottom of their heart of an earnest wish, that the Lord would come to them, when they cannot come to him: all they can say is, O, when will he come to

me! Or, when will he give me a visit! O, there is none in the world needs a visit so much I!—Sometimes their desires are more vivid and lively, more bright and shining, and break forth in ardent prayers and pantings of soul after him; “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God.” “With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early.”—Sometimes again their desires become so strong, as that the person is made to put on a resolution, as David did, “I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob. Lo, we heard of it at Ephrata: we found it in the fields of the wood.” Psalm cxxxii. 4, 5, 6. ———Their desires may be such as to make them restless, till they get their hearts made a fit habitation for him; they may be such as to carry their souls aloft above all temporary enjoyments, and make them mount up on wings as eagles; and to look down upon all the enjoyments of time, and sublunary comforts, as altogether contemptible. But then,

(2.) As there is a love of desire, so of delight and complacency, whereby they take up their rest and satisfaction in him saying, Though the fig-tree should not blossom, nor fruit should be found in the vine, etc.; yet will I rejoice in the Lord; I will joy in the God of my salvation. Indeed, they that have found saving desires after the Lord, are unsatisfied till their desire be turned to delight, and till they attain this, “Whom having not seen ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” When the Lord manifests himself to them, as reconciled in Christ, when he manifests his love to their souls, and opens the flood-gates of his Spirit’s influences, O then they cannot but delight in him, and be satisfied as with the marrow and fatness; for then they have a feast of fat things, and of wines on the lees, well refined. O sensualists, that never had a more pleasant hour all your days, than when you sat down to a hearty meal of meat or drink, you are but a miserable creature; There is meat to eat that you know not of, and joy that you intermeddle not with. O the joy and triumph that there is in the enjoyment of a God in Christ; Thanks be to God, which always causes us to triumph in Christ; ALWAYS CAUSES TO TRIUMPH! It is true, the souls of believers may sometimes wander from the Lord, even after they have experienced this enjoyment; and never more readily than on the back of a sweet communion: their desires

may wander after other things; they may fall asleep; they are not yet perfect, nor delivered from a body of death; and therefore after that, they may come under doubts, and great fears; and these may bring them very low, and may much alienate their hearts from the Lord; yea, but they are as the needle in the compass, that can never rest or settle till it comes to the right point. They can never rest till they get into his bosom again; they find their case a wilderness case, wherein they are wandering from mountain to hill, and therefore they say, Return unto thy rest, O my soul: they are made again to return to him, and take more delight in him than ever; and, by delighting in him get an earnest of heaven.

(3.) There is a love of benevolence and good-will towards Christ, and his interest in the world, that all his concerns in the world may go right, and that no weapon formed against Zion may prosper. By this love, all these things, whereby God makes himself known, his word, his ordinances, his people, his precepts, his truths, are precious. And to this we may join,

(4.) The love of beneficence, whereby they do all they can for the honour of Christ, the good of his church, the credit of his truths, and for bearing down every interest opposite to his.—But these things may perhaps fall under another head.

4. We may consider this love in the dimensions of it: as God's love towards his people hath height, and depth, and length, and breadth, so there is something like dimensions of that sort in their love to him,

(1.) Their love is a high love, it hath a height; it is a transcendent love; they love him above all things; they love him more than father or mother, sister or brother, profit or pleasure, credit or preferment; yea, doubtless, they count all things but loss and dung in comparison of him. The language of their soul is, *None but Christ*; in all things he hath pre-eminence.

(2.) Their love hath a depth; for it is rooted in the heart, and does not float in the fancy. The love of many is but like a thaw, that will sometimes be on the face of the ground, by the heat of the sun, while there is a hard frost below in the earth; so their love is but superficial, upon the surface of the soul: there is some thaw, but the heart is hard; true love hath a deep root.

(3.) Their love hath a breadth: they not only love his mercy and grace, but his faithfulness, justice, and holiness: they love not only his covenant promises, but his kindly threatenings; not only

his favourable providences, but also his fatherly chastisements: they love every thing that hath any thing of God in it; his people, because they are his image; his ordinances because they are his galleries; they love the place where his honour dwells; and every thing that hath a divine stamp and superscription.

(4.) Their love hath a length in it, as well as a height, and depth, and breadth. It is not like the hope of the hypocrite that perisheth. Their hope and love, who are hypocrites, is built upon an airy fancy and empty imagination; it is built upon sand, and so it falls to the ground; but the believer's love is built upon the faith of the promise, and the faith of the love of God; it is built upon the rock of ages, and so the building stands. Some will have a love to a thing to-day, and quit it to-morrow; but love to Christ will never go quite out. It is true, their love is not always exercised, or always equal in its exercise; for sometimes it is like a coal below the ashes, yet all the power of hell cannot quench it; for many waters cannot quench love: it may be over-topped with the weeds of corruption, and out of view; for the flesh lusteth against the Spirit; and the flesh may be strong, and the Spirit or grace weak, but still the root remains, and shall grow up to perfection.

5. We may consider this love in the properties of it. Some of them have been touched in the preceding heads, therefore, in short,

(1.) True love to God in Christ is a free and voluntary love. Some people force themselves up, as it were, to an esteem for Christ, by using manifold arguments; and after all, it is but imaginary and mercenary love: they are not under the constraint of gospel-grace, but the constraint of legal hope; expecting some reward for their love and service: but here the person loves the Lord for himself, and serves him without legal compulsion or coaction; or by legal fears of hell, or legal hope of heaven. As he loves them freely, in opposition to merit, so they love him freely, in opposition to legal compulsion.

(2.) True love is a sincere love; Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. It is a loving the Lord with all the heart, soul, mind and strength; it is hearty, and hath its abode in the inner chambers of the heart. It does not lay in the tongue or lip, or the outward profession only, but in the heart, and affection, and soul of man.

(3.) True love is an ardent love: it is compared to fire that hath a most vehement flame: it is like fire for light; it is the

discovery of Christ that makes the soul to love him, and it makes the man's light to shine before men, so as his heavenly Father is glorified. It is like fire for heat; it heats the breast, and warms the affections, and flames towards Christ when he is seen. It is like the fire for its consuming quality; it consumes lusts and corruptions: many waters cannot quench it: no water of sin, of affliction, of desertion, or temptation.

(4.) True love is active love; it makes the soul to act for God, and for Christ, saying, O what shall I do for him? What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits? It constrains to services and sufferings for Christ.

(5.) True love is an uniting love: it carries out the soul towards union and communion with God in Christ; he affects communion with him in his thoughts and meditations; My meditation of him shall be sweet.—Communion with him in his ordinances, communion with him in his grace, and communion with him in glory.

(6.) True love is solicitous and careful love: it is careful to avoid whatever is offending to God, careful to provide whatever is pleasing to him; careful and solicitous lest it should lose his company; careful and solicitous to recover a sight of him when he absents himself.

(7.) True love is a bold and venturing love; it will adventure upon reproaches, persecutions, dangers, difficulties, yea, and death itself, for the sake of the Lord Jesus. When there are greatest difficulties, true love will cleave most to Christ: when there is a general apostacy, true love will appear most for Christ, as the two witnesses, Rev. xi. 3. When men make breaches upon the truth of God, the true lover of Christ will cast himself into the breach, as Pergamus did, Rev. ii. 13. In a word, when love cannot stand in the breach, it will mourn for the dishonour done to Christ, and weep in secret places for it. All these proceed from the invincible valour of love.

(8.) True love is a persevering love: when faith and hope, in some respect, will carry us no further than the grave, love will go over the border of time, and remain in heaven for ever.

(9.) True love is a conjugal love, a marriage love: and as conjugal love is a loyal love; so is true love to Christ: It calls Jesus LORD and KING: "He is thy Lord and worship thou him," Psal. xlv. 11. As conjugal love is a chaste love; so true love to Christ cannot endure a rival: it allows no mate, no lust, no Delilah, to come in Christ's room, without the utmost abhorrence. As

conjugal love is a reverential love; so true love to Christ carries towards him with holy fear and reverence, and filial regard. And as a conjugal love is a fruitful and fruit-bearing love; so true love to Christ is a love that bears fruit to him; "Ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ;" and "married to another," even to Christ, that ye might bring forth fruit unto God.——
Again,

(10.) True love is an assimilating love; it changes the person in whom it is, into the image of the glorious and beloved object, and makes him desire, above all things to be like unto Christ; saying, O, to be holy! O, to be free of sin! O, to be full of God! O, to be conform to the image of Christ! yea, the more love, the more likeness.

(11.) In a word, sometimes it is an extatical love, as if the man were beside himself, and out of himself: hence that proverb, *Amantes, Amantes*; like that of Paul, If "we be beside ourselves, it is to God," 2. Cor. v. 13. It carries the soul out of itself, saying with the church, The voice of my beloved, behold he comes; it is an abrupt kind of speech, like that of a person transported, ravished, and in a rapture: The voice of my beloved, behold he cometh: sometimes there is a ray of glory, a bright glance of the Sun of righteousness.

6. We may consider this love in the effects of it.

(1.) This love vents itself in prayer and supplication; "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee." Psalm lxxiii. 1.

(2.) It vents itself in praise and commendation; "My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand." Cant. v. 10.

(3.) It vents itself in wonder and admiration; "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."

(4.) It vents itself in obedience and observation of his law; "If you love me, keep my commandments."

(5.) It vents itself in hatred of sin, and every false way; "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil."

(6.) It vents itself in loving every thing that belongs to God. And this might lead me to shew how,

7. We may consider this love in the object of it, and in the extent of its object; why, the true lover of Christ, he loves a whole Christ.

(1.) He loves him in his person, as he is the brightness of the Father's "glory, and the express image of his person." Heb. i. 3.

(2.) He loves him in his natures, as he is God-man ; EMMANUEL, God with us.

(3.) He loves him in his offices ; as he is a Prophet to take away his darkness ; a Priest, to take away his guilt ; and a King, to take away his sin, and to subdue his lusts.

(4.) He loves him in his relations ; as he stands related to God, being his eternal Son ; as he stands related to the covenant, being the Mediator, Witness, Surety, and Testator, and all of it ; and as he stands related to his church, being their Head and Husband, and all relations to them. You see what a large field I might here go through.

(5.) He loves him in his righteousness, both active and passive, as having fulfilled the law, and satisfied the justice of God in our room.

(6.) He loves him in his merit and purchase ; he loves him in his Spirit and grace ; he loves him in his commands, promises, and comforts ; he loves him in his work and wages ; he loves him in his ministers and people ; he loves him in his gospel and ordinances ; he loves him in his crown, honour, and glory ; he loves him in his cross his reproach, and suffering ; he loves him in every thing about him, and especially in himself, as being altogether lovely. And this leads to another consideration.

8. We may consider this love in the grounds of it. Indeed it is a God in Christ they love : more particularly, if you ask, what are the grounds of the saints' love to Christ ? Why,

(1.) Their love to him is grounded upon his worth, beauty, and excellency ; the soul loves him, because of his own amiable excellency. When the soul gets a view of Christ's own beauty, and of the glory of God in him, his power, wisdom, holiness, grace, mercy, and other properties, his heart is ravished with love within him. O the thoughts of his worth, and his fulness of grace and good-will is overcoming ? "Because of the favour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee." Song i. 3.

(2.) Their love to him is grounded upon his undertaking for them, and accomplishing that undertaking : they love him because of what he did undertake from eternity, and perform in time ; Who loved me, and "gave himself" for me ! They love him because he put himself in their nature, for their good : they love him because he put his name in their debt-bonds and bills : they love him, because he put their names in his last-will, and in the book of life : they love him, because he puts his Spirit, his nature, and his Father's image into them.

(3.) Their love to him is grounded upon his Father's love to him, and satisfaction in him; The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And, O but Christ be deservedly the object of the saints' love, because he is the object of the Father's love, who loves him, both as he is his Son, and as he is our Surety; and therefore as the sum of all,

(4.) Their love to him is grounded upon his love to them; "We love him because he first loved us." This leads me to

III. The third general head, viz. The influence that his love hath upon theirs as the cause of it. And here I would, 1. Clear and demonstrate it, that his loving us is the cause of our loving him. 2. Enquire what influence his love hath upon ours.

1. As to the first of these, to clear this point, we would offer the following considerations.

(1.) Consideration is, That a natural man, that looks upon God, can never have a heart-love to him, whatever he pretends. It is true, many fancy God loves them, and pretend they have a love to him, like some in the church at Ephesus, who said, they were apostles, and were not, but were found liars; so many pretend they know God, and love him, who yet in works deny him; and by their practice are found liars; and the vision of their heads is like to end in utter darkness. It is true also, that all that have a love to God, have not the full assurance of God's love to them: some may live under his frowns, who are yet in a state of favour: there may be some true love, where yet there is but little joyful assurance; yet, I say, these who have no faith at all of God's love in Christ, but look upon God as an implacable enemy, they can have no hearty love to him; nay, conscience of guilt, and fear of wrath make them run away from God as an enemy; the spirit of slavish fear, which all awakened sinners are naturally possess of, till God shew them his love and favour in Christ, will rather harden men in their enmity, than melt them into love. If there were nothing but the terror of the Lord to be known, conversion would be impossible.

(2.) Consideration is, That the greater the sense of God's love in Christ is, the stronger will our love to him be. Hence there are such different degrees of love to God among the saints, and even in the same saints, or believers, at several seasons, according as they have more or less of the comfortable apprehension of the love of God in Christ: for, although the love of God be not variable, yet our views and apprehensions of it are. Every believer hath

his dark and gloomy days, as well as his bright and pleasant days; and the less sensible views he hath of God's love and favour, the more sensible deadness in duty, and decay of love to God takes place. When the believer wants the faith of God's love, his wings are clipt; but when his heart is fraughted with a large measure of the faith of God's love, then he mounts up on wings as an eagle; then the love of Christ constrains him; and his heart is enlarged to run the way of God's commandments.

(3.) Consideration, That the love of God discovered, breaks the power of all these things that hindered our love to him. Is self-love a snare to keep us from the love of God? Well, a display of God's love breaks the power of self-love. When Job got a discovery of the glory of God's grace, then he abhors himself. When we know that God is pacified towards us, it makes us loath and abhor ourselves, Exek. xvi. 63. A sinner is never so odious in his own sight, as when he is persuaded of his being precious in God's sight. Does the flattery of the world allure men from the love of God? Well, but the displays of God's love make the world to be crucified to us, and us to the world.—Christ's love discovered obscures all the seeming glory of the world, as the sun darkens the lesser lights, and as the works of nature spoil the reputation of the works of art. Do the frowns of the world frighten us from the love of God and his way? Well, but the display of God's love to us is a noble security against this temptation; for little matter, who be against us, if God be for us; His loving-kindness is better than life: therefore, though the rage of men should reach our lives, yet what comparison is betwixt the breath of our nostrils, and the favour of an eternal God? We do not love God in Christ, because we do not know him; but when his love is displayed, then he is known in the light of the Spirit, As a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ; the Spirit comes as a Spirit of light; and thus the love of God is shed abroad upon the heart by the Holy Ghost.

(4.) Consideration, When God displays his love, he at the same time transforms the soul to whom he discovers himself, and makes it a new creature. Now, the new nature is a grateful and loving nature; depraved nature may reward evil for good, and hatred for love; but it is not so with the new nature, it natively renders love for love; it is native to the soul upon the discovery of God's love, his everlasting love, to be constrained to his service and obedience; "If ye love me, keep my commandments." Now, this love, that is the product of God's love, is virtually all obedience; and there-

fore love is said to be the fulfilling of the law: and when love takes place, his commandments are not grievous, but pleasant; yea, when the love of God is in the heart, then the law of God is in the heart.—But then,

2. To enquire more particularly what influence God's love hath upon ours: "We love him, because he first loved us:" our love is just the reflex of his, as the sun shining upon a glass. Why, how does his love to us influence our love to him? (1.) It hath a moral influence, in point of motive. (2.) A physical influence, in point of power.

(1.) It hath a moral influence, in point of motive: and so it is the moral cause of our love; the incentive, the argument. What will move us to love, if the display of this infinite love does it not? We cannot but love such a good God, who was first in the act and work of love; that loved us when we were both unloving and unlovely; that loved us at such a rate, as to seek and solicit our love at the expense of his Son's blood. O amazing love! Is there any motive can be stronger to engage us to love him again? Shall not the love of Christ constrain us to love him again? What in all the world will endear a soul to God, if the love of God do it not?—So much as we see of the love of God, so much we love him, and delight in him, and no more. Every other discovery of God without this, will but make the soul to flee from him. If the faith and apprehension of his free love, of his ancient love, his antecedent love, his preventing love, such as I have spoken of, be no motive or argument to influence us to love him, there is no argument in the world will prevail.

2. It hath a physical influence, in point of power; and so it is not only the moral, but the productive cause. There is a power in his love that conquers, captivates, and overpowers the man, so that he cannot but love: God's love hath a generative power: our love is brought forth by his love, James i. 18. Of his own will he begat us; that is of his own free love and good-will. Divine love makes such an impression, that it enstamps love upon the soul. As his love hath a generating power, so it hath a creating power; his love infuses and creates love in the person. Beloved, it works good in the man, that is the object of it; his power and will are commensurate; what he wills, he works; and when the time of love or of manifesting love comes, the time of power comes; "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." His love hath a constraining power; "The love of Christ constrains us;" and his love hath a drawing power; "I have loved thee with an everlast-

ing love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." He draws with the cords of love, and thereby draws the heart towards him in love: and hence never a soul tasted the sweetness of his everlasting love, but at the same time he felt the power of it warming the heart, and kindling a fire of love there. O how does his mighty love break the power of their mighty enmity. Was ever pardoning mercy and love intimated, but the pardoned soul behooved to read the pardon with tears of joy; and to love much when much was forgiven? Can they choose but love him, "Who are the called according to his purpose" of love? Rom. viii. 28.— "We love him, because he first loved us."

IV. The fourth general head, was the application. Is it so, that God's love to his people is the source and cause of their love to him? Then we may apply it for information; and,

1. Hence see the difference betwixt God's love to the saints, and the saints' love to God. It is true, their loves agree in several things: his love to them is a love of complacency, he delights in them; and their love to him is a love of complacency, they delight in him: he loves them in Christ, and they love him in Christ; but yet vastly great is the difference betwixt his love and theirs. 1. His love is eternal, their love is but of yesterday's date. 2. His love is the original cause, their love is the native effect of his. 3. His love is an antecedent love, it goes before theirs, as the father loves the child when the child knows not the father, much less loves him; yea, they are by nature haters of God. And surely all must begin on his side; "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us:" yea his love not only goes before our love, but before every thing that is lovely in us; "God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Sin imports all unloveliness and undesirableness that can be in a creature: yet he loves: but then our love is a consequential love. 4. His love being free and eternal is always equal and unchangeable; for, The Strength of Israel is not a man that he should repent: but our love to him is unequal and changeable, up and down: his love is like the sun, always the same in its light, though a cloud may sometimes interpose; our love is like the moon, hath its waxings and wanings; his love, I say, is like the sun, always the same in its light. It is true, as the sun is sometimes under a cloud; so the fruits and manifestations of God's love may change; now he shines, now he hides his face, as it may be most for our profit; but still his love in itself is the same.—Whatever changes affect the saints, whether as to sin or suffering, yet God's love to them is

unchangeable. Why, were it not blasphemy to say, that God loves his people in their sinning, as well as in their strictest obedience? If so, who will care to serve him more? To which it might be replied, The love of God in itself is no more changeable than God himself; and what then? Loves he his people in their sinning? by no means; he loves his people, not their sinning. Alters he his love to them? No; not his love, but the discoveries of his love: he smites them, rebukes them, and fills them with a sense of indignation. But wo would be to us if he changed in his love: nay, "For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." These very things which seem to be demonstrations of the change of his affection, do as clearly proceed from love to them, even his chastisements, as any other dispensations. Well, but will not this encourage to sin? "O sure he never tasted," as one says, "of the love of God, that can seriously make this objection." The doctrine of grace may be turned into wantonness, but the principle of grace cannot. His love, I say, being free, eternal, and preventing love, is in itself always equal and unchangeable; but our love to God is an ebbing and flowing love. We are scarce a day at a stand. This hour we may be at this, Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I! and the next hour at this, I know not the man. When was ever the time that our love was equal one day to an end?

2. Hence see the difference betwixt justification and sanctification; and the priority of justification to sanctification: We may here notice the differences betwixt the one and the other. Many are the differences betwixt them, but I confine myself to what the text imports. 1. In justification, God loves us, and shews his love in Christ; in sanctification, we love God, and shew our love to him: for the comprehensive sum of active holiness is love, which is the fulfilling of the law. 2. In justification, we have the favour of God; in sanctification, we have the image of God; and the special part of his image is love. 3. In justification, we are passive as when God set his love upon us; but in sanctification, we are active, while his love causes us to act in loving him. 4. Justification is God's act of love without us, in and through the merit and righteousness of Christ imputed to us; sanctification is God's work of grace within us, by the spirit of Christ imparted to us as a spirit of love, as well as of other graces. 5. Justification is perfect, equal, and always the same, like the love of God, the original cause, and the righteousness of Christ the meritorious cause of it; but sanctification is imperfect, unequal, and changeable; for the love of the

saints, as I said, is up and down. 6. Justification is the cause; sanctification the effect; even as God's love is the cause of our love. 7. Faith in justification is an instrument receiving Christ, as the Lord our righteousness, and apprehending the love and mercy of God in him; but faith in sanctification is an agent, employing Christ as the Lord our strength, to enable us to manifest our love to him. Thus we see the priority of divine love and favour, and acceptation and justification before any work of ours; and so, how any can maintain, that actual gospel repentance (which must be a work of ours, and a piece of sanctification at least) doth go before, and is necessary in order to justification, let the judicious consider, without receding from our standards, and binding their faith to the belt of any fallible creatures, councils, or acts. That legal repentance, or humiliation and conviction, and sense of sin, does go before justification, in order of divine operation, is plain; and that habitual sanctification, or regeneration, and the issuing of all grace into the soul, is also precious, is not denied: But that gospel-repentance, or any part of actual sanctification, is necessary in order to justification and pardon, I do not see how it is possible to maintain that, without running into the Roman camp, and fighting with popish weapons, and inverting the order of our text, making any part of our love to God necessary first in order to God's loving us. But sure God's method of doing will stand in spite of hell and earth; "We love him because he first loved us."

3. Hence we may see, that as the persuasion that is in the nature of faith lies in the apprehension of the love and mercy of God in Christ to a man's self in particular; so this doctrine of faith does not make void the law, but establish and fulfil it, if we consider love as the fulfilling of the law; for the language of this text, when read in the singular number is, I love him, because he first loved me; He first loved me, there is faith's apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ. It is true, a believer may say, I know not whether he loved me or not; but sure I am it is not his faith that says so, but unbelief; but the stronger that his faith is, to be sure the more will he be able to say, He loved me; and the more he can say this, the more can he say the other also, I love him: and there is obedience, gospel obedience, the obedience of faith, which is a loving obedience; for the law of Christ is a law of love; it is blasphemy against the love of God to reproach it, as a mother of licentiousness, and a nurse of carnal security. They that have the love of God in their eye, can take no encouragement from thence to sin; for sin tends to cloud that light wherein they rejoice. If

it were possible for a believer to think that God loves him, and thereupon should take encouragement to sin, then I am bold to say, it is not the faith of God's operation takes place at that time with him, but only a fancy, and a strong temptation of Satan, working upon that fancy: for a true faith of God's love, brings holiness, love, and obedience along with it, as natively as the rising sun brings light. God's love of bounty displayed, does as natively bring in our love of duty, as it is natural for the fire to bring heat. Is it possible that God's communicating his thoughts of peace to a child will embolden him to new acts of treason? No; if the sense of God's love did not wear off, and security and unwatchfulness wear on, the believer's love would always be flaming in the fire of God's love. They have no experience of the love of God who think that the discovery thereof would give them a license to transgress.

5. Hence we see, that as the believer is perfectly free from vindictive wrath, from the curse and penal sanction of the law, so his gospel-obedience is not influenced by slavish fear of hell, but by the love of God. How can the man that is actually justified, and accepted in the Beloved, and so the actual object of God's everlasting, unchangeable love, ever fall under his vindictive wrath, which is the threatening and sentence of the law as a covenant of works? And, how can the believer that is obliged to believe this love, be ever obliged to serve from a fear of hell and vindictive wrath? That he may, through unbelief, apprehend God's vindictive wrath, and fear to be thrown into hell, is plain from common experience; but that the fear of hell should be either a gospel-grace, or a believer's duty, is some of the new divinity of our day. Filial child-like fear, which is the believer's duty at all times, is every way consistent with love, yea, supposes and imports the faith of God's fatherly love; but slavish fear of hell, and vindictive wrath, excludes and opposes it. See the context, verse 18. "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out (slavish and tormenting) fear."

5. Hence we may see, the difference betwixt the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. The order of the covenant of works is, in some respect, quite cross to the order here set down in our text; for, in the covenant of works, our love of duty was first to take place; and after that God's love of bounty, as the reward of our perfect love and obedience, according to the old covenant paction; whereas, in the covenant of grace, God's shews first his love of bounty, and then follows our love of duty.

Never does the soul turn his affections towards God, if the heart of God be not first set upon him. Herein differ works in the new covenant, (for love, as I said before, is the sum of all work and obedience) from works in the old covenant. In the legal covenant, our love and work is first, and then God's favour and justification; but in the gospel-covenant, God's love and favour in justification is first, and then our love and obedience follows. As the same day that the waters went off from the earth, and were gathered into the sea, the earth was adorned with grass and flowers, and was fruitful; so when the deluge of wrath goes off from the conscience, and the favour of God appears in justification, then it is presently adorned with the graces of the Spirit, and love among the chief of them, springing up: whatever other motives engages to obedience here, yet love is the most prevalent motive; and here gratitude influences to obedience. In a word, the covenant of works was properly conditional to us, but the covenant of grace, however conditional to Christ, who hath performed the whole condition in his obedience to the death, yet to us it is absolutely free and unconditional. Upon what condition have we God's love and favour? Does not his love prevent all conditions? "He first loved us:" his love prevents the true proper condition itself, namely, Christ's obedience; for his love sent him to perform the same, much more does it prevent all that men call conditions. O! how far is our obedience, even the obedience of faith, from having any causality, or proper federal conditionality in obtaining salvation, seeing our imperfect love and obedience here is not the cause, but the effect of God's love and favour partly displayed, and our perfect love and obedience in heaven will be the effect of the full vision of his glorious grace in heaven, Where "we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is?"

6. Hence we may see the blasphemy of these who say, they are believers in Christ, and yet are not lovers of God; and who pretend to believe the grace of God, and yet turn his grace to lasciviousness, by continuing in enmity against him, and discover their enmity by their ungodly practices; The grace of God, that brings salvation, teaches us quite the contrary; what the law teaches preceptively, the gospel teaches effectively, viz. To deny "ungodliness and worldly lusts," and to "live soberly, righteously, and godly," Titus ii. 11, 12. She is not the spouse of Christ, but an adulteress, that impudently abuses his love. They can have no true evidence of God's love to them, who have no love to him; for our love to him is the native result of his love to us; "We love

him, because he first loved us." The love of God discovered, knocks down the natural enmity, which is the root of all disobedience; and influences to love, which is the sum of all disobedience.

7. See hence the eminent privilege of the saints, whatever low thoughts the world may have of them. It is an honour to stand in the presence of princes, though but as servants; what honour then have all the saints to stand with boldness in the presence of God, and enjoy his bosom-love? The queen of Sheba pronounced a blessing on the servants of Solomon, who stood before him and heard his wisdom; how much more blessed are they who stand continually before the God of Solomon, hearing his wisdom and enjoying his love? As they are happy, so they are safe. Here is a safe and sweet retreat to the saints in all the trials, reproaches, and misrepresentations they undergo in the world. When a child is abused in the streets by strangers, he runs with speed to the bosom of his father; there he makes his complaint, and is comforted. In all the hard censures and tongue persecutions which the saints meet withal in the streets of the world, they may run to their Father and be comforted; his love can counter-balance all the world's frowns. O! how are they privileged beyond all the hypocritical world!—Hypocrites, for the most part, cannot be known or differenced from saints, in regard of their external duty and enjoyment; but while they are living in the love of their lusts, the saints are sweetly wrapt up in the bosom of God's love; they have this meat to eat, and refreshment in the banquetting-house, wherein others have no share.

8. Hence see where it is we may get our enmity killed, and our love quickened; it is even in the love of God. What is the reason that the world have no love to God? Why, they cannot believe his love and good-will through Christ; and so they live in enmity. What is the reason that believers have so little love to God? Even because their faith of his love is so weak. It is by faith we know that God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself; it is by faith we see the King in his beauty, and so cannot but love him; it is by faith that we hear his voice, and understand his words of grace, and say, It is the voice of my Beloved: it is by faith we embrace the promises, which are so many messages of love: it is by faith we receive out of Christ's fulness, and grace for grace; or, as the word may be rendered, Love for love. Faith breaks the shell of the promise, and then eats the kernel of God's love and grace that is there. Faith is the bucket wherewith we draw, Christ is the well, God is the fountain, and love is the water that

we draw: O! what get you in Christ, poor soul, whenever you go to him? Can you not say, O, I get more love to God than I had! I never approached near him but I got a large draught and ample fill of love to God; Out of his fullness, we receive grace for grace, and love for love. In a word, by faith we behold the glory of the Lord as in a glass, and are changed into the same image; and the image of God is love. O then, the little faith that takes place in our day, makes little love to God and his people; faith and love are like twins that are born together, and live and die together. Go to the root of all our backslidings, and you will find it unbelief; An evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.

Use of examination. Try your state by this doctrine, whether or not you be in a state of favour with God, and the objects of his love in a special manner. How shall I know, if he hath loved me? You may know it by that fruit and evidence of it in the text: if he hath manifested his love savingly to you, then you will love him, because he hath loved you.

QUEST. How shall I know, if I have that love to him, that is the fruit and effect of his first loving me?

Answ. 1. If your love to him be such as is the fruit of his love to you, then you have been convinced of your natural enmity, and that you never had any love, nor could have it, unless the Lord in love had, in some measure, manifested himself in his grace. Many speak of their loving God all their days, as if it were natural for them to love God; poor creatures, they never saw or considered, that they were born with a dagger of enmity in their hearts against God. These that truly love him have seen their want of love, and something of the power and strength of their enmity; and got it, in some measure, broken in a day of power.

2. If you have such love to him, as is the fruit of his love to you, then you have seen his glory, and particularly the glory of his grace, and love to draw out your love towards him: Shew me thy glory, says Moses to God; yea, says God, I will make all my goodness pass before thee. His goodness and his love is his glory. If you have seen his glory, surely you count all things but loss and dung, in comparison of him.

3. If you have such love, as is the fruit of his love, then his loveliness and excellency hath engaged you to choose him; to choose himself, for your God; his Christ, for your husband; his covenant, for your character; his precepts, for your rule; his people, for your companions: his purchase, for your jointure; his

Spirit, for your guide; his promise, for your cordial; his glory, for your aim. If you have chosen him thus, and resolve to abide by your choice, it is a fruit of his choosing you from eternity: You have not chosen me first, but I have chosen you.

4. If you have such love to him, as is the fruit of his loving you, then it is the faith of his love, that, in a special manner, will influence you to obedience, in all the duties of religion; "If ye love me, keep my commandments:" yea, the faith of his love will influence you to such a love to him, as will bring forth all the fruits of true love. And here I will tell you of some of the fruits of true love to God, by which you may try your love to him.

1. One fruit of true love is this; true love will make you love to be with him on earth, and long to be with him in heaven.

(1) On the one hand, true love will make you love to be with him on earth; and this love will make you rejoice when he is present, saying, O! my soul shall rejoice in God my Saviour: and it will make you lament when he is absent, saying, O! that I knew where I might find him! You will love to be with him in your desire, saying, He is the desire of all nations, and the desire of my soul. You will love to be with him in your delight, saying, "A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me." * * * You will love to be with him in your walk and conversation, desiring to have your conversation in heaven, and to walk with him. You will love to be with him in your esteem, saying, Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none in earth that I desire beside thee. You will love to be with him in your thoughts and meditations, saying, My meditation of him shall be sweet. You will love to be with him in your duties and performances, in reading and hearing, and singing, in communicating, in praying. You will love to be with him, and to have him with you: particularly to be with him in prayer, is the most frequent thing with the believer: how does he love to embosom himself to his God! The Legalist may do the duty, but to be with Christ in it, is what he is not much taken up with; the believer is taken up with prayer, as a mean of communion with God. O! I cannot stay away from him, though he shut the door upon me, and cover himself with a cloud, that my prayer cannot pass through; I cannot be absent from him. It is one of the main things that makes earth tolerable to the believer, that he hath sometimes access to God, in Christ, by the Spirit in prayer. If it were not for some sweet meetings that he hath with the Lord this way, he would even be crying, O what a weary place is this earth! O let me out of it! I say, the true

lover loves to be with God, and to have God with him. How does he love to have God with him, by his sanctifying grace, by his enlightening, enlarging, enlivening, and comforting grace? True lovers love one another's company. And,

(2.) As the true lover of Christ loves to be with him here, so on the other hand, he longs to be with him hereafter. O to be in the place of perfect love, where there will be an eternal emanation of the love of God! O to be in the place of perfect likeness to Christ! For "when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." Though they are reconciled to his will, and made content to abide here, while he pleases, yet they are even longing for that day, when they shall have the immediate fruition of him, and be delivered from all sin: they desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, which is best of all. A carnal man may say, O to be out of an evil world! but the heart of the true lover say, O to be with Christ? It is true, when the believer's love is in fresh exercise, he will even sometimes be willing to abide in this world, notwithstanding of all the troubles and trials that are in it, if so be he may glorify God in it; whether by suffering for him, or giving a testimony against sin, and for the truth and honour of the Lord Jesus. O! if I may be of any use to any of thine; if I may be of any service to thy Majesty, and glorify thee by doing or suffering; if thou wilt help me to serve and honour thee in my life, let me even beg from door to door in the wilderness; through grace I will cheerfully endure any trouble, and glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. This submission is not inconsistent with his longing to be with the Lord.—Thus, I say, true lovers of God, they love to be with him on earth, and long to be with him in heaven.

2. True love will make you long to be like him, saying, O to be holy, as God is holy! O to be conform to the image of his Son! O to be like unto Christ! Indeed, the man that hath most of the image of God, will readily see himself the most unlike to him; and look upon himself as the most unholy person on earth, O! my understanding is like a dark dungeon, my will is like a devil, and my heart like a hell; and yet something of the light of God it is that thus discovers him to himself, so unlike to God: and something of the love of God it is that makes him love to be like him, and desire above all things to be quit of sin, which is the devil's image, and to be endued with holiness, which is God's image.

3. True love will make you love to live upon him: you will

love to live upon God the fountain of living water; and love to live upon Christ, for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. The lover of God is one that loves to live by faith on the Son of God; To him to live is Christ: Christ is the Alpha and Omega of his life; the food and medicine of his life; the Author and Restorer of his life; and the whole business of his life. * * *

4. True love to God will make you love to reverence him: godly fear is a true mark of love; you will have a holy fear of displeasing him; you will have a jealous fear, lest your deceitful heart lead you aside from him: "We receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, [or, let us hold fast grace,] whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire." Heb. xii. 28, 29. All this is inconsistent with the slavish fear of hell: for the faith of receiving the kingdom that cannot be moved, and the fear of hell which is a being excluded from that kingdom, are contradictory; but let us fear our God in Christ, who hath discovered himself in Christ to be even a consuming fire; for this fire of infinite justice took hold of the man Christ Jesus. When God dwelled in the bush of our nature, the bush burned in the flame of divine wrath, and justice was satisfied this way: herein God gave a more awful instance of his being a consuming fire, in taking vengeance upon sin in the Surety, than can be given by all the flames of hell, in which the wicked burn for eternity. But here God being in the bush, the bush burnt, but was not consumed; He that was dead, is alive; and behold he liveth for evermore. But we may turn aside, and see this great sight, the bush burning, Christ satisfying dying justice: and what in the world should more influence to a holy fear than this?

5. True love will make you to think well of him, and think no evil of him: Love thinketh no evil, says the apostle. You will entertain good thoughts of God; and construct all he does in the best sense: though in affliction a saint may have harsh thoughts of God, and under a fit of temptation, yet habitually he entertains good thoughts of all God's dealings towards him. This or that dispensation or affliction, however severe, is either to mortify some lust, or to exercise some grace, or to discover some corruption, and remove it. "O! how good is he that will not let me alone in my sins, nor let me go with my faults, nor cease to be a Re-prover! Love thinks no evil."

6. True love will make you love what he loves, and hate what he hates; and also love as he loves, and hate as he hates.

[1.] True love will make you love what he loves, and hate what he hates; and particularly to love his friends, and hate his enemies.

1. To love his friends; his friends in office, and his friends in heart.

(1.) His friends in office; his ministers, whose office it is to commend Christ: surely they that love God, will love his friends; they that love Christ the Bridegroom, will love the friends of the Bridegroom, whose work it is to set them forth: How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, that bring glad tidings of good things, that publish salvation! Isa. lii. 7. Rom. x. 15. The reason why they love such is, because it is their work to open Christ's love-letter that is sent to his bride, and to read it, and explain it to the bride; and because they love the sweet doctrine of the gospel. Some pretend a great love to the precepts of the law, but for the doctrine of the gospel, and free justification without the works of the law, * * * they will mock at Christ's messengers when they preach the doctrine of grace. But I seek no further evidence of an enemy to Christ than that. Some love all preachers, and all preaching alike; they cannot discern betwixt the one and the other: if you preach the doctrine of the gospel to them, they love that; if you preach the covenant of works to them, and desire them to do so and so, and thereupon they shall be justified before God, they love that too; all is fish that comes in the net with them; but the sheep of Christ know his voice; and the voice of the shepherds, that convey his voice and mind to them, is sweet, and beautiful and lovely to them.

(2.) They love his friends in heart, as well as his friends in office; the saints, the excellent ones of the earth, are these in whom is all their delight. He that loves him that begeth, loves him that is begotten. They love the brethren, as in the verse following the text; How can you say that he loves God, whom he hath not seen, when he loveth not his brother whom he hath seen? He that loves the parent, will love the child: they that love God, will love his children, that have his image, as a man will love the very picture of the person whom he loves: they love the saints, though poor, as a man will love gold, though in a rag; and also will love them, though afflicted, even as metal in a furnace may be loved.

2. As the true lovers of God will love his friends, so they will hate his foes and enemies, whether it be his open enemies without, or his secret enemies within.

(1.) His open enemies without, even all the wicked and ungodly.

world; "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee?" They that can delight in fellowship with these that are drunkards, swearers, and blasphemers of the name of God, surely they cannot have the love of God in exercise: the true lover of God hates the wicked as such. It is true, as they are the children of Adam, bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh; as they are poor miserable creatures like themselves, they love them with a love of pity; but as enemies to God, and in rebellion against him, they can have no delight in them; their company is a burthen to them.

(2.) As they hate his open enemies without, so they hate his secret enemies within; and these are their own lusts and corruptions. They hate sin, who love God; and are engaged in a warfare against sin, and hate their own lusts. He that loves God hates sin, whether in himself or others: he hates sin as God's enemy, and as that which is displeasing and dishonouring to him; and as that which mars communion with God, that provokes him to anger, and unfits them for his service. O that loathsome, and ugly thing sin! that evil of evils, and devil of devils! The man pursues it to death, and cannot rest till he gets his hands embrued, as it were, in its heart's blood: they have taken up arms against it, in the name of the Lord, and resolved never to lay them down, till it be mortified and killed. They find indeed sometimes sin very lively and strong in them, and themselves led captive by the law of sin; but this animates them so much the more to pursue it to death. And as they hate sin in themselves, so also in others; I beheld transgressors, and was grieved. I would not give much for your pretensions to love, if you have no zeal against sin; love is the fire, zeal is the flame: they that love the Lord will show forth indignation against sin.—Thus, I say, true lovers of God will love what he loves, and hate what he hates.

[2.] True love will not only hate what he hates, and love what he loves, but hate as he hates, and love as he loves.

1. They will hate AS he hates; they will hate sin as God hates it; I speak not of degrees, but of similitude.

(1.) God hates sin with a natural hatred, as opposite to his nature, will, and law, and dishonouring to him; so the true lovers of God will hate sin with a natural hatred; I mean, by virtue of his new nature, he will hate it as opposite to God's nature and will, and dishonouring to his God.

(2.) God hates sin with a perfect hatred, and so does the true lover of God; they say of God's enemies within them, as David,

Psalm cxxxix. 22. "I hate them with perfect hatred;" their hatred is going on to perfection.

(3.) God hates sin with an everlasting hatred; he will never be reconciled with it: so the true lover of God hates sin with an everlasting hatred; a durable hatred; they will never be friends with it.

(4.) God hates sin with a grievous hatred; sin grieves his spirit; and is, as it were, a burden to him: he is pressed under it as a cart under sheaves: so the true lover is grieved with the body of sin and death, and pressed under it.

(5.) God hates sin with a parting, separating hatred; he casts it away with loathing and abhorrence, being of "purer eyes than to behold evil," so the true lover hates sin so as to part with it, and separate from it: and while he cannot get himself rid of it he loaths himself for it.

(6.) God hates sin with an avenging hatred; he takes vengeance upon it where-ever it is; even when it was found but imputatively in Christ, he took vengeance upon it in the Surety: so the true lover of God hates sin with an avenging hatred; yea, what revenge does he meditate against it! 2 Cor. vii. 11. He would sometimes be at Sampson's work, to pull down the house of that tabernacle upon the Philistines to be avenged upon it, and cannot rest till it be destroyed: he looks upon himself as wretched, so long as it remains with him: O "wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"—Thus he hates as God hates.

2dly, They love AS God loves. It is true God's love to them is infinite, their love is but finite; his love to them is the love of a God, their love to him is but the love of creatures; yet their love bears some resemblance of his love.

(1.) God's love to his creatures is a remembering love: he never forgets them; Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, she may; yet will I not forget thee, saith the Lord. So, true love to God is a remembering love * * * I will never forget thy precepts, for by them thou hast quickened me. I can never forget such a word, such a glance, such a visit, such a day, such a sermon, such a bank, such a valley, such a chamber, where God manifested himself.

(2.) God's love to his people is a hearty and cordial love; he loves them with all his heart; so, where true love is, it will be with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength: as with the heart man believes, so with the heart the believer loves.

(3.) God's love to his people is a manifested love ; he does not conceal his love, but discovers it : so true love to God will be a manifested love ; it will manifest itself, and vent itself in prayer, in praises, in zeal, in obedience ; " If ye love me, keep my commandments." The true lover will vent his love by desiring to keep Christ's words, keeping them in the heart ; Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I may not offend thee ; keeping them in the practice, by ordering the conversation aright.

(4.) God's love to his people is an uniting love ; it brings them to union with himself ; so true love to God is uniting ; desires union, and cleaves to the Lord ; it affects nearness ; more and more nearness ; and still more and more nearness.

(5.) God's love to his people is a prevailing love ; it had many hinderances in its way ; mountains of guilt, mountains of sin, mountains of provocation, yet he did not call back his love again : even so, true love to God, notwithstanding of hinderances and opposition from earth and hell, and corruption within, yet is not drawn back, but labours to prevail ; and will, through grace, fight its way through all difficulties ; for love is strong as death.

(6.) God's love to his people is a rejoicing love ; he rejoiceth in his love ; so where true love to God is, the man will rejoice in his love ; delight in God and Christ, and be joyful in the God of his salvation.

(7.) God's love to his people is a resting love ; Zeph. v. 17. He rests in his love ; when it comes, it never thinks of removing any more ; This is my rest, here will I stay ; so where true love to God is, it is a resting love ; it says, Return to thy rest, O my soul. The true lover of God hath no other resting place but a God in Christ.

(8.) God's love to his people is a communicative love ; his love inclines him and engages him to make over himself, and all that he hath, for the good of his people : so, where true love to God is, it is such a communicative love, that it makes the soul to give himself, and all that he is, and hath, to the Lord ; he commits his soul, body, and all the concerns of his salvation to him.

(9.) God's love to his people is a distinguishing love ; he loves them above all others ; " Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee." Isa. xliii. 4. So their love to him is superlative love ; they love him above all things ; and in all things he hath the pre-eminence.

(10.) God's love to his people is in Christ ; they are accepted in the Beloved ; so, true love to God is a love to God in Christ ; out

of Christ they cannot love him, but fear and flee from him : but in Christ he is amiable and lovely to them.—Now, by these things you may try whether you love God, so as your love is a fruit of his first loving you.

Use of exhortation. Is God's love to his people the cause of their love to him? then be exhorted, 1. To seek the view of God's love to you. 2. To render him love for love.

1. Seek a view of God's love to you; say not in your heart, Alas! all are not loved of God, and it may be not you; but rather say, Many are the objects of his love, and why not me? Why, say you, the first object of faith cannot be to believe that God hath loved me. Indeed you cannot know God's love to you till he manifest the same; and he does not manifest his love but in Christ, in whom is proclaimed peace on earth, and good-will towards men, because Christ hath brought in Glory to God in the highest; and therefore the way to know the love of God to you, is to believe his love and good-will in him; and in coming to him, the love of God is known and believed. How do the saints get to know the love of God to them? It is even by believing his love in Christ. 1 John iv. 16. "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us." If you look to God out of Christ, you never see his love to you, or any sinner like you, but wrath and vengeance issued out against you; but if you look to God in Christ, then you may see good-will towards men; for, God is "in Christ reconciling the world unto himself."—Why, say you, I cannot find any love in my heart towards God; and therefore, how can I believe his love, or heart to be towards me? Indeed, man, you will never love God till you take up something of his love and good-will towards you; your way of doing is a preposterous course, and a way to rob God of his glory, to think you must love him first, and then expect that he will love you: lay down your carnal reasoning, and seek grace to apprehend the mercy of God in Christ, and that will open your soul to let out your love towards him.—Why, say you, I see no ground why he should love me! there is no cause, no reason in the world, but all the reason in the world, why he should not love me; and therefore, how can I be persuaded of his thoughts of love towards me? To this we might reply, That God speaks love, mercy, and good-will towards you man, you woman, by this gospel, as particularly as ever he did to any elect soul, the day before he met with the day of power; for the general tenders of grace in the gospel are to all: and as for a cause of love, he hath as much cause to fix his love on you as ever he had upon

any of the children of men; that is, he had no cause at all without himself: and if you can attain to believe his grace and good-will towards you, and that by a faith of his own operation, you shall not be deceived. When I call you to believe thus, I am not calling you to fancy that God loves you, or to persuade yourselves in a natural way; nay, I call you to a saving faith, which I know you can never attain unto without a pull of omnipotence: and if that power accompany the call, then the duty called to will be put in practice, and not otherwise: therefore, O seek the power of God to persuade you of the good-will of God in Christ. All that hear me are obliged to receive Christ, as a token of God's love; "For 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 that believeth, shall be saved: he that believeth not, shall be damned. If there be insuperable difficulties and objections in your way, I cannot help it; the God who calls you, can remove them; but it is at your peril, if you reject his call: you shall never have it to say in hell, that the good-will and favour of God was never proclaimed to you; for I take the mountains and hills that are in your view, to witness, that I proclaim, through Christ, Peace on earth, and good-will towards men; and that God is "in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." Why, would we have the greatest sinner, and vilest debauchee among us all, to believe the love and good-will of God towards them? To this we reply, Whilst you are in a sinful state, you are indeed under the wrath and curse of God; and if you continue therein, you will be damned for ever, as sure as God lives; and you will continue there for ever, unless you come to get the apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ; but whenever you get this apprehension of God's love, then I defy you to continue in a state of sin, or in a course of sin and enmity. Will a man receive Christ, and believe the love of God in him, and yet keep fast hold of his lusts? No, I defy him, it is not possible; and therefore it is to kill your enmity and destroy your sin that God would have you to believe his good-will in Christ. I remember that story of a godly man, that said to a woman, when nothing else could soften her heart, "I do," says he, "in the name of the Lord Jesus, charge you to come to Christ for salvation; to come to him for faith, repentance, and remission of sin, and you shall have acceptance, and be received into the favour of God in him." The poor woman was made to say, "O, Sir, shall I believe your word?" "My life for you," says he "if you rely upon Christ." Immediately her bands were loosed;

and the Lord brought her to a deep humiliation for sin, and sense of the favour of God, so as she gave evidence, by the testimony of discerning persons, that the Lord had shewn mercy to her. O if you knew how the Lord is saying to his servants, O fie upon you! will you not compel those people to come in and close with Christ, as the great pledge of God's love? O! go to God, when you can get an opportunity to be alone, and say, Lord, I have been called to believe, but my heart is hard, and thou only can break it: O! come and save the chiefest of sinners, whereby thou wilt get more glory than ever thou had by any of Adam's posterity: cry to him, Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief.

2. I would exhort you to render him love for love: and this exhortation concerns believers particularly. O, love him, because he first loved you. What a shame it is for you, believer, if you do not love him who first loved you! And to engage you, consider,

(1.) Whose love it is; it is the love of him, who in himself is all-sufficient, who hath no need to go forth with his love to others; the love of a God, O what a vast consideration is it!

(2.) Consider who you are that are the objects of his love; so wicked, so wretched, so unworthy of his love. That God should love the glorious angels is no wonder; for they are messengers and ministers executing his pleasure: that he should love inanimate creatures is not strange; for hail, snow, vapour, and stormy wind fulfil his word: but to love you is a wonder; and to love you while enemies.

(3.) Consider what sort of love it is. It is eternal love: before the foundation of the world, his delights were with the sons of men, from eternity: the very thoughts of this is enough to make all that is within you leap for joy, that you lay in the bosom of his love from eternity: and will you not love him!—His love is a free love; if you deserved his love, his love would be of less value; but that which is eternally antecedent, must be absolutely free.—His love is unchangeable love; though you change every day, his love is unchangeable. Could any provocation turn away his love, it had ceased long since; but as he set his love upon you, notwithstanding all the faults you were, and he knew you would be, guilty of, so it continues notwithstanding all.—His love is a distinguishing love; why should he have fixed on you, and passed by millions from whom you differ not by nature? Why hath he passed by your father, mother, brother, sister, and set his love upon you? And, O! will you not love him?—His love is a bountiful love: with his love he gives himself, his Christ,

his Spirit, his grace, his glory, and all. See how the psalmist extols this love, Psalm ciii. 1, 3. "Bless the Lord O my soul," "who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases," etc. "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities!" O, it is no small thing to forgive or to pardon three or four sins, but it is yet more to pardon three or four thousand sins: Who can conceive of that love! but to forgive many million of faults; O what love is here! And so he deals with these whom he loves; He multiplies to pardon; yea, more, he heals all your diseases. O poor sinner, have you not many plagues, many diseases; yea, more than you are aware of? If you knew the plagues of your own heart, you will be crying out, O the plague of my mind, the plague of my will, the plague of my affections! O my atheism, unbelief, hardness, blindness! etc. O what innumerable evils compass me about, say you! O what horrible evils! yea, why do I call them evils, they are so many devils within me; yea, but for as many as they are, He healeth all thy diseases; and for as grievous as they are, He supplies all your wants: such also is his bountiful love, My God shall supply all your wants. Are you not made up of wants? Do you not want light, life, love, faith, repentance, joy, assurance, peace, communion with God? Yea, but sometimes even on earth he supplies all wants, so as to make you say, I have enough. O does not this bountiful love, call for love?

(4.) Consider the channel in which this love runs: Christ is the means of the communication of the love of God; you have the love of God the Father, in the Son, by the Holy Ghost: Christ is the channel. Love in the Father is like the honey flower; it must be in the comb, before it be for our use: Christ must extract and prepare this honey for us. And, O how sweet is that love, that runs through such a glorious channel!

In a word, consider the excellency of the grace of love. Love to God is the fulfilling of the law; all that is required is love: love is the great qualification of the saints above: the more love you have, the more like heaven you will be; and the more love, the more meetness for heaven: heaven would be a burden, and a weariness to you without love: if you had not love, you would throw yourself out of heaven into hell. If you have love, you will find it make every duty pleasant; the obedience of love is sweet obedience. Yea, love will make all your crosses to be comforts: where there is little or no love, the cross is insupportable; the man cries, O a bitter cross! O the gall and wormwood! yea, but love would be like the tree cast into the waters of Marah, to make them become sweet. If you have much love, it will make you say of affliction,

O this is the cup that my kind Father hath put in my hand! And shall I not drink it? Welcome whatever he sends.

O love the Lord, ye his saints, and manifest your love by your obedience: will you render him hatred for love? O let his love to you warm your heart with love to him; and in order thereto,

1. O do not doubt of or question his love to you; beware of renouncing that which engages you to love him: it is the devil's great aim to have you mistrusting God's love, that so you may not love God again.

2. Attend all his love visits, and thankfully receive them; think not little of his ordinary visits, when in any measure he manifests his love through the lattices of ordinances; Despise not the day of small things; and especially, O make much of his extraordinary love-visits, when he mounts you up at any time into the chariot paved with love!

3. Take heed of abusing his love: beware of spotting your garments with the flesh, after God has spread his skirt over you. To sin against love is a dreadfully aggravated sin. It was a sad blot upon Solomon, that his heart was turned from the Lord, After that the Lord God of Israel "had appeared unto him twice," 1 Kings xi. 9.

4. Beware of confidence in the flesh, and expecting that your love should influence God to do you good; the love of Christ must constrain you; think not that your duties and obedience should constrain him: O beware of inverting the gospel at this rate, and turning it upside down! If his love excite you to love and obedience, then your love and obedience does not excite him to love you. We might fear every day, that the heart of God would be turned to hate us, if our hopes of abiding in his favour were built upon our best love and obedience.

I would send away the haters of God with a word of terror. Know that if you cannot be persuaded to the love of God, if his love does not break you in time, his vengeance will break you to eternity: "The enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs; they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away." If you love not Christ, know what the apostle says, If a man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema. I will tell you what is sad, the day is coming, wherein you shall say to the rocks and mountains, "fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" You will lie forever under the fiery mountain of divine vengeance. I will tell you what is yet sadder, and you will think strange what

that can be: in short it is sad, that before this day eight days, all that I am saying will be forgotten; yea, before the morrow at this time, the impression of all will be gone.

I would send away the lovers of Christ, the lovers of God with a word of comfort. You love God and God loves you, and God's love to you is ground of comfort.—Comfort in what you have; what you have in possession, you have it with a blessing; what you have in expectation in the promise, is in love; and therefore the promise is free, because of God's love in it; the promise is firm, because of his love in it.—Comfort in what you want; since you have God's love you shall not want.—Comfort in what you fear; You need fear no evil.—Comfort in what you do; All your services will be accepted; all your sins pardoned, though he should take vengeance on your inventions.—Comfort in what you suffer; you shall be sustained and supported: and though you may suffer the loss of gifts, goods, liberty, life, yet you cannot lose God, Christ, the Spirit, grace, heaven, or God's everlasting love.—O go away with the comfortable sense of his distinguishing love!

In a word, Are you lovers of God? O go away rejoicing in it, that He first loved you; he is not behind hand with you; He loved you before you loved him. You were elected by the grace of God from eternity; you were redeemed by the blood of Christ, you are certainly effectually called; For they that love him "are the called according to his purpose;" and the day comes, when you shall enjoy the object of your love in a full manner. If you be true lovers of Christ, I certify you, the time is coming, when you shall see Christ as he is, and be for ever with the Lord, and enjoy him for evermore; and love without decay, and love without wearying shall be your everlasting exercise: you shall rejoice in an immediate enjoyment of him. You were upon his heart from eternity; you are upon his heart this day in heaven, for you his eternal Son came to the world; for you he lived, for you he died; your love to Christ is a reflex of his and his Father's love to you; and there is not a true lover of Christ here, but hath as good ground to say as ever Paul had, He loved me, and gave himself for me. Your love to him is an infallible pledge of his ancient love to you, a pledge of his present love to you, and a pledge of the future enjoyment of him. O let your heart, and life, and tongue, and all that is within you, and about you, vent love to him, and say, "WE LOVE HIM, BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US!"

Sacramental Sermon, June, 1723.

SERMON IV.

Gospel Humiliation,

GROUNDLED ON FAITH'S VIEW OF DIVINE
PACIFICATION.

FAST DAY SERMON.

“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 the Lord God.”

EZEKIEL xvi. 63.

AFTER great convictions of sin, and great denunciations of judgments against Israel, in the preceding part of the chapter, the Lord here, in the close, remembers mercy in the midst of wrath, and ends all his sad and heavy words with a sweet nevertheless, ver. 60, And, indeed, mercy must begin on God's side: “Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant.” And what will be the effect of this, we see in ver. 61. “Then shalt thou remember thy ways, and be ashamed.” It is worthy our observation, that when God says, “I will remember my covenant,” then he adds, “Thou shalt remember thy ways.” Hence it is evident, that never a good thought, never a penitent thought would have come into our hearts, had not some thoughts of peace and good will come into God's heart. When he remembers his covenant of mercy for us, so as not to remember our sins against us, then we remember our sins, against ourselves with shame.

And in the latter part of the verse he adds, “When thou shalt receive thy sisters, thine elder and thy younger:” that is, when the Gentile nations, some of them greater than thou art, and some lesser, both ancient and modern, shall be received into church-communion, and owned as members of the church of God; “And I will give them unto thee for daughters:” they shall be my gift unto thee as daughters; they shall be nursed up and educated by that gospel, that word of the Lord that shall come forth from

Zion, from the Jews; insomuch, that Jerusalem below may, in some sense, be called the mother; and "Jerusalem which is above is free," shall be acknowledged to be "the mother of us all," Gal. iv. 26. They shall be thy "daughters, but not by thy covenant;" that is, thy covenant of duties, or which thou turnedst to a covenant of works: not by that old covenant, which was violated; but by that covenant, which promised to write the law in the heart, and to put the fear of God into the inward part. Now, when thou shalt receive them, and when Jews and Gentiles shall be united in Christ, the covenant-head, Thou shalt be ashamed of thine own evil ways. Thou shalt blush to look a Gentile in the face, remembering how much worse than the Gentiles thou wast in the day of thy apostacy.

He farther signifies his gracious purpose, ver. 62. "I will establish my covenant with thee." He had before said, "I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant," ver. 60. This covenant is God's covenant: it is of his making with his Son Jesus Christ; I have made a covenant with my Chosen: and it is established in him unto us; and therefore may be said to be established with us. As if he had said, As I will establish it with him, unto thee; so I will re-establish it in him, with thee. And then the effect of that re-establishment of it shall be, "Thou shalt know that I am the Lord;" that I am JEHOVAH, a God of power, and faithful to my promise. It had often been said in wrath, You shall know that I am the Lord; you shall know it to your cost: but here it is said in mercy, Thou shalt know that I am the Lord; you shall know it to your comfort. And it is one of the most precious promises of the covenant, They shall all know the Lord: by a justifying knowledge; so as to be delivered from the guilt of sin, and from the punishment threatened in the law: by a sanctifying knowledge; so as to be delivered from the rule of sin, and to be fitted for gospel-service and obedience: by an evangelical knowledge; a knowledge of God in Christ, which is the beginning of eternal life; "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent:" and likewise by a humbling knowledge; and here is the humbling effect of it described in the words of the text, "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."

Here you may observe both the nature of true HUMILIATION, and the ground of it.

1. The nature and properties of true humiliation, Thou shalt remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame.

2. The ground and spring of it, "When I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done:" when thou shalt so know the Lord, as to view him to be a reconciled God in Christ. He had before said, I will remember my covenant; and when he puts them in mind of the covenant, then they mind their sin and misery, their evil ways, and are ashamed. And here, when the covenant is further opened, the humiliation is further enlarged also. Why, the clearer evidence that persons have of God's being reconciled to them, the more grieved and ashamed will they be for offending of him.

I shall farther explain the words, in discoursing upon the following doctrine.

OBSERV. True gospel-humiliation is rooted in the believing knowledge and view of divine reconciliation: or, then is a soul truly humbled when it apprehends God as truly pacified, and well-pleased in Christ Jesus.

To this purpose are these and the like words of scripture, They "shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days." "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand;" the kingdom of grace, reigning through the righteousness of Jesus, declaring God to be pacified in him, it is at hand, it is proclaimed in your ears. Repent, and in order to this, believe the gospel; the gospel of reconciliation. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord." Why? "He will have mercy;" "He will abundantly pardon."

The method we would lay down, for prosecuting this observation, as the Lord shall be pleased to assist, shall be the following.

I. We would speak a little of this humiliation.

II. Of this reconciliation; or, of God's being pacified.

III. Of the connection between them; or, the influence which the view and knowledge of God's being pacified hath upon this humiliation.

IV. Make some application of the whole.

I. We will touch a little at that humiliation here before us. And, O Sirs, since we are here met about humiliation-work, let us look upon it as the subject-matter of a divine promise, "Thou shalt know that I am the Lord: that thou mayest remember, and be confounded." If you had this view, then you would have the more

hope of coming speed, and meeting with success. This view may help you to know that you are not come to do some great work of yourself, as if God were still standing upon terms with you, according to the old covenant of works; but that you are come to get all the humbling and healing grace that you need, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace, which is a giving covenant, etc.

But now I shall mention four ingredients of this humiliation that is here promised, and that we are to look for, and pray for, to be brought forth out of the promise, namely, remembrance, confusion, shame, and silence.

1. The first ingredient is remembrance; "That thou mayest REMEMBER." The very first beginning of true repentance is, God's making a man thoughtful; I thought upon my ways, and turned my feet to thy testimonies. Hence we are called to consider our ways. We forget God, and forget our sins against him; but whenever God begins the good work, he makes the man to remember and call to mind his sins: as the prodigal, when he came to himself, considered matters. This remembrance, I think, includes illumination and conviction. The first part of the physic that God gives, is the eye-salve that they may see; for, until their eyes be opened, they will not turn from darkness to light, Acts xxvi. 18. The first creature that ever God made in the primitive creation was light; and the first thing in the new creation is spiritual light. The sinner, before repentance, is like a man sleeping in a dark pit, in the midst of a great many vipers, asps, and serpents, and venomous beasts: while he lies in the dark pit, they neither hurt him, nor is he afraid of them himself; but whenever a ray of light comes in at hole or window, presently they fall upon him, and sting and torment him, and he sees himself to be surrounded with them. So here, before repentance, the sinner sleeps in the darkness of ignorance, atheism, error, and unbelief; but whenever a beam of spiritual light breaks in upon the mind and conscience, by an effectual conviction and illumination, then sin revives, and the sinner finds himself encompassed, as it were, with living serpents, tainted and corrupted with the poison of asps, destroyed and defiled with all the trash of hell in his heart.

It is not a bare speculation, or notion of our sinful ways, that is imported here. We many times, by a bare notion of our sins and mercies, write them, as it were, upon the waters: they are no sooner thought, or spoke of, but they are forgot again; but it is a feeling remembrance, and an abiding remembrance: such as the psalmist had, when he said, My sin is ever before me: they haunt me like

a ghost. The ghost of Uriah is still before me, might he say; the thoughts of my murder and adultery never go out of my mind. Yea, it is a remembrance of sin, as against God; "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight," Psal. li. 4. This is the remembrance here also spoken of; "Thou shalt know that I am the Lord:" and so thou shalt remember thine evil ways, "and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame." It is a remembrance of some sin or other, so as to bring in the remembrance of the rest, like that of the woman of Samaria, when Christ told her of her wickedness, she got, as in a map, a view of all that ever she did. Yea, it leads back to the fountain of sin in the nature; "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me," Psal. li. 5.

2. Confusion is another ingredient of the humiliation here mentioned; That thou mayest remember, and be CONFOUNDED. It is true, this confusion may be thought to be the same with the shame afterwards mentioned; but, I think, they may be viewed as distinct. There is a confusion of heart, and a confusion of face. The last of these I take to be the same with shame: but the former, namely, confusion of heart, I think seems, especially here, to be intended; because it is joined with heart-remembrance of sin: Thou shalt remember, and be confounded; q. d. Thou shalt have a heart-confounding remembrance of thy sin. And this confusion of heart, I think, takes in heart-contrition, or some degree of brokenness; heart-compunction, whereby the heart is pricked and pierced; heart-sorrow and anguish, and most of these ingredients of repentance and godly sorrow mentioned, 2 Cor. vii. 11. "For behold, this self-same thing, that you sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge!" etc. Yea, it seems to import the heart's being struck with astonishment at its own sinfulness, and with amazement at its own madness; like a man plunged into the deep, his senses are instantly confounded. O! when a man's thoughts are, by a spiritual remembrance, plunged into the depth of sin and wickedness, that he sees into his heart and ways, how he is confounded, so as he knows not what to think! His sins are beyond his understanding; Who can understand his errors? His very heart-sins do overflow his thoughts, and surpass his knowledge; "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked who can know it?" Jer. xvii. 9. The man is swallowed up in this great deep. Thou shalt "remember, and be confounded."

3. The next ingredient is shame, such as is mentioned here, and Ezra ix. 6. "O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens." The poor penitent Publican is the reverse of the proud Pharisee; he is ashamed to look up to heaven. Sin brings shame one way or another; but is best when it brings in a holy shame before God. One may be ashamed of sin, as it brings him to open ignominy before men; but the truly humbled soul is ashamed of sin before God, and that on many accounts.—Sin makes him guilty. Adam never blushed for shame, until he was guilty of eating the forbidden fruit, and perceived himself naked. Sin makes him ungrateful; and so he is ashamed that he hath requited evil for good: Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish and unwise? He is ashamed, because sin makes him naked: he sees he is naked, as Adam and Eve saw themselves to be after they had eaten the forbidden fruit. Sin divests us of our garment of righteousness and holiness; and hence the gospel offers the righteousness of Christ, as white raiment, that the shame of our nakedness may not appear, Rev. iii. 18. The humbled soul sees itself naked, and therefore is ashamed.—Sin makes him a beast; and therefore he is ashamed: So foolish was I, and ignorant, I was as a beast before thee. The dog returning to his vomit, and the swine to his wallowing in the mire, is not so loathsome as the soul is to itself, when under a view of sin: Truth, Lord, I am a dog.—Sin makes him a fool; and therefore he is ashamed. He views himself as a fool and a madman, that hath been mad upon idols; and is not this ground of shame?—Sin makes him a slave; and that is matter of shame. Alas! that I should have been a slave to Satan, and a captive to divers lusts!—Yea, sin makes him a devil; and he sees himself to be an incarnate devil; and therefore blushes that he should be reckoned even among the children of men, let be the children of God; and how can he look up to God while he sees his nature to be not only earthly, but hellish, not only sensual, but devilish, James iii. 15. He sees his sin to be not only greater than the sin of heathens, who never had the gospel, but greater than the sin of devils. They never sinned against the blood of Christ, as I have done.—In a word, he is ashamed because his sin brought shame and disgrace to the eternal Son of God, the God of glory, who, as he endured the cross, and despised the shame; so our sin brought him to it; yea, our continued sin put him to open shame, Heb. vi. 6. Ah! the shame that the penitent rubs upon himself for sin! I read of

Diodoros, a logician, that he fell down dead for shame that he could not resolve an argument that was propounded to him. Oh! if we were apprehensive of the horridness of our sin, how might we blush for shame before God!

4. The next ingredient is silence; "And never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame." This holy silence before God, imports a not opening the mouth in opposition to God; not daring to quarrel with his dispensations, but owning that God only hath a right to speak against us; and that he will be justified when he speaks, and clear when he judgeth, Psal. li. 4.—It imports a not opening his mouth in complaint of him, or reflections on him, whatever be his dispensations: Why should a living man complain? a man for the punishment of his iniquity?—It imports a silent submission to the will of God, saying with the psalmist, "I was dumb," I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it, Psal. xxxix. 2.—It imports a silent taking with the charge of sin and guilt, justifying God and condemning ourselves; "That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God," Rom. iii. 19.—It imports a conviction of former pride, in opening of the mouth against God: a not opening it any more says, that this was the former practice. Men naturally justify and vindicate themselves by covering themselves with the fig-leaves of some silly excuse. Hence errors in principle, are called but a free way of thinking; errors in practice, are denominated freedom of action; drunkenness, is termed but good-fellowship; swearing, declared but a piece of bravery; licentiousness, looked upon to be but a trick of youth; malice and revenge, styled but just resentment: thus the mouth of the whole world is open against God in the justification of sin; but when once humiliation takes place, the mouth is shut.—Finally, it imports a constant, habitual, self-condemnation, and silent taking with sin all the days of our life: for so the word runs, Thou shalt never, never open thy mouth any more. The humbled soul's constant principle and habitual practice is, never to open its mouth, but still to be silent before God.

II. The second thing proposed was, To speak of that which is the spring and ground of this humiliation; or, when it is that a sinner is brought to it; namely, when God is pacified toward him for all that he hath done; or, when he is at peace with him. Now, I shall condescend upon six properties of this peace which are also included in the text.

1. It is a well-grounded peace; peace upon the ground of an atonement; for so the word pacified seems plainly to import: I am

pacified and fully appeased with the blood of the covenant that I have established unto thee in Christ. I have found a ransom; I have set forth Christ "to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Rom. iii. 25, 26. He hath "made peace through the blood of his cross." Col. i. 20. The Lord is well-pleased for his righteousness' sake, who gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour unto God. Hence,

2. It is a divine peace; I am pacified, saith the LORD GOD. It is a peace of God's contrivance, a peace of God's revealing, a peace of God's making; it is a peace that God glories in; I am pacified. O good news, to hear of a pacified God.

3. It is a present peace; I AM pacified; though I was offended, yet now I am pacified. I was displeased by sin, but I am well-pleased in Christ. I am pacified; for the sacrifice is offered. It is true, this was said in our text before ever Christ died, and before he appeared in our nature: but Christ having engaged to do it, it was as good as done; and therefore he then said, I am pacified: and therefore much more may we believe that now God is saying, "I am pacified."

4. It is a particular peace; "I am pacified toward THEE." It is true, it is a general peace that is published through Christ, according to the song of the angels, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward MEN;" but particularly published in Zion, even to all sinners of Zion, and to every sinner in particular who hears the gospel. If you know the joyful sound, you may know it is God, saying, I am pacified toward THEE; and I have given a commission to all my ambassadors to preach the gospel of peace to THEE; "Go preach the gospel to every creature," to every sinner of mankind, declaring that I am pacified toward HIM. "To YOU is the word of this salvation sent." To thee, man; to thee, woman; to every individual, whether young or old. Alas! what think you of your sinning against this God, who says, "I am pacified toward thee?" Will not this break your heart for your enmity, when he is expressing such love to you, saying I am pacified toward thee?

5. It is a wonderful and surprising peace, with a non obstante; NOTWITHSTANDING "all that thou hast done;" or, FOR all that thou hast done. "Thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou

couldst." Jer. iii. 5. Thou mayest remember, but I am not to remember it: Thy sins and thine iniquities will I remember no more. God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them; but imputing the righteousness of Christ unto them. I have got payment for all that thou hast done; therefore, I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done. Not one of thy sins, greater or less, but are answered for. The price of redemption is paid to the full.

6. It is a proclaimed peace, a spoken of and published peace; and who speaks it? It is said, The Lord will SPEAK peace to his people: and here it is a peace and reconciliation spoken with a Thus saith the Lord God; "When I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, SAITH THE LORD GOD." Thus SAITH THE LORD GOD to thee, "For all that thou hast done," and NOTWITHSTANDING all that thou hast done, "I am pacified toward thee."

Here is a sure footing and firm ground for thy faith; it is the word gone out of the mouth of the Lord; the God that cannot repent, that cannot revoke his word, and that can never unsay what he hath said: "The word of the Lord endureth for ever;" and upon this word thou mayest build thy faith, confidence and hope. O sinner, it is the word of that JEHOVAH, who can give a being to what he says; it is a word of pardon and peace, for thee, guilty sinner. O! wilt thou accept of the free indemnity proclaimed by the great God over the red-cross of the blood of Christ, and over the market-cross of this everlasting gospel?

III. The third head was, To shew the influence that this hath upon the former; or, the influence that the view and knowledge of this peace and reconciliation, through Christ, proclaimed to the sinner, hath upon the sinner's humiliation: for, the connexion between the two is evident from the particle WHEN, "That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, WHEN I am pacified;" or, when thou shalt so far know the Lord, as in the verse preceding, as to see and apprehend that "I am pacified toward thee, for all that thou hast done." This is the main-spring of true repentance and humiliation. Hence, in our Lesser Catechism, repentance, or returning from sin to God, with grief and hatred of sin, is said to proceed from a true sense of sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ. Now, if thou art sensible that thou art truly a sinner, then, O listen to the news of mercy in God through Christ; and the apprehension thereof will tend to humble thee: and here is mercy proclaimed, "I am pacified toward thee."

Now, the influence that the knowledge and view of God's being pacified in Christ hath upon gospel humiliation, may be opened in these following particulars.

1. The gospel-news of God's being pacified in Christ, is the vehicle of the Spirit of God; "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" Gal. iii. 2. The gospel is the ministration of the Spirit. If by the hearing of the gospel of peace and reconciliation the Spirit comes, then gospel humiliation must come that way; for, he is the Spirit of grace and supplication, repentance and humiliation.

2. It is by the view of God's being pacified that faith comes; "Faith cometh by hearing," Rom. x. 17. Faith comes by hearing these good news; and then it purifies the heart, and works by love. Who ever had faith, but by the revelation of the grace and mercy of God in Christ? And who ever had this faith of mercy, but was melted and humbled thereby?

3. It is by this view of God's being pacified that hope is begotten; "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope," 1 Pet. i. 3; the hope of life, the hope of glory: and then he who hath that hope, purifieth himself; and the more of his purification, the more is the soul humbled and ashamed for sin.

4. It is by the view of God's being pacified in Christ that life comes into the soul: and hence the gospel of peace is called the ministration of life, 2 Cor. iii. 7, in opposition to the law that is the ministration of death. Hence let a man preach the law as a covenant of life upon doing, promising one heaven if he do so and so: or let him preach it as a covenant of death, for not doing, and so threaten hell and damnation with all the art and rhetoric of the world; yet never shall he be able to raise one soul to a lively hope; or bring one soul from death to life by it. No; it is impossible. It may preach them dead, but never alive. It is the news and view of God's being pacified, that quickens the soul; and then it remembers, and is confounded and ashamed of its sins.

5. It is the view of God's being pacified, or the revelation of the grace of God in Christ, that brings in liberty, true liberty; "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," 2 Cor. iii. 17. Every legalist is in chains and fetters; but so much of the knowledge of peace with God, as any have, so much liberty and freedom; freedom from soul fetters; freedom of heart to mourn for sin, and turn from it: O! does mercy vent to the like of me? Then the bonds are loosed, and the heart dissolved.

6. The view of God's being pacified begets love; for his love kindles ours, and so kills the enmity; "We love him, because he first loved us," 1 John iv. 19. The great God, manifesting his great love to the hard-hearted sinner, makes his heart to break; and so the love of God in Christ constrains it, and makes it ashamed of its enmity, and confounded for its rebellion against such bowels of mercy.

7. The view of God's being pacified brings in joy and health to the soul; and then, the joy of the Lord being our strength, we are able, with tears of joy, to fall down before the Lord our Maker: and having the conscience healed by the pacifying blood of Christ, then the soul is ready to say, Oh! let me sin no more; let me never open my mouth any more against God.

8. The view of God's being pacified, or the revelation of the grace of God reigning through the righteousness of Christ, is the channel of the power of God; "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation;" "for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith." Rom. i. 16. 17. And this being the channel of divine power, it is this power of God that brings down the pride of the heart, and humbles the soul under the mighty hand of God, 2. Cor. x. 4, 5. Thus God's being pacified in Christ hath a moral and a physical influence upon humiliation: a moral and argumentative influence: Oh! shall I not be ashamed and confounded for my ingratitude against such love and grace manifested towards me? And also, a physical, powerful, and operative influence; for thus the Lord draws the soul with cords of love, or melts down the hard and icy heart with the fire of his infinite love.—So much for this head, viz. the influence that a view of God's being pacified, through Christ, hath upon the sinner's humiliation.

IV. The fourth thing proposed, was the application. It is so, as has been said, that true gospel-humiliation is rooted in the believing knowledge of divine reconciliation, hence see,

1. What are the grounds of God's controversy, and of his being angry with the visible church, and of his not being pacified toward them. I mention these two from the text and context here.

(1.) When that church or land does not know that the Lord is God: when they are ignorant of him, and of his being Lord; Lord of all in general, and Lord of his church in a special way: when he is not owned and acknowledged as Lord of the vineyard, but is denied in his Sovereignty and Supremacy over his church, and

affronted in his Headship; hence it is said, My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. When Christ is affronted openly in his supreme Deity, and in his supreme Headship; this cannot but be a great ground of controversy.

(2 .) When that church or people do not believe in him, as a God pacified and reconciled in Christ; do not take him up, as he is revealed in his word: believe not that he is pacified in Christ, but go about to pacify him themselves, and establish a righteousness of their own; contriving some other way of pacifying God than God hath revealed: thinking to please God by their moral virtues and legal performances; and so going off from the gospel.

2. Hence see what are the fruits and evidences of God's anger and controversy with a church or land, and of his not being pacified; and, consequently, of their want of knowledge of the Lord as a pacified God in Christ.

(1 .) When they are not brought to remembrance of their sin: for, when God is pacified, then they remember. Here is an evidence of God's continued anger with a church; when they do not remember their sin; are not remembering their apostacy; are not remembering that they and their fathers have sinned, and will not remember the same; will not be put in remembrance; will not remember their covenant-breaking and perjury; will not remember the dishonours they have done to God. When God remembers mercy to a people, then they remember their sin. When he forgets their sins, then they remember them: But, when they forget their sins, God remembers them.

(2 .) When they are not brought to confusion of heart for their sin; when it is not a remembering so as to be confounded. If they barely remember, without confusion, it is as good as no remembering: when they remember, and think nothing of their sin; when they remember their sin, and yet do not remember against whom they have sinned; nor remember the heinousness of their sin, nor the aggravations thereof, nor the danger thereof, and the wrath their sins deserve, so as to be touched to the heart, and affected before God, or confounded.

(3 .) When they are not brought to shame or confusion of face, as well as confusion of heart: when, instead of remembering their sin with shame, they sin without shame, are not ashamed of their sin; but declare their sin as Sodom, and are bold in their sinning; hardening their face against shame and blushing. When people are become shameless in their sinning, shameless in their apostacy, shameless in their defection, shameless notwithstanding all their cor-

ruptions; yea, shameless in going on in their sin notwithstanding all the convictions offered.

(4.) When they are not brought to silence, so as not to open their mouth against God, and in their own vindication: when they open their mouth, and say, they are innocent, then the controversy remains; "Thou sayest, Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn from me. Behold, I will plead with thee, because thou sayest, I have not sinned." Jer. ii. 35: when they stand up in their own vindication with open mouth; instead of opening their mouth in confessing of their sin, and in justifying of the Lord: when they will not openly and judicially confess their sin: when they do not confess freely, nor confess fully, nor confess nationally, or as a church, that they have sinned; but rather open their mouth in justifying themselves, and condemning these that aim and endeavour at confessing or witnessing against their sin.

3. Is it so, that a soul is then truly humbled, when it apprehends God as truly pacified, and well pleased in Christ Jesus? Hence see then, the miserable case of secure sinners, that know not God in Christ. They do not remember their sin against God. They sin without shame; and they have their mouth open against God, vindicating themselves, and justifying themselves. They glory in their shame; they see not their sinfulness.

4. Hence see what is the cause of so little humiliation. Because there is so little faith of the gospel of peace: unbelief, in not knowing and remembering that God is a pacified God in Christ, is the main cause of it; therefore they do not remember their sin. They do not believe that God is at peace with them; therefore they are at war with God. Perhaps they think and fancy he is at peace with them; but if they had the faith of it, it is impossible they could be at peace with sin.

5. Hence see the matchlessness of the grace and mercy of God, that he should proclaim peace with rebels, and declare himself pacified towards them, for all that they have done: and, that he should send forth ambassadors, to publish peace in his name, and commit to them the word of reconciliation, to pray you in his name to be reconciled to God, because he hath made Christ to be sin for us, a sacrifice for us, through which he is pacified.

6. Hence see the necessity of preaching the gospel of peace; otherwise no true repentance, no gospel humiliation. People will never remember their sins, and be ashamed for them, until they hear, and know, that God is pacified toward them, for all that they have done. Gospel doctrine is a heart-humbling and heart-soften-

ing doctrine: but, such is the hardening nature of legal doctrine, that, let a man preach life to the doer of the law, and death to the transgressor of it never so much, it will only tend to harden the man's heart against God; and to foster his rebellion and rage against God; for, the law worketh wrath. Never will a sinner remember his sins, and blush or be ashamed, until he understand that God insists not upon the doing covenant with him, or upon the threatening covenant, denouncing wrath from Sinai: but, when God declares himself pacified, and when the sinner hears the doctrine of free remission, pardon to guilty sinners, and peace to rebel sinners; then will he remember his sins, and be ashamed: what! is there mercy, peace, and pardon for me! Then the soul melts.

7. Hence see what is the leading sin of the day and generation wherein we live. * * *

8. Hence see an evidence of true gospel-humiliation. When is a person truly humbled for sin? Even when the mercy of God melts him, when the love of God in Christ shames him for his enmity: when the view of God's being at peace, makes him at war with himself; when in view of God's grace, he is confounded at his own ingratitude: when he begins to fear the Lord and his goodness; when he loves much, because much is forgiven him: when the grace of God, that appears to him, teaches him to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts; when the news of God's being pacified toward him, for all that he hath done, melts him more than all the flames of Sinai could; when his mouth is stopt from speaking ill against God, because God's mouth is open in speaking peace to him; when the view of peace and pardon, and the sense of God's kindness to him, confounds him for his unkindness to God.

9. Hence see what is the proper work of a humiliation-day, namely, to remember your sin, and be ashamed. O that Scotland would remember their sin; that king and parliament would remember their sin; ministers and judicatories would remember their sin, and be ashamed. Let every one of us remember our sin, and all that we have done. Remember the sin of your heart and nature; the sin of your youth, and follies of your non-age: remember the sin of your riper age: remember the sin that hath accompanied your calling; ye that inordinately desire to be rich, how you lie, and cheat, and swear, and break the Sabbath: remember the sin of your holy things, of your reading, praying, hearing, communicating: remember the sins of omission and com-

mission you are guilty of: remember, and be confounded; remember, and be ashamed, and be silent, and never open your mouth, because of your shame.

10. Hence see, how, and in what way, you may come to this right remembrance and due humiliation for sins. Why, the great and leading duty, in order to this humiliation, is a look to a pacified God. If you would be brought to holy shame and confusion of face for your sin; then, O know and believe that God is pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done; that there is mercy in God toward thee.

QUEST. How shall I know that God is pacified toward me? For I thought rather to have heard that God was angry at me for my sin; since he is angry with the wicked every day, and hath revealed his wrath against sinners.

ANSW. Yea, in the law his wrath is revealed; "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them;" and the law-threatening shall be executed upon you, if gospel-grace be not received: and, as you may know the wrath of God is what you are liable to; because it is revealed in the law; so, you may know the mercy of God is what you may obtain, because it is revealed in the gospel; and it is to you that this mercy is given in the gospel-dispensation. To you the door of hope is open. God hath commanded us to go and "preach the gospel to every creature;" and what is this gospel of peace? Even that God is pacified in Christ towards thee, for all that thou hast done.

OBJECT. But God hath no purpose or design of mercy towards ALL; and therefore, how can I apply this gospel-offer to myself?

ANSW. God hath not made his secret purpose the rule of thy faith, but his word: and you may and shall know his merciful purpose, if once you take his word, and believe his word, saying, "I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done."

"But," say you, "I am a monster of sin; I am an old sinner, a hardened and stout-hearted sinner." Well, but hear his word, saying, in Christ, "I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done." Alas! but I have done evil as I could. Nay, but says he, "I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done."

OBJECT. "Oh! but I have done dishonour to God; I have done affronts to Christ; I have done despite to the Spirit; I have done injury to my neighbour; and I have done many villanies that you know nothing of." Well, but what of all that? Says God,

Behold, "I am pacified" in Christ; and "I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God."

"Alas!" say you, "but I have done more wickedness than ever any sinner before me did; and if you knew what I have done, you would neither think nor say that there is peace in God's mind toward me."

ANSW. Why, little matter what I think or say; but, O hear what God says; he is saying, "I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done:" you cannot think it; but my thoughts are not your thoughts; "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

"Why, Sir," say you, "if that be the case, that God is, in Christ, pacified toward me, for all that I have done, and thought, and spoken against him; this is such astonishing doctrine, and such astonishing grace in God, manifested toward me, that I am confounded at the thoughts of this marvelous grace; and I am confounded at the thoughts of my woful wickedness against such a gracious God." Are you so? Confounded may you be, in God's great name, and ashamed to the dust! This is the great thing that God would have you brought to, by making known his covenant of grace to you, even "That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame," for, thus "saith the LORD GOD," "I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done."

SERMON V.

Redemption by Christ,

SHEWN TO BE OF GOD AS THE FIRST CAUSE,
AND TO GOD AS THE LAST END.

(SACRAMENTAL SERMON.)

*“Who of God is made unto us redemption.” “For thou wast slain,
and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.”*

1 COR. i. 30, COMPARED WITH REV. v. 9.

THE Lord's Supper is called the Eucharist, which signifies thanksgiving. And how can we express our thanksgiving, this day, more fitly, when called to commemorate our Redeemer's dying love, than by joining issue with the singers of the new song in this text, saying, “Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood?” * * *

How we are to improve Christ for redemption; or as made of God unto us redemption? The answer we offer is, That we are to improve Christ for redemption, by viewing in him to what end, and by what means we are to be redeemed by him. Both these are here. 1. To what end are we redeemed? We are redeemed to God. 2. By what means? By the blood of Christ: “Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood!”

In which words you may observe these five particulars following.

1. The great privilege here spoken of, namely, redemption. It is a great word; a larger word by far than creation. Devils were created, wicked men were created, but a select number are redeemed. There is a fundamental redemption, which was performed by Christ upon the cross, where he suffered the wrath of God, the pains of hell: There is an actual redemption, when his people reap the benefits of that fundamental one. It is a redemption, first by impetration, or purchase, and then by application; first by price, and then by power.

2. The objects of this redemption, or persons redeemed, us; Thou “hast redeemed us.” Here it may be asked, Who will

claim, who do claim, and who may claim this privilege, saying, Thou "hast redeemed us?"—As to the question, Who will claim it? Why, all the elect, in due time, will claim it: some benefits of Christ's death accrue to the world; but the elect will be the redeemed ones, and are so. Election, redemption, regeneration, and salvation are of equal extent.—As to that question, Who do claim it? Why, all believers, or all the elect, that are brought to lay hold on Christ by faith; they say upon the matter, Thou hast redeemed us; and we believe, that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved.—As to the question, Who may claim it, upon the warrant of the word, shewing how that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures, and upon the warrant of the gospel call? To this we reply, All sinners, to whom the gospel comes; they are warranted to come to Christ by faith, saying, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood;" for this is the record they are to receive, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. The ground of this faith is no secret thing; but the revealed word.

3. The author of this redemption, Christ: THOU wast slain: the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the God-man, the root and offspring of David. The work is the effect of two natures in one Christ concurring; not God alone, nor man alone, but God-man: "Thou hast redeemed us."

4. The end and effect to which they are redeemed: Thou hast redeemed us TO GOD; to be his sons, his servants, his friends, and favourites; his crown and glory; to enjoy him, to glorify him, to be his peculiar treasure.

5. The means of it; Thou wast SLAIN, and it is by thy blood. Why! what is the necessity? Was it not enough for God to become a man, a creature, to be hungry, and weary, and reproached? No, says God; I will never be satisfied for the sins of the human race, nor appeased, till I see my Son lying a sacrifice, bleeding at my feet; It pleased the Lord to bruise him; without shedding of blood there shall be no remission. Blood I will have for an atonement. Blood is here taken for the whole sufferings of Christ, from the moment of his conception, from his miserable entry into the world, until he breathed his last; till he cried, "It is finished;" the whole is included: "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."

The former text and this compared, set before us the whole business of our redemption, from the beginning to the end of it: and especially,

1. The original cause and spring of our redemption through Christ, it is of God; "Who of God is made unto us redemption."

2. The meritorious cause or means of it, viz. the death and blood of Christ; "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."

3. The final cause, issue, and end of it, namely, to God, the fountain whence it came; Thou hast redeemed us to God. It is of God that we are redeemed in Christ, and to God that we are redeemed; OF GOD he is made unto us redemption, and he was slain, and hast redeemed us TO GOD by his blood.

From the words, as they stand connected, and as we have now explained them, we lay down this one doctrinal proposition.

OBSERV.—That the redemption we have by the blood of Christ, being of God as the first cause, is also to God as the last end.

As it is said, Rom. xi. 36. "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen;" so especially all things relating to our redemption are OF him as the beginning, and TO him as the last end. Our redemption by Christ, is of God, and our redemption by Christ is to God. Thus it is said, 1 Pet. iii. 18. "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."

The method we would here lay down for illustrating this doctrinal observation, through divine assistance, shall be the following.

I. To offer some propositions concerning this redemption.

II. To show how it is OF God as the first cause.

III. How it is TO God as the last end.

IV. Make some application of the subject.

I. The first thing proposed was to lay down some propositions concerning this redemption. We shall only offer the four following.

Propos. 1. That till we partake of this redemption we are in bondage and captivity.

1. We are in bondage to the power of sin, and to the punishment thereof; To the power of sin; and hence sins are called chains, and fetters, and bonds; and it is called the law of sin and death: To the punishment of sin; and hence the sinner's heart is full of fear naturally: why, the Philistines are upon us; yea, the devil is upon us; nay, the wrath of God is upon us, and his favour is departed from us; We are condemned already. Ah! how miserable is the condition of every man by nature! Whatever be

his outward privileges, he is the slave of Satan. This spiritual slavery is indeed indiscernible; many, as Leviathan, sport themselves in the waters of sinful pleasures, and think that the only end of their being, not knowing that they are captives.

2. We are captives to the justice of God, to which we owe millions of talents, which cannot be paid till Christ redeem therefrom, by satisfying all the demands of justice.

3. We are captives to the law, as a covenant: the law condemns us; yea, every new-born child is condemned to the fire of hell by the law, till Christ redeem from the curse of the law; for he was condemned in our room, and he could not plead innocence; though he was in himself innocent, yet imputatively guilty, when the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all: the Father had enough to charge him with.

4. We are captives to our own consciences. That bosom-judge tells us, we are enemies to God, vile traitors, and speaks bitter things against us; it is a judge we cannot decline, a witness we cannot cast, an executioner we cannot resist; it tells us we are to be sentenced with devils to hell and damnation, till Christ redeem from that captivity, slavery, and bondage, by intimating to this deputy that the Judge is satisfied and appeased with the blood shed at Jerusalem. O Sirs, then is the conscience sprinkled with the blood that speaks better things than that of Abel. Why, says conscience, Is the great Judge pleased? Then I have no more to say.

5. We are by nature captives to Satan; he leads us captive at his pleasure: we are his servants, he is our master; we are the subjects, he is the king; we are the shop where he works, till Christ redeem from this captivity, and till the God-man bind the strong man and dispossess him.

6. We are captives to divers lusts: one lust is hard enough to serve; but, how hard is it to serve divers! Not only variety, but contrary ones, like so many wild horses drawing us contrary ways. The galley-slave, tugging at the oar night and day, is at perfect freedom when compared to this; redemption from this slavery is a great redemption. The old man is said to be crucified with Christ, Rom. vi. 6. He hath nailed sin to the cross, and slain it legally. Oh! may the believer say, this lust of mine hath not been well nailed, it is yet living and lively: well, but being crucified it shall actually die. But again,

7. We are by nature captives to every creature. We were once masters and lords of the creation, but we are now servants to

them; they were once under us, but now they have got above us, and have the command of us; they have power to charm and draw us away from God; every creature hath power to vex us; Christ redeems from this captivity, when he restores to us our primitive dominion over the creatures, which is now to be had in Christ, who hath all power in heaven and in earth.

8. We are captives also to the fear of death. Many are in great bondage all their days through this fear; the prospect of the king of terrors creates a horror in the soul, till Christ redeem from this, by taking away both the sting of death and the terror of it. Our Lord Jesus redeems from these, and from all the effects of sin; he redeems from the curse of the law, Being "made a curse for us." * * * He redeems from the wrath of God, that omnipotent wrath, that irresistible wrath, that destructive wrath, that righteous wrath, that none can stand before, one drop whereof would destroy thousands of angels. He redeems us from distance from God; this is the perfection of misery, to be far from God, from light, from life, from the centre of happiness. Christ redeems from this, by bringing us near by his blood, that we may have the begun enjoyment of God here, and the uninterrupted enjoyment of God hereafter.

Propos. 2. The second proposition is, That Christ, and only he, is the Redeemer; "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us:" "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." He only frees us from the power of sin; he brings the quickening Spirit, 1 Cor. xv. 25. As by his Spirit he will raise up our natural body from death to life; so he raises our souls from the death of sin, to the life of grace. He only frees us from the punishment of sin; There is "no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect;" "it is Christ that died," Rom. viii. 1, 33, 34. It was too transcendent a thing for any mere creature to be the Redeemer of the sons of men. The children of Israel were afraid to trust an angel with their conduct into Canaan, Exod. xxxiii, much more should we have been to trust an angel, or any creature, to make a way for our passage to the heavenly Canaan; "Such an High-priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." Heb. vii. 26. It was requisite that the Redeemer should be θεανθρωπος, God-man; he behoved to lay down his life, which he could not have done if he had not been man; he took up his life again, which he could not have done, if he had not been God. It was fit that

the Redeemer should be the eternal Word; "The Word was made flesh." Thus, 1. He was the personal wisdom of the Father: and how fit was he to reveal the counsels of his love from eternity? 2. He is the middle person of the Godhead: and is it not fit he should mediate between God and man? 3. He is the Son of God; and so fit to bring the adopted sons to glory. 4. He was the Word that made the world; and so the Word that redeems the world, and will forever be acknowledged, by all the redeemed number, as the only meet help and fit Redeemer for them; "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us."

Propos. 3. Another proposition is, That this redemption is for men; "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us," "out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." "Unto us a Child is born;" he was made "sin for us," he was "made a curse for us." There is a threefold view we are to take of the pronoun *us*.

1. With reference to the divine ordination from eternity, it respects the elect only, of whom Christ says, "I lay down my life for the sheep," John x. 15.

2. With reference to saving application of this redemption already made, then the persons that are the objects thereof are believers, whose faith is the fruit of electing and redeeming love; for, says Christ, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me," John vi. 37. And in Acts xiii. 48, it is written "And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed."

3. With reference to the general indefinite dispensation of the gospel, it respects sinners of all sorts, to whom the gospel comes, because therein all are welcomed to come to and believe in Christ as their Redeemer; and, in the way of coming and believing in him, to say, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."

In respect of eternal destination, the elect only are they who say it certainly, Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us. In respect of effectual application, only believers are they who say it materially, Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us. And, in respect of the general dispensation of the gospel, all sinners, to whom the gospel comes, have warrant to say it believingly, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us:" they are thus warranted by the first command, that "requires us to know and acknowledge God to be the Lord our God and Redeemer;" which is explained, 1 John iii. 23. "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ," and to believe this gospel, which is "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." 1 Tim. i. 15.

Here is room for the faith of all that hear the gospel the question not being, Are you elect or not? Nay; nor, Are you believers or not? The elect indeed will be partakers, and believers are partakers already, of this redemption; but the question in the gospel-dispensation is, Are you sinners or not? and do you need a Saviour and Redeemer? Then, upon the warrant of this word of salvation sent to you, that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," you are to receive these good news to yourself. It is not Christ in the decree that you are to look to, while you know not that you are elected; this is to look too far back: nor is it Christ in the heart, or in possession, you are to look to, while you know not if you be a believer; this is to get too far forward: but it is Christ in the word, because you are a sinner, and Christ a Saviour held forth to you there, saying, Look to me and be saved. This is the middle between the two former, and the only way to secure them both, and to say, with particular application, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us."

Propos. 4. The fourth proposition I would offer, relates to the means, viz. That this redemption is by death and blood; "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." He that was slain decretively, by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God from eternity, and is called the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, who was slain typically under all the sacrifices of the Old Testament, whereby his death was adumbrated and shadowed forth, was slain actually between two thieves upon mount Calvary, where the sufferings of his life were consummated in these of his death; for, though he was in the form of God, yet he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, when he was wounded for our sins, which were his murderers, the Jews were but executioners. Now, we do not say, that the hangman, or executioner, kills a man for theft, or murder, or the like; but rather his theft and murder they kill him: so here, it was not so much the Jews, or soldiers, that killed the Lord of glory, as our theft and murder; our sins, abominations, and breaches of God's law, which were imputed to him as the Surety, and laid to his charge, who suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might pay the debt we owed to divine justice: and now, not only was his body afflicted, but his soul agonized, when he grappled with all the powers of heaven, earth, and hell. His Father had said, Awake, O sword, against the man that is my fellow; and the glittering sword of wrath and vengeance was sheathed into his bowels with infinite horror and terror, making his soul exceeding sorrowful, even

unto death, and breaking, bruising, wounding him for our iniquities. Once over Jerusalem he shed tears of water, but now, upon the rack of justice, he shed tears of blood; "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."

This is the scene of blood opened and represented to us in this sacrament; For, as oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, we shew forth the Lord's death till he come again. The Lord's supper is a lively crucifix, wherein Christ is evidently set forth crucified before us, and shewing us, that he was slain and has redeemed us by his blood. Here is the price of redemption, the precious blood of the Son of God, Acts xx. 28. He purchased the church with his own blood; and whence is this, but, (1.) To declare the infiniteness and immeasurable nature of the love of God; "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us," 1 John iii. 16. (2.) To declare the infiniteness of his truth in the law sentence, which required that, "Without shedding of blood is no remission," Heb. ix. 22. (3.) To declare the righteousness of God, and his infinite hatred of sin. God's infinite holiness and hatred against sin, appeared right well in casting angels out of heaven, for once beginning to sin, and Adam out of paradise for one mouthful of fruit: but it is another sort of a display of divine hatred of sin, to see the Son of God, the second Adam, wallowing in his own blood, for our bloody sins. (4.) To declare the power of Jesus Christ, to lay down his life and to take it up again; "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." John x. 18. By this commandment and will of the Father, the scripture was fulfilled, the new covenant confirmed, justice was satisfied, the work of the devil destroyed, sin condemned and taken away, hell vanished, and heaven purchased. "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."

II. We proposed next to shew, How this redemption is of God as the first cause. I need not enlarge upon this, seeing it was the subject I enlarged upon formerly, that all things are of God, relating to the new creation. Thus all things are of God, relating to this redemption: why, the Redeemer is of God; "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son," etc. John iii. 16.—His substitution in our room is of God; "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Isaiah liii. 6.—His suffering in our room is of God; "It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief:" Isaiah liii. 10.—His assuming our nature, that he

might therein give himself a sacrifice for our sins, is of God, and of his sovereign will; "Lo, I come:" "I delight to do thy will, O my God." This commandment have I received of my Father, Psalm xl. 7, 8. Heb. x. 7.—His being made a curse for us is of God; He was "made a curse for us" and "he hath made him to sin for us." Gal. iii. 13. 2. Cor. v. 21.—His furniture and ability, for his work of redemption is of God; "Behold, my Servant, whom I uphold;" Isaiah xlii. 1. "Him hath God the Father sealed," John vi. 27.—His resurrection and exaltation is of God; for, By him we "believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God." 1 Pet. i. 21.—His exhibition to us by the gospel is of God, Col. i. 25, 26. Rom. i. 16, 17, and the powerful saving efficacy of this revelation.—It is of God, that he is made not only a Redeemer to us, but the whole of our redemption in the abstract: for so says the text I compared with this, that of God he "is made unto us redemption;" our heaven, our happiness, our all. All is owing to God as the first cause.

III. We shall, in the third place, shew, that this redemption is to God as the last end; "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." He suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. His redeeming us to God may be viewed in two ways. 1. As it relates to our happiness. 2. As it relates to his honour.

1. To be redeemed to God, may be viewed as it relates to our happiness, which lies in being brought to God: and, as we can never be brought to God, unless we be redeemed to him, both by price and by power; so it is only by Christ that we are redeemed to God, namely, by the price of his blood, and by the power of his Spirit; "I am the way," says Christ; "no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." John xiv. 6. He hath redeemed us to God in all respects.

1. He hath redeemed us to the knowledge of God; for we have "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God," only "in the face of Jesus Christ." 2 Cor. iv. 6. We do not see God savingly till we see the Redeemer; "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father;" John xiv. 9. We have lost the view and knowledge of God by our fall; and no guilty sinner can see God, to his satisfaction, but in the red glass of the blood of Jesus, who hath redeemed us to God by his blood; that is, to the knowledge of God.

2. He has redeemed us to the favour of God, and to the peace of God; for, he alone is our peace, "having made peace through"

the blood of his cross," Col. i. 20. Reconciliation is brought about by the blood of his cross; "You that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh, through death," verses 21, 22. Hence God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and proclaiming, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."

3. He hath redeemed us to the image of God; for, he gave himself for his church, "That he might sanctify and cleanse it." Eph. v. 26; and Titus ii. 14. "He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." That he might bring us to God, and to conformity to his image, by bringing us back to the life of God, to the love of God, and to the service of God. We are by nature alienated from the life of God; but he redeems from death, to the life of God; from enmity, to the love of God; and from slavery to sin and Satan, to the service of God. And thus,

4. He hath redeemed us to the enjoyment of God, and to fellowship and communion with him, so as to have possession of him as our God, according to the covenant sealed with the blood of Christ; "I will be thy God," and communion with him as such. This enjoyment of God, to which we are redeemed, hath three degrees, inchoative, progressive, and consummative.

The first is initial or inchoative; which is a communion of state relative and real, the soul being related to Christ, and to God in Christ, as a reconciled God and Father in Christ, and having really the Spirit of Christ in us as a well of water, and a fountain of all grace.

The second degree is progressive enjoyment; which lies in getting, from time to time, more and more acquaintance with Christ, and with God in him; more and more nearness and increase of love and likeness to him: hence by him we are said to be brought near to God; "Ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." Eph. ii. 13. By whom we are said to "have access," verse 18. "Through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Eph. iii. 13. In him we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. And Heb. x. 19, we have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." Hence also joy and peace in believing, and joy unspeakable in this enjoyment of God through the blood of Christ; "We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." Rom. v. 11. And hence also the joy of the Lord is some times our strength; and we go from

strength to strength, till we appear before the Lord in Zion. And then comes, thirdly, the last degree of the enjoyment of God, that we are redeemed by his own blood; that is, the consummative enjoyment of him in heaven; that enjoyment of him that is begun in the remission of sin, and the renovation of the nature, and is carried on, in the continued communication of the fulness of the Godhead, that is in Christ, unto us, is at last consummated in the full and uninterrupted enjoyment of God in heaven; where communion with God is no more by faith, but vision; no more by hope, but fruition; for, Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; and shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; and so shall we be ever with the Lord. To this enjoyment of God also we are redeemed by his blood; for, "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom. vi. 23. And hence heaven is called the purchased possession, Eph. i. 14; and the heavenly singers here make this the burden of their new song, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."

Thus are we redeemed to the knowledge of God, to the favour of God, to the image of God, and to the enjoyment of God, commenced and advanced graciously here, and consummated gloriously hereafter in his heavenly kingdom. Thus by the blood of Christ we are redeemed to God, to the kingdom of God, in grace and glory, and so to God as our chief good and last end, to have the Lord Jehovah to be our everlasting light, and life, and happiness, our exceeding great reward, our portion, our all in all.

2. His redeeming us to God may be viewed, not only as it relates thus to our happiness, but as it relates to his glory. He hath redeemed us to God by his blood; that is, redeemed us to the glory of God, in all his glorious perfections, which are displayed more gloriously here than any where else. Thus,

1. By his blood we are redeemed to the glory of God's wisdom. O here is the wisdom of God in a mystery, in bringing God and man together in a God-man; in reconciling justice and mercy, and making them kiss each other; and the blood of Christ the cement for joining them together inseparably in our salvation.

2. By this blood we are redeemed to the glory of God's power, which was more displayed in supporting the human nature of Christ, under an infinite load of wrath, than in supporting the pillars of heaven and earth, or creating all things out of nothing. The power of God is here employed, not only in destroying principalities and powers, but here the power of his arm is employed in

bearing the power of his wrath; and, Who knows the power thereof?

3. By his blood he has redeemed us to the glory of God's holiness, and without prejudice to his holy law, that required perfect obedience, while his eternal Son, in our room, yielded himself obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

4. By his blood we are redeemed to the glory of God's justice. The eternal damnation of all the reprobate world will never illustrate the glory of justice, so much as the blood of the Lamb, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness," Rom. iii. 25; or, to manifest his justice in punishing sin, and then pardoning sin upon that propitiation.

5. By his blood we are redeemed to God; that is, to the glory of God's mercy and love. O the love of God that shines here! Rom. v. 8. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." O the glory of the Father's love is great, in giving Christ for this end! How does he here proclaim that he delights in mercy! And he is so forward to shew mercy to a number of mankind-sinners, that, rather than want an opportunity to shew mercy to them, he will make a way through the heart's blood of his dear and well-beloved Son!

6. By his blood we are redeemed to the glory of God's truth and faithfulness. The first promise to fallen man was a blessed promise respecting us, yet a bloody promise respecting Christ, that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent; yet the serpent should bruise his heel, or that Christ should have his blood shed for our redemption. The church of God of old was big with hopes of the accomplishment of this promise; they waited long for it. When Christ appeared, and humbled himself to the death of the cross, then was the promise fulfilled: and as this was the greatest instance and indication of the faithfulness of God, that ever was given; so this is an earnest and evidence, that all the gospel-promises shall be accomplished. God hath fulfilled his word, in giving Christ to the death; then certainly he will fulfil all the other promises of blessing and mercy in the new covenant, which were ratified by his blood. God's truth in the law-threatening of death, and his truth in the gospel promise of life, were both sealed by his blood.

In a word, by his blood we are redeemed to God; that is, redeemed in a way that brings glory to God in the highest. God designed himself as the last end, his glory as the ultimate end of

his redemption; and now, by the blood of Christ, we are redeemed to God's honour and glory, to God's pleasure and satisfaction, to the joy and content of his heart. It is said of Christ, "The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand," that in him he is well-pleased, and his "soul delighteth." Isaiah xlii. 1. Why, then, by his blood we are redeemed to God, in a way that is to the pleasure and contentment, joy and delight, and satisfaction of God.

Thus the redemption we have by the blood of Christ, being of God as the first cause, is to God as the last end. "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."

IV. The fourth general head I proposed, was, To offer some inferences for the application. And passing, at present, many inferences relating to the means of our redemption, the death and blood of Christ, which are afterwards to be set before us under the sacramental elements, I confine myself to these inferences that relate especially to the great source, and to the great resource of this redemption through Christ, the great spring, and the great issue of it; the great cause, and the great end of it.

Is it so then, That the redemption we have, through the blood of Christ, being of God as the first cause, is likewise to God as the last end? Hence,

1. See and admire the antiquity and perpetuity of our redemption and religion in Christ. This wonderful transaction, in time, is nothing else than a display of what from all eternity was of God, and to all eternity will be to God. We are this day to commemorate God's ancient and endless love, whereof he hath made a display in Christ the Redeemer, that was slain, and has redeemed us to God by his blood.

O Sirs, see the high source of our redemption; it is of God, from eternity, before the foundation of the world. There are four things we read of relating to this redemption, that are said to be before the world was.

(1.) We read of a choice that God made before the world; "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy." Eph. i. 4.

(2.) We read of a promise he made before the world; "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." Titus i. 2.

(3.) We read of grace given us in Christ before the world; "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." 2 Tim. i. 9.

(4.) We read of glory ordained for us before the world; "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory." 1 Cor. ii. 7. This whole redemption in Christ is an ancient business; all was of God before the world was: see John xvii. 5, 24.

See also here the last recourse of this redemption, or the great ocean into which it runs; as it is of God from eternity, so it is to God through eternity. As the springs of water come from the sea, and return to it; so here, the whole of redemption is of God and to him: hence, when the mystery of redemption shall be finished, it is said the kingdom shall be delivered up to God, even the Father, that God may appear to be all in all, 1 Cor. xv. 24, 28. Not that Christ will cease to be king; nay, the Father, hath said to him, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; but in respect of the distinct administration of the kingdom which will be, (though now we speak but as babes, ignorantly, of what will then appear gloriously) it will then appear to be such as will shew that Christ, though, as he is the Christ, was the great mean and ordinance of God for our redemption; yet God was the all in all of it, even the great original, and the great end: "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God."

2. Hence see the wonderful constitution of the person of Christ the Redeemer, who was slain, and has redeemed us to God. O what a mysterious person is here! Christ indeed is God; essentially one God with the Father and the Spirit; personally he is God the Son; and as God he is the first-cause and the last end equally with the Father and the Holy Ghost: but as Christ, he is neither God only, nor man only, but GOD-MAN; the person that stands between God and man; the middle person by whom we come to God, and are redeemed to God. Christ, as God, says, "I and my Father are one," even when he had said in the preceding verse, My Father "is greater than all," John x. 29, 30; yet, "I and my Father are one:" but again, Christ, as man says, "My Father is greater than I," John xiv. 28. And though, as Mediator, he is the Father's servant; yet being, as Mediator, God as well as man, GOD-MAN, his name is called ALPHA and OMEGA, the beginning and the end; and the Father wills all the angels of God to worship him; and "all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him," John v. 23. And hence, here, in the text, he is the subject of the new song, and the object of the worship, and praise of the redeemed; "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed

us to God by thy blood." Our Redeemer, therefore, is the wonderful EMMANUEL, God-man. If he had not been man, he could not have been slain, and redeemed us by his blood: if he had not been God, he could not have redeemed us to God: our redemption could not have been of God, as the first cause; and to God, as the last end, if it had not been through God, as the means; for all things that are of him, and to him, are also through him, Rom. xi. 36. "Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things."

3. Hence see the reason, why the man Christ Jesus ascribed all the glory of his redeeming work unto God. He speaks of himself as the Sent of God, more than thirty times in that one gospel according to John. He speaks of his doing the work of him that sent him, and seeking the glory of him that sent him. Part of his prayer to the Father is, That the world may know that thou hast sent me, and that "the world may believe that thou hast sent me." John xvii. 8, 21. Saving faith looks to Christ as the Sent of God. He speaks of his dying, and laying down his life, as a commandment he received from his Father, and his having finished the work the Father gave him to do. He speaks of God, as his God and Father, whose will he came to accomplish; "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." Heb. x. 10. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. By this will we are redeemed; it is by the will of God we are redeemed to God by the blood of Christ. The whole work of redemption flows from an act of God's will: and hence the covenant of grace and promise, sealed with the blood of Christ, runs in so many of God's I wills; I WILL sprinkle you with clean water, etc. I WILL take away the heart of stone; I WILL be your God; I WILL put my spirit within you, Ezek. xxxvi. 25,—30. q. d. It is my will, that such and such a goodly number of mankind sinners be brought to me; and, by the blood of the Covenant, redeemed to me. Well, says Christ; "Thy will be done:" even when it came to the bloody part of the bargain; Not my will, but thine be done: and AMEN, says faith, in the day of power; Thy will be done.

4. Hence see, that it is too narrow a view of redeeming work, to see only that Christ was slain, to save and redeem us by his blood, if, through the prospect of faith, we look not to the farthest end of this redemption, namely, that he has redeemed us to God. Your redemption signifies nothing, if it do not land you in God and his glory; in vain hath Christ suffered, the just for the unjust, if it be not to bring you to God. Many presume they are

redeemed by the blood of Christ, and that Christ died for them, but bewray the narrowness and naughtiness of their faith, by not considering from what, and to what Christ hath redeemed his people, when he redeems by price and power; he redeems from Satan unto God: and so they are said to be brought "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." Acts xxvi. 18. They are redeemed from the world to God; Gal. i. 4. "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God, and our Father." They are redeemed from men to God, Rev. xiv. 4. "Redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God, and to the Lamb:" hence they are not of the world, John xv. 19. Though they be in the world, yet they are not of it, but rather witnesses against an evil world; and therefore, the world hates them, as it did Christ, John vii. 7. The redeemed of the Lord are redeemed from a vain conversation to God, and to a conversation in heaven, 1. Pet. i. 18, 19. "Not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ." But, alas! many speak of Christ as their Saviour and Redeemer, but yet walk as if they were redeemed to the devil, and redeemed to sin, redeemed to the world, and to their lusts, and delivered to work abomination, Jer. vii. 8,—11. Or, as if they were redeemed to themselves, to be their own lords; Ye are not your own, says the apostle, "For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." 1 Cor. vi. 20. They that are redeemed by the blood of Christ, are redeemed to God, to walk humbly with God here, and to walk with him in white hereafter, and so to shew forth his glory forever; "This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise." Isaiah xliii. 21.

5. Hence see a test and proof of true religion, true conversion, and a true work of God, namely, it is such as is of God, as the first cause; to God, as the last end; and through Christ, as exhibited in the gospel, and his death and blood, as the means. It is said in scripture, Some return but not to the Most High; they are converted, but not to God; and surely that religion never came from God, that led not to God. * * *

Here also we may see a test and trial of all the graces and operations of the Spirit, if they be true or false.—The knowledge of Christ may here be tried: the knowledge of Christ would not save you, did not the knowledge of him lead you to the knowledge of

God; the knowledge of Christ does not terminate on Christ himself, but is the Midsman and way to bring us to the knowledge of the Father; "I am the way," says Christ; "no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." And, "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father;" John xiv. 6, 9.—True faith may be here tried: for true faith in Christ, as it is of God, or of divine operation, so it will not terminate on Christ himself, but upon God in and through him; for, by him we believe in God, 1 Peter i. 21;—Love to Christ, if it be true love, and of God as its original, it will terminate upon God as the ultimate end and object of it; hence the true knowledge of Christ is a knowledge "of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. iv. 6.—True joy in the Lord Jesus terminates in God; hence we joy in God, through "Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."—Rom. v. 11.

Here is a test of all true experimental religion. True experience leads a man to rest upon no internal feeling of Christ within him: the true Spirit testifies of Christ in the word; and, if Christ be in you, by his Spirit, he will bring you out of yourself, and of all confidence in the flesh, and out of all confidence in internal feelings, and impulses, and impressions, and will land you in God alone. True experience, like the true Christ, brings no man into himself, no, by no means: he brings us to God; and redeems us to God.

6. Hence see the duty of all lost and undone sinners, that have lost their way to God, and have lost the knowledge of God, the favour of God, the image of God, and the enjoyment of God, viz. to accept of a Redeemer that is come from God to give himself a sacrifice, to satisfy divine justice, to redeem us to God by his heart's blood. You are called to accept of a complete redemption that God brings to you, in order to bring you to God; to God, your chief end; to God, your chief happiness. Here the treasures of God's grace are opened fully and freely to you that have nothing; only come, and welcome: you that are fools, come and get the wisdom that is of God; you that are guilty, come and get a righteousness that is of God; you that are unholy, come and get a sanctification that is of God; you that are unhappy and miserable, come and get a redemption that is of God. Christ is made of God to you all these things, which includes every thing else that you need. Here the weak may get strength, the blind may get sight, the diseased may get health, the dead may get life, the leper may be cleansed, the Ethiopian may be beautified, the captive may

be liberate, bankrupts may get their debt paid; only come to, and accept of the Redeemer that is come from God to redeem you to God, and sent of God to bring you to God. You cannot come to God, because you are weak; and you dare not come, because you are worthless; but, worthy is the Lamb that was slain: and, as God sent him once to be a sacrifice to redeem you to God; so he has sent him now as usher to bring you to God, that you may come to God by him as the way, by him as the guide and leader. No matter how great, how atrocious your sins have been hitherto; though you had all the sins of Manasseh, Mary Magdalene, or Saul the persecutor and blasphemer; yea, all the sins of these that were murderers of the Lord of glory; he who hath redeemed us to God by his blood, by his blood, that cleanses from all sin, he has come here in his Father's name, who hath sent him clothed with his vesture dipt in blood, that by him ye may "have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." Eph. i. 7. O Sirs, do you know him, when you hear of him? for, faith, and acquaintance with him, come by hearing. Do you know him in his bloody robes? And is it not a robe of grace, grace reigning through righteousness and blood to eternal life? Will you accept of him who is thus come from God to bring you to God?

"But," say you, "will he accept of me who want faith and repentance, and such conditions requisite to bring me to God?" Alas! what is this? Behold the malignity of a legal spirit, that rises up against the gospel of the grace of God. What! would you have a faith or a repentance to be a Redeemer to you instead of Christ, to redeem you to God! Would you have faith to be a Christ to redeem you, or repentance to be a Christ to bring you to God? Would you have a Christ within you in your heart, to the disparagement of Christ without you, and revealed to you in the word? Alas! this legal dream flows from the power of the first temptation, Ye shall be as gods. God only is the first cause and the last end of this whole business of redemption; but ye would be as gods, to be the first cause yourself; you would have something wrought by you, or wrought in you to be the first cause of your own salvation, that God may lose the glory of the work. But, O proud sinner, come down from the height of your desired deity; you are yet desiring to be as God, but come down to God's foot, and acknowledge him to be God, and be content that he only be the first cause and the last end, and that Christ be the all in all of your redemption to God. True faith cannot bring itself to God,

but only welcomes the Christ of God to bring it to God. Here, O sinner, you have nothing to do, nothing to make; God has made all to your hand; Christ is made of God to you redemption; he is made of God a Redeemer by price, to redeem you to God; and a Redeemer by power, to bring you to God. How love you this bargain? Do you accept of it?

Oh, Sirs! what shall I say? Is there any soul here that would not choose to be swallowed up forever in this ravishing mystery of God? Christ the Redeemer, is the brightness of the Father's glory, by whose blood you are redeemed to God; that is, both to the God of glory, and to the glory of God: to the God of glory, that you may be glorified forever in him; and to the glory of God, that God may be glorified forever in you. O Sirs, this redemption through the blood of Christ, is a redemption of God, as the first cause; and a redemption to God, as the last end; and therefore a redemption to be valued, as made of God to you for your everlasting happiness, and made of God to himself for his everlasting honour: therefore, as ye would not trample on the blood of Christ, and as you would regard your own everlasting happiness, which is a great matter, and God's everlasting glory, which is infinitely greater; come, come to this blessed Redeemer, and welcome a redemption made of God to redeem you to God, and to his highest honour and greatest glory. And I will tell you good news, if your heart welcome this Redeemer in his bloody vesture, for this reason, because he comes from God to bring you to God; and welcome this redemption for this reason, because it is a redemption made and ordained of God, to redeem you to God; then you may be assured that God the Father welcomes you into his everlasting bosom, because his only begotten Son, which is in his bosom, is accepted as God's Sent to you; therefore, says Christ, with a doubled AMEN, a doubled assurance, John v. 24. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life."

Thus I have been endeavouring to shew you concerning the great stream of redemption, coloured red with the Redeemer's blood, whence it comes and whither it goes; that as the Redeemer himself came from God, and is gone again to God his Father, so this great red-flowing stream hath its rise from God as the fountain; and its recourse to God, as the end. And if any here be so enamoured with this method of salvation, that they would be glad to have their souls, this moment, carried, by the strength of this

stream of redeeming blood, in to God as their everlasting God and glory, then their everlasting life is begun, and they begin to dwell where God and Christ dwell. Where is that? Why, God dwells in Christ, and Christ dwells in God, John xiv. 11. "Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me." God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself; and Christ is in God, and your everlasting life there with him, and in him. Col. iii. 3. "Your life is hid with Christ, in God;" and therefore you have ground to expect communion with God in Christ, at his table of grace here below, and at his table of glory above. Go, therefore, to his table, O believing soul, singing and saying, Salvation to our God that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb. Let your song to God be to him as the first cause and the last end of this great work of redemption in Christ, who of God is made unto us complete redemption; and let your song to the Lamb be the new song of the redeemed here, "THOU WAST SLAIN, AND HAST REDEEMED US TO GOD BY THY BLOOD."

SERMON VI.

The Great Ruin and the Great Relief,

OR, HELP FROM HEAVEN TO SELF-DESTRUCTORS
ON EARTH.

(SUBSTANCE OF TWO FAST-DAY SERMONS.)

"O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help."

HOSEA xiii. 9.

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, verses 1,—4.

2. They are reprov'd and threatened for their wantonness, pride, and luxury, and other abuses of their wealth and prosperity, verses 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 thine help."

There are two springs of gospel-repentance; one is, a true sense of sin; and another, the apprehension of the 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 we 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 thine 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 thine 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 thine 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 wouldest 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 our ruin. In our reading, BUT "in me is thine 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 hath 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 thine 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 pitieth 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, insomuch, 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 thine 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 thine 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. 19, "Hast thou not procured this unto 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, Matt. 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." 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 come 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 shalt thou 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 is a self-destroyer.—The slothful man is said to be his own murderer; Proverbs xxi. 25. "The desire of the faithful killeth him."—The adulterer is his own murderer; Prov. vi. 32. "Whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul."—The drunkard is his own murderer; Prov. xxiii. 29, 30. Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine." How sweetly soever it go down, at last, "It biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder."—The extortioner is his own murderer: he heaps up treasures of vengeance for himself, James v. 3, 4.—The voluptuous, the wanton debauchee is his own murderer; James v. 5. "Ye have lived in pleasure 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 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," etc. 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 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 had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses." etc. "Shall I not visit for these things? saith the Lord: and 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, 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 destruction 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 1. 15; "When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." In nature corrupted, there remains so many 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 chooses 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 reins, and joins himself with the companies that practice wickedness, and agrees 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 *ἄνευ*, 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 ; 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 preposition 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 from having the lest 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 out my 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 desolation, and an 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, licentiousness, 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, Matt. xv. 18, 19. Christ says, "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." Thus Isa. lix. 7; "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 inbred corruption, which gives matter, life, and being to every sin; insomuch, 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. 40. "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 reproved; "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 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 none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore they shall eat of the fruit of their own way." It is said, Prov. xi. 5, "The wicked shall fall by his own wickedness." Psalm lxxxix. 11, "My people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me." Matt. 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 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 choose to do anything, 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 they 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.

1. They are naturally unwilling to come to the outward means of grace; “Thou hatest instruction, and casteth 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 choose? Is it not natural to you that are ungodly to choose to be in any place, rather than where the gospel is powerfully dispensed; you choose the tavern, rather than the temple; the place of vanity and foolery, 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 choose? 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 choose? Some had rather undergo any drudgery, than be employed in spiritual worship. “Nay, you may take the carnal man,” says one, “and tie him to a stake, and kill him with praying and preaching.”—What delight do you choose? Are they not rather any vain, carnal delights, than in divine and spiritual things?—What books do you choose? 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 choose? Is it not any carnal company, rather than the company of the godly? Any diverting or debauched 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 at 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.

2. 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 hate the light, John iii. 20. Thus doth the present generation hate 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 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 halves, 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 mischief, but that it will do him much more; and yet be unwilling to come to Christ.—He may have in his eye the precious promise 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 remains unwilling to come to Christ, and perishes forever.

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.

1. 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 choose 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 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. 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? Though 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. 18, 19. As a mad man who casteth fire-brands, arrows and death; so is the man that deceiveth 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 thine 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 choose whether you will rejoice or remember? Whether you will take your short heaven now, or your long hell hereafter? Whether you will choose 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 licentiousnes; 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 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 lightning 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 fear; Psalm xc. 11; "Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy 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; and 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 unto 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, through 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 unto 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 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 improv'd 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. * * *

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. * * *

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 art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place." Revel. ii. 4, 5. The candlestick is the church; the sin that removes the candlestick is apostasy. * * *

3. Barrenness under the means of grace, that God hath been some time giving a plentiful allowance 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 axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree, which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire," Matt. 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, etc. Isaiah v. 5, 6.

4. Union and communion with a wicked world is church-destroying and soul-destroying; for the companions of fools shall be destroyed. * * *

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 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 Matt. 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 something 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. * * * "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself," etc.

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 iv. 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. * * * 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 together, is a desolating and destructive sin, Hosea iv. 1, 2, 3, 6; "Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel; for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out; and blood toucheth blood." 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 him-

self; 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. * * *

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, 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. Exekiel xxii. 25,—31 * * *

Cities are destroyed by luxury and wantonness, when God is calling for mourning, 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 now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh 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 upon 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. * * *

Again, Cities have destroyed themselves with monstrous licentiousness and adultery, of which the Lord says, Jer. v. 9, "Shall I not visit for these things? saith the LORD: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" * * *

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? etc. 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 have they forgotten me. Therefore I will be to them as a lion;" etc. 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 the 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 the true Israel of God, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself." * * *

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, are encamped in the open fields; shall I then go into mine house to eat and to drink," and lie in my bed of ease and pleasure? As thou livest 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. Though 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 be divisions among you; and I partly believe it?" and we know some evident effects of it.

* * * It was observed by enemies themselves, to the commendation of the primitive Christians, "Behold! how they love one another." * * *

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. * * *

The second branch of the text, "In me is thine help:" importing, that our relief and deliverance is only owing to God, and his

sovereign mercy; "To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, 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 will shew mercy on 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, then 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, not-

withstanding 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. 47. 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 with 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, "all nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing and vanity." Isa. xl. 17. What a little piece of that nothing are we, that God should pity us! 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. * * * 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 forever 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 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," etc. Matt. 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 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. * * * 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. * * *

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 smoke 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 lie 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 show 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 forever, 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. Though 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 chooses 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 one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat 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 lie, and die, and roar forever, 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 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 surgeon, 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 anything that can be called madness and folly in the world, anything 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 have 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 sinners, 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 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 EMMANUEL, 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 thine 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 thine 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 thine 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 thine 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."

1738.

SERMON VII.

The Rent Veil of the Temple;

OR, ACCESS TO THE HOLY OF HOLIES BY THE
DEATH OF CHRIST.

(POST SACRAMENTAL SERMON.)

"And behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom."—MATT. xxvii. 51.

SOME here may think, what will the minister make of that text, and what relation hath it to the work of this day? Indeed, I cannot promise to make anything of it, unless the Lord himself make something of it to you. But, with his help we may find a feast in it to our souls; and a suitable feast on the back of a feast, such as many of you have been celebrating. Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you this day, and as you have been called to feast upon his passion, so now you are called to feast upon the fruits and effects of it. Have you seen him dying on a cross for you! O come and see what immediately followed upon his death, "Behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom." That I may divide the words, and then explain them, you may notice here,

1. The connection of this verse, with what went before, in the particle **AND**, intimating, the time of this miracle, that it intended the death of Christ, ver. 50, "When he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost." This loud cry signified, that his death should be public, and proclaimed to all the world, as it hath been to you this day; and his yielding up the ghost, showed, that he voluntarily resigned his soul to be an offering for sin, according to his undertaking as our Surety, Isa. liii. 10. Death being the penalty for the breach of the first covenant, "Thou shalt surely die;" the Mediator of the new covenant must make atonement by means of death, otherwise no remission. Now, he gave up the ghost, and immediately the veil of the temple was rent.

2. You have a note of admiration, Behold! intimating what a wonderful thing did immediately ensue. Several miracles, besides the rending of the veil, are here mentioned; but this seems to be the most remarkable. We are told, that "the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose:" but that which is put in the first rank of these miracles, is, that "the veil of the temple was rent in twain;" and we find the evangelist Mark mentions this in particular, and none of the rest of the miracles here named, as if this rending of the veil were the miracle most to be noticed, as containing somewhat mysterious and significant therein, Mark xv. 37, 38, where we have the very same words, "Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost; and the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom." And here it is ushered in with a behold; turn aside and see this great sight; be astonished at it. But what are we to wonder at? Then,

3. See this object of admiration; the veil of the temple was rent in twain, just as our Lord Jesus expired; that veil of the temple which parted betwixt the holy place and the most holy, was rent by an invisible power. In this, and the rest of the miracles, Christ gave testimony to his Godhead; putting forth the power of his divine nature at the same time wherein his human nature, his soul and body, were rent in twain, like the veil of the temple. It is remarkable how the evangelist describes the manner in which the veil of the temple was rent; showing what a full and entire rent it was. Luke says, it "was rent in the midst;" and here Matthew and Mark say, it "was rent in twain:" rent from the top to the bottom; an entire rent. But what was the meaning of all this? What did the rending of the veil signify?

(1.) It was in conformity to the temple of Christ's body which

was now dissolved: Christ was the true temple, in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. When he cried, and gave up the ghost, and so dissolved and rent the veil of his flesh, the literal temple did, as it were, echo to the cry, and answer the strokes by rending its veil.

(2.) The rending of the veil of the temple, signified the revealing of the mysteries of the Old Testament. The veil of the temple was for concealment; it was extremely dangerous for any to see the furniture of the most holy place within the veil, except the high priest; and he but once a year with great ceremony, and through a cloud of smoke: all which pointed out the darkness of that dispensation, 2 Cor. iii. 13. But now, at the death of Christ, all was laid open; the mysteries are unveiled, so that he that runs may read the meaning of them.

(3.) The rending of the veil of the temple signified the uniting of Jews and Gentiles, by removing the partition-wall betwixt them, which was the ceremonial law; Christ, by his death repealed it, and cancelled that handwriting of ordinances, nailed it on the cross, and so broke down the middle wall of partition; and, by abolishing these institutions and ceremonies, by which the Jews were distinguished from all other people, he "abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man," Eph. ii. 14, 15. Just as two rooms are made one, by taking down the partition wall.

(4.) The rending of the veil did especially signify the consecrating and opening of a new and living way to God. The veil kept off people from drawing near to the most holy place; but the rending of it signified, that Christ, by his death, opened a way to God for himself, as our blessed High-priest; and for us in him.

1. For himself: this was the great day of atonement, wherein the High-priest, not by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood entered once for all into the holy place; in token of which, the veil was rent, Heb. ix. 7,—13. Though Christ did not personally ascend to heaven, the holy place not made with hands, that is, to heaven, till above forty days after; yet he immediately acquired a right to enter, and had a virtual admission: his entrance into the heavenly temple, into the holy of holies, began in his death; having offered his sacrifice in the outer-court, the blood of it was to be sprinkled on the mercy-seat within the veil, according to the manner of the priests under the law: but now the legal shadows were all to vanish; the great, the true High-priest having by his own blood entered, and so procured,

2. For us an open entrance into the true holy of holies, as the apostle applies it, Heb. x. 19, 20. We have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil." We have now free access to come with boldness to a throne of grace, to a God in Christ, Heb. iv. 16. The veil of the temple did so interpose betwixt the people and the most holy place, that they could neither go in, nor look into it, but only the priest, in the manner that I said before; but the rending of the veil signified, that the true holy of holies, heaven itself, is now open to us, by the entrance of our great High-priest, that we also may enter in by faith, as a royal priesthood, following our Forerunner, who for us hath entered within the veil, Heb. vi. 19. Nothing can obstruct or discourage our access to God in his grace and glory, for the veil is rent.

Now, I am to touch a little at the special mystery here represented, "Behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom."

OBSER. That Christ, by his death hath rent the veil that interposed betwixt God and us, and obstructed our access to him.

He gave up the ghost, and behold, the veil was rent, 1 Pet. iii. 18; "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust." Why? "That he might bring us to God;" and, in order thereunto, that he might rend the veil of guilt and wrath that interposed betwixt us and him, that he might take away the cherubims and flaming sword, and open a way to the tree of life.

The method wherein I shall speak of this subject, shall be, to shew,

- I. What is that veil that interposed betwixt God and us.
- II. How the death of Christ hath rent that veil.
- III. In what manner is the veil rent.
- IV. For what end the veil is rent.
- V. Draw some inferences from the whole for application.

There may be some here that come to this occasion, to enquire into God's temple, to see his beauty and glory there, and to get near to God; but, ah! they are complaining, they have lost their end; why? they apprehended a veil betwixt them and the glory of God, and thought it impossible to get through the veil: but perhaps, you knew not that the veil of the temple was rent; and therefore you have not seen the beauty of the Lord in his temple.

If you had known that the veil was rent from the top to the bottom, you would have gone in more boldly to the most holy place; and if yet you will believe that the veil is rent, I can promise that you shall not miss a sight of his glory, through the rent veil: Did I not say to thee, if thou wouldest believe, thou shalt see the glory of God? . But I proceed in the method proposed.

1. What is that veil that interposed betwixt God and us? Not to speak of the veil of Old-Testament shadows and ceremonies, now rent and removed by the death of Christ, there are some veils that, in a special manner, obstructed our access to God; and they may be reduced to these three, the veil of a broken covenant, the veil of God's injured attributes, and the veil of man's sin.

1. The veil of a broken covenant, or law of works. The covenant of works, you know, was, do and live, otherwise you shall die; "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." In which covenant, you see, there was a precept, a promise, and a penalty. The precept was do, or perfect obedience; the promise was life, or eternal happiness upon obedience; and the penalty was death and eternal damnation, in case of disobedience. Now, man by his sin hath broken the precept of that covenant, and so forfeited the promise of life, and incurred the penalty of death. If ever we have access to God, this broken precept must be repaired, this forfeited life must be redeemed, this penalty must be executed. Here is a veil that separates betwixt God and us; a veil that neither men nor angels can rend, and yet a veil that must be rent, otherwise we die and perish forever; and this veil is the harder to be rent, because of the following, namely,

2. The veil of God's injured perfections; particularly, his incensed justice, and injured holiness. Justice, infinite justice, was a black veil that obstructed our access to heaven; for God became an angry God, a God filled with fierce wrath against the sinner. God hath set this penalty upon the law, commanding perfect obedience upon pain of death: God's justice was engaged to make this penalty effectual upon man's falling into sin. Nothing can satisfy justice but infinite punishment; "The wages of sin is death:" and God will, by no means clear the guilty: And so, if this veil be not rent by a complete satisfaction, the guilty sinner must go down to the pit. The holiness of God also was injured by the breach of the law; Sin is a transgression of the law; a transgression of the precept. Now, as God's justice stands up in defence of the threatening and penalty, so his holiness stands up for the defence of the pre-

cept and command of the holy law. God cannot justify the sinner, nor accept of him as righteous, unless he hath a complete righteousness; not a lame, partial, and imperfect righteousness; but a righteousness every way commensurate to the extensive precept of the law, will satisfy an infinitely holy God. As infinite justice cannot be satisfied, without a complete satisfaction, answering to the threatening and penalty of the law; so the infinite holiness of God cannot be satisfied without a perfect obedience, answerable to the precept and command of the law. Now, our natural want of ability to yield satisfaction, and our natural want of perfect conformity to the law, make justice and holiness, and other perfections of God, stand in the way of our salvation, and of our access to heaven, like a veil that can never be rent by us; especially considering, that there is,

3. A third veil, and that is the veil of sin on our part. This is a separating veil betwixt God and us, Isa. lix. 2. "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God." Now, before we can get near unto God, this veil must be rent, the guilt of sin must be expiated; for without shedding of blood there is no remission: the filth of sin must be purged; for, who shall ascend to the hill of the Lord, and stand in his holy place, but he that hath clean hands and a pure heart? The power of sin must be broken.—There is, by nature, in us all a power of ignorance; our minds have become a dungeon of darkness, and these form such a veil between God and us, that unless it be removed, there is no hope of mercy: therefore says the prophet, it is a people of no understanding; therefore he that made them, will not have mercy on them.—There is in us a power of enmity, The carnal mind is enmity against God, etc.—We are enemies to God by wicked works: this is another veil that must be rent by the arm of almighty power; for it is a veil and curtain that the devil hath strongly wrought, like a web, with the warp and waft of pride, carnality, security, worldliness, and all other wickedness whatsoever, which are but so many threads and pieces of this web, this veil of enmity.—There is a power of unbelief, that is another veil, that on our part stands betwixt us and the holy place, and separates us from divine favour; He that believeth not, is condemned already.

II. The second thing, How the death of Christ hath rent the veil: when he gave up the ghost, behold the veil was rent.

1. By the death of Christ the veil of a broken covenant was rent in twain, so as we might get to God through that veil of the law, for the law was fulfilled in every part of it, by his obedience to the

death. Was the precept of the law a perfect obedience? Well, Christ by his obedience to the death, did magnify the law, and make it honourable, brought in an everlasting righteousness: his death was the finishing stroke, the highest act of that obedience whereby the law was fulfilled. Was the promise of life in the law, or first covenant forfeited by us? Well, Christ rent this veil, by redeeming the forfeiture with the price of his blood: he bought back the inheritance for us that we had lost, making a purchase of us, and of eternal salvation for us. Was the penalty of death in the law standing also in the way? Well, Christ comes in the sinner's room, endures this penalty, by coming under the curse of the law, becoming obedient to the death, enduring the wrath of God, and delivering us from the wrath to come: and so behold, the veil of a broken covenant was rent.

2. By the death of Christ, the veil of God's injured attributes, that stood betwixt God and us, was rent and removed. Christ hath satisfied the justice of God, by offering himself a sacrifice, Eph. v. 2. This offering being through the eternal Spirit, it was of infinite worth and value: here the altar sanctified the gift; the altar was the Godhead of Christ, the offering was made upon the altar of the divine nature; and therefore this blood of Christ is called the blood of God. This sacrifice was of infinite worth and value, for doing the business of poor man, in atoning justice, and so rending this veil. But now as Christ hath satisfied the justice of God, by enduring the penalty and threatening of the Law; so he hath vindicated the holiness of God, by fulfilling the precept and command of the law, which he not only did through the whole course of his life, but perfectly finished in his death. Now, if Christ hath fulfilled the law, satisfied the justice, and vindicated the holiness of God, by his obedience to the death, then we may see and say, Behold the veil was rent. But,

3. There is the veil of sin on our part; how is this rent by the death of Christ? Why, the Lamb was sacrificed to rend and remove this veil, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." By his death, the guilt of sin is expiated; for God set him forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins, etc. By his death the filth of sin is purged; for the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin, and that both meritoriously and efficaciously; for, by his death, the power of sin also is broken fundamentally, seeing by his death he purchased the Spirit; which, in due time, he pours out, and thereby actually removes the veil on our part,

which he had done fundamentally and virtually on the cross. By this purchased Spirit he rends the veils of darkness and ignorance: The God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, shines into the heart, etc. All the light of nature, reason, education, and human literature cannot rend this veil, till the man receive the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. By this purchased Spirit he rends the veil of enmity, shedding abroad his love upon the heart; and indeed the view and apprehension of God's mighty love in Christ, can rend that mighty veil of enmity; for we love him whenever we see that he first loved us, 1 John iv. 19. When the soul sees the God, whose majesty he dreaded, is now a God in Christ, reconciled to the soul through the sacrifice that Christ offered up, then the soul is reconciled to God, and so the veil of enmity rent in twain. By this purchased Spirit he rends also the veil of unbelief: for, as he is a Spirit of light, to remove the veil of darkness, and a Spirit of love, to remove the veil of enmity; so he comes into the heart, as a Spirit of faith, and removes the veil of unbelief; he begins the rent of humiliation, when he rends the heart in twain with a sense of sin, and a sight of its undone state; when he makes the soul take with sin, and justify the Lord, though he should damn him for his sin. He makes the rent of the veil wider by a gracious manifestation, like that, John ii. 11; He "manifested forth his glory, and his disciples believed on him." Thus he rends the veil of unbelief; and completes the rent of this veil when faith is turned into vision.—Thus you see how by his death the veil was rent.

III. The third thing, In what manner was the veil rent? All I say on this head, shall be in allusion shortly to the rending of the veil of the temple here: which we see, was in a wonderful manner ushered in with a behold.

1. Behold, it was rent; not only drawn aside, but rent. The curtain was not only drawn aside, but torn to pieces, as if God had been displeased at the veil of partition betwixt him and us; angry at the veil of separation, and enraged that there should have been any veil to intercept between him and us. God's heart was set upon a reconciliation betwixt him and us, and therefore his hand tears the curtain that was hanging up betwixt him and us; gave it such a rent, as it might never be whole again; all the devils in hell cannot sew up the rent, so as to disappoint God's design of bringing his people into union and communion with him.

2. Behold, the veil of the temple was not only rent, but rent in twain: the veil that was one, was made two, that God and man,

who were two, might be made one. It was not half rent, but wholly rent; rent in twain, a full and complete rent; shewing, that Christ, by his death, would not be a half Saviour, but a complete Saviour, and the Author of a full and complete salvation; taking entirely out of the way whatever separated betwixt God and us, not leaving so much as a stitch of the curtain to hold the two sides of the veil together; no, the veil was rent in twain. And not only so, but,

3. Behold the veil was rent FROM THE TOP TO THE BOTTOM: The veil was rent from the TOP, the highest thing that separated betwixt God and us was rent in twain; we could never have reached up to the top of the veil; yea, the hands and arms of all the men on earth, and angels in heaven, were too short to reach to the top of the infinite justice and holiness of God, that interposed betwixt him and us: the top of this veil, this wall of partition, was higher than heaven; what could we or any other creature do for rending it from the top? But Christ put up his hand, as it were, to the top of the veil, and rent it from the top. The rent begins at the top, but it does not stop here: For,

4. The veil is also rent to the BOTTOM: the bottom of this veil, that did separate betwixt God and us, did reach as deep as the bottom of hell: who could descend to hell for us to rend the veil to the bottom? According to the lamentation of one Joannes Seneca upon his death-bed, "We have here," says he, "some that will go to the quire for us, some that will play for us, some that will say mass for us, some that will pray for us; but where is there one that will go to hell for us?" But, O happy believer, Christ is one that hath gone to hell for you, that he might quench all the flames of hell with his blood, and conquer all the powers of hell that were in the way betwixt you and heaven. He descended to hell, in a manner, that he might rend the bottom of the veil. But there is yet more here, he not only rends the veil at the top and at the bottom, but,

5. From the top to the bottom all is rent; both the top and the bottom, and all that is betwixt the top and the bottom, all the impediments betwixt heaven and hell are removed. Though heaven be purchased, and hell vanquished, yet there might be something in the earth, something in the world, betwixt heaven and hell that might obstruct the passage to the holiest; well, but the rent is from the top to the bottom: all that comes betwixt the top and the bottom is rent as well as both ends; so that there is access from the lowest part of misery to the highest happiness, a long rent, in

a manner, from the top of heaven to the bottom of hell. We fell as low as hell by sin, but Christ by his death hath made an open way from hell to heaven; for, "behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom."

IV. The fourth thing, For what END was the veil rent? I shall tell you only these two ends of it. 1. That Christ might enter into the holiest as our High-priest for us. 2. That we might enter in also after him and through him.

1. I say, the veil of the temple was rent, that Christ our glorious High-priest might enter into the holy of holies in our name. I told you, that the veil of the temple was that which parted betwixt the holy place and the most holy, and which kept off people from drawing near to the most holy place. The veil was for concealment; and none might enter within the veil but the high-priest, and he was not to enter in without blood, the blood of the sacrifice along with him, as you see, Heb. ix. 3, 7. Now, the most holy place was a type of heaven; so our Lord Jesus Christ having shed his own blood, entered within the veil into heaven, the true holy of holies, carrying in with him the blood of his own sacrifice, Heb. iv. 12; "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place." Not that Christ did carry into heaven his own substantial blood in his hand; we are not to understand it so carnally, but that, in a spiritual sense, and virtually, he did so. Under the law, the day of atonement was upon that day when the high-priest went into the holy of holies, Lev. xvi. 30; on that day the people were pardoned all their sins, and cleansed from all their transgressions: when the high-priest had been within the veil in the holy of holies, then was the atonement actually made: though the blood was shed without the camp, yet the atonement was not made till it was brought into the holy place, Lev. xvi. 14, 15. What did this typify, but that our atonement was perfectly made upon Christ's going into the holy of holies, namely heaven? See Heb. ix. 24; "For Christ is not entered into the holy place made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." Perhaps you have thought hitherto that the work of our redemption was perfectly completed on the cross, so as there was no more to be done; but know, it was not enough for the sacrifice to be killed without the camp, but the blood must be carried into the holy of holies; all was not done till that was done. Indeed when Christ died, the sacrifice was slain, the blood was shed; there was no more sacrifice to succeed, all was finished in that

respect; but yet all was not done until the true veil being rent as well as the typical: the blood of Christ was carried into the holy place within the veil, that is, into heaven. Though Christ did not personally ascend to heaven, as I said in the explication, till above forty days after, yet he immediately acquired a right to enter, and had a virtual admission; so that his entrance began in his death; and when he ascended into heaven he completed and perfected that in his own person, in the true holy of holies, heaven itself, which the high-priest did typically in the figurative holy of holies, which was of old under the law in the earth; and there hath Christ, in the power and virtue of his blood, made atonement; and as the high-priest did under the law, he carried in with him all the names of all the tribes of Israel on his breast; and by the power of this blood of the sacrifice made a full atonement. But then,

2. Another end of rending the veil was, not only that he might make a way for himself, as our Priest, into the most holy place, but that he might make a way for us in him; that we might enter in also, and have access to God through him, access to heaven through him. See therefore how the believer is said to follow in after Christ into the holiest within the veil, Heb. vi. 19, 20. They are said to flee for refuge to the hope set before them, "which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an High-priest forever after the order of Melchisedec." Heb. x. 19, 20. We have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." Where our way to heaven, or to the holiest, is said to be through the blood of Christ; or, which is all one, through his flesh offered as a propitiatory sacrifice; by which, as by the rent veil, we have boldness to enter. Now, this entrance into the holiest, or access to God that we have in Christ, is two-fold, either inchoative here, or consummate hereafter.

(1.) There is an initial, *inchoative*, or begun entrance that we have into the holiest in time. In the most holy place was the golden altar, and symbols of God's presence and glorious majesty, and access thereto was typical of our access to God and heaven; which access we have now with boldness even in time, through the rent veil by which our High-priest hath entered into the holy place. Heb. iv. 14, 16; "Seeing then that we have a great High-priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God," "let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace." And so it is

inferred from this same doctrine, Heb. x. 22; "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith." Quest. What is that nearness to God, and access to him, that a man hath in time, when he is brought within the veil? Answ. In a word, It lies not only in the first application of grace, and change of the man's state, when in Christ Jesus he that was afar off is made nigh by the blood of Christ: for, whenever the virtue of that blood comes upon us by the Spirit of Christ, God comes near to us, and we are brought near to God; but there is still more and more nearness enjoyed by his people. Exercised Christians are able to give a distinct account of their having this nearness at some times, and of their want of it at other times. He may be suspected indeed for an hypocrite that hath no changes, Psal. lv. 19; for the true Christian's sky is never long clear and without clouds: change of weather, and change of way, is usually found by travellers to heaven. Every believer indeed hath still the Spirit of Christ dwelling in him; for, if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his: but there are some singular outpourings of the Spirit promised and bestowed, and well known by all believers, and they are precious enjoyments. This Spirit "the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him:" says Christ; "but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you," John xiv. 17.—This access to God within the veil, is sometimes experienced in prayer; yea, most frequently in that exercise is the light of God's countenance lifted up, and the soul made to say, I love the Lord, because he hath heard the voice of my supplication. Do not ye, believers, know this, that sometimes you have been so troubled that you could not speak?" Psal. lxxvii. 4; that your hearts have been so bound and straitened, that you could do nothing, and say nothing before the Lord, but sit as dumb and oppressed, all dark above, all dead within, and all doors shut upon you? You durst not neglect prayer, and yet you could not perform it; but behold, you have quickly found the two-leaved gates cast open to you; your hearts enlarged, and mouths wide opened in asking; the windows of heaven open, and the banks of the river of life broken down, and the streams gushing in upon you, like that in Isa. xlv. 3; "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground."—Also, this access to God within the veil, is sometimes experienced in sweet communion and Fellowship with God; Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. This communion with God is a mystery, sweet indeed to them that have it, and surpassing all the

delights of sense and reason; but to them that have it not, it is incredible and unintelligible: a stranger intermeddles not with this joy. Ye that know not what it is, although the word be full of suitable and savoury expressions of it, yet it is a riddle and dark parable to you; it is only tasting of it that can declare its transcendent sweetness. O taste and see that God is good! You that know what it is, though you cannot express it, yet you can relish and understand some sound words about it. It may be, you feel it sometimes in the secret retirements of the house, sometimes in the fields, or under a bush, as Nathanael under the fig-tree; but what you felt, you cannot make the world understand: only when the Lord directs the minister to speak somewhat suitably to it, then you are ready to think, O it is just like the thing I felt at such a time and such a place; that which the minister is saying from God's word, hath a sweet sound of that which I got yonder, when none in all the world heard me or saw me: But (Nathanael) when thou wast under the fig tree I saw thee, says Christ: I heard you groaning to me; I saw you wrestling with me; I put your tears in my bottle, and poured in my comforts into your soul. O, know you what it is to be brought near to him, and to have the clouds and veils that are on your hearts, or on your faces, scattered, and the light of his countenance lifted up upon you? Have you not been sometimes on the mount, so as to think, O how good is it to be here? Have you not known what the warm and healing beams of the Sun of righteousness upon you are? Have you not tasted that in his company that hath made all the wells of worldly comfort, like puddle water, loathsome and unsavoury to you; yea, that hath made you groan in this tabernacle, and long to be at that complete and uninterrupted communion above, whereof all you tasted on earth is but a small earnest?—However, the veil was rent, that you might enter within the veil into the holiest, to a begun heaven even in time. Grace being the same specifically with glory; there is but a gradual difference: and therefore the believer, even on earth, is said to be "come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect," Heb. xii. 22, 23. Why, when does the believer come to all this? Even when he comes by faith to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, then he is come to heaven itself, the true holy of holies inchoatively, or by a begun entrance. But,

(2.) There is a consummative entrance into the holiest, that the believer shall have, as a fruit of the rending of the veil, and that is when he comes to the heaven above, to the higher house, whither the Forerunner is for us entered, having rent the veil, which was rent, that we might have access to God in glory as well as in grace, and then the believer will not be half in, as it were, but completely within the veil; for then will his communion with God be completed, then his knowledge of God, his love to God, his delight in God, his vision of God's glory, his conformity to God's image, will all be complete; for that which is in part shall be done away, and that which is perfect shall come, 1 Cor. xiii. 10. O what a sweet exchange will that be, when faith will say to vision, I give place to you; when hope will say to fruition, I give place to you; when grace will say to glory, I give place to you; when partial communion will say to perfection, I give place to you; when short passing blinks will say to uninterrupted everlasting joys, I give place to you! Little wonder then, believers long to be wholly within the veil; (but I insist not on it) for then indeed he fully enters into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

Thus you see the two great ends for which the veil was rent, namely, that way might be made for Christ's entering into the holy of holies, and so for our entering in also through him, and after him. But I come now to

V. The fifth thing, viz. the Application. Is it so, that Christ hath by his death rent the veil that interposed betwixt God and us, and obstructed our access to him? Then, first for information: hence we may see,

1. What a full feast of love we have to feed upon on a communion-day, namely, the love of Christ, not only in dying, but in rending the veil, that he might enter into the holiest for us. The apostle says, that Christ loved us; and how does he prove it? Eph. v. 2; He gave "himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour:" this savoury and sweet-smelling sacrifice, was the offering of incense; and where was the incense offered under the law? why, it was offered within the veil. God tells Moses, that Aaron should take his handful of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the veil, Lev. xvi. 12. Now, Christ having given himself an offering and sacrifice to God without the camp in this world, he rends the veil, and goes to heaven, and offers himself as incense within the veil. Perhaps you have seen and thought upon the love of Christ, in his dying upon the cross, in his making himself a sacrifice; but, O see his love also in his

incense within the veil. We feed too sparingly upon Christ; and therefore our faith is weak: we eat, for the most part, but of one dish, Christ, as the paschal Lamb slain on the cross, but we should learn to feed upon Christ as a Priest gone in within the veil: our faith should not tarry on the cross, but we should carry it further, even after Christ, within the veil, into heaven itself. Our faith should flee for refuge, to lay hold upon all the hope that is set before us: the anchor of our soul will not be so sure and stedfast, as it might be, except it enter within the veil, Heb. vi. 19. As the apostle says of patience, Let it have its perfect work, so we say of faith, let it have its perfect work; let us follow Christ within the veil, and view him, not only shedding his blood, but entering into the holy of holies within the veil, and sprinkling his blood upon the mercy-seat and before it, Lev. xvi. 15. The priests under the law sprinkled the mercy-seat, which was within the veil, all over, and when Christ went to heaven within the veil, he did that in substance, which the priests did in ceremony, in order to make a full atonement: and when faith is acted upon all this, then the believer is said to be come to the blood of sprinkling; and we act not our faith far enough, when we act it no further than the death of Christ; for the atonement was not actually perfected, though it was made fundamentally on the cross, yet not formally, till upon the rending of the veil, our High-Priest entered into the holy place, and sprinkled the mercy-seat with his blood; by which act mercy and justice are actually met, and kiss each other.

2. If the veil of the temple be rent, hence we may see the glory of the New Testament dispensation, beyond that of the Old; the veil of the covering is rent, the darkness of that dispensation removed by the death of Christ, and Old Testament mysteries unveiled; so that now, he that runs may read the meaning of them. Now we see clearly, that the mercy-seat signified Christ, the great propitiation; the pot of manna signified Christ, the bread of life. Now we all with open face beholding the glory of the Lord, as in a glass, which helps the sight as the veil hindered it; and that the veil of the temple was rent, it may give us ground further to expect, that the veil shall be taken away from the hearts of the Jews; for even to this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their hearts; nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away, 2 Cor. iii. 15.

3. If by the death of Christ the veil be rent, that interposed betwixt God and us, hence we may see what is the way to heaven, and what access we have this way; why, We have boldness to

come to the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by that new and living way, that he hath consecrated through the veil. We may come boldly to the throne of grace, for the veil is rent; by the blood of Jesus, the way is open. How shall the unholiest of sinners venture to come into the holiest of all, or to God's presence? Yea, says the Holy Ghost, by the blood of Jesus, by the rent veil. There are many mistakes about the way to the holy place; it is a dreadful thing to think, that many who have heard the gospel, it may be, ten, twenty, thirty years, if they be asked of the way to heaven, they will say, why, if we do justly, live honestly and civilly, and do as we would be done to, we shall surely be saved. But I tell you, you shall surely be damned, if no more be done. O sad, that after all the light that hath shined about the way of salvation by the slain Son of God, that civility that is to be found among heathens, is all the title that a great many have to eternal life. Others, they hope to get to heaven by a better righteousness, but it is a righteousness of their own; they say they will do as well as they can; they must read, and pray, and hear, and the like, and so they find out a way to heaven for themselves: some cannot endure to hear any thing spoken against self-righteousness, as if no person were in danger to be ruined by it; whereas this is a great part of the strong man's armour, whereby he keeps possession of souls. I tell you, Sirs, your false righteousness, is so far from being the way to heaven, that true holiness itself is but the business that people have to do who are in the way; there will never be another way to heaven but Christ: holiness is the walk, Christ is the way in which we walk, Col. ii. 6; "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him." I am the way, no man comes to the Father, but by me. This is the new and living way, consecrated through the veil. The veil of the temple is rent, and the way to the holiest lies through the rent veil. Every person thinks, that it is very hard to get to heaven, and that it will cost a great deal of time, and pains, and struggling: but, says one, here is the mischief of it; people do not know, that it is hard to know the way to heaven, and that flesh and blood cannot reveal it, till God himself send in a beam of light upon the heart, and give the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, who is the way, having by his death rent the veil. O this way is little known, and yet we assure you, that there is free access for you all this way; and nothing to hinder your access to God and heaven this way, if it be not your own ignorant unbelieving heart; nothing to hinder your entering into the holiest, for

the veil is rent, the law is fulfilled, justice is satisfied, holiness vindicated, sin is expiated. Will you go to heaven this way, man, woman? for the door is open for you, the veil is rent for you; to you is the word of this salvation sent; to you, man, woman, young or old; whosoever hears me, to you is the way to the holiest made patent: and whosoever will, let him come and enter in; and him that cometh he will in no wise cast out. What in all the world is to hinder you from coming in? The law, however holy, needs not hinder you, here is a righteousness; justice, however awful, needs not hinder you, here is a satisfaction; your sins, however great, need not hinder you, here is a sacrifice: all these veils are rent, what should hinder? Are there any other veils to be rent? O, say you, the veil of darkness, ignorance, enmity, and unbelief that is upon my heart. Well, let me tell you, that needs not hinder you neither to come to Christ, and employ him to rend these veils on your part; that is but little for him to do, who could rend such great veils as were on God's part. O Sirs, he is good at rending veils; give him work, and the work is done. Did he not rend a greater veil, when he satisfied infinite justice, and stopt up the flood-gates of divine wrath? and if he hath done the greater, O will you not employ him to do the less? Why, say you, if I knew that he rent that great veil for me, I would not fear, but he would render the lesser: why, man, the veil was rent for sinners, and why not for you? Christ came to save sinners. But say you, all shall not be saved and brought within the veil, and perhaps not I. We answer, Some shall be saved, and why not you? wherefore are not all that hear this gospel saved, but because they will not give employment to Christ to save them? Through unbelief they think he meant no favour towards them, when he rent the veil, and so stand aloft from him, saying, It was not for me; but I declare in his name, it was for you, man; for you, woman; whoever will have the benefit of it. The gospel notifies in general, that the veil is rent for you all, so far as that God calls and commands you all to come in to the holiest by this way, this new and living way consecrated through the veil, and if you do not, you shall be damned for your neglect of it. But as for your particular personal knowledge of your actual interest in the benefit of this rent veil, it is impossible for you to have it, till you come to Christ and sue for it: therefore, let nothing hinder you to enter, since the veil is rent, and the way patent: you have nothing to do yourself, for you cannot rend any veil; all that you have to do, is to consent that Christ should rend all veils betwixt God and you; for he will

be a complete Saviour; he will not leave a rag of the veil for you to rend, but with his own hand will rend all in twain from the top to the bottom. O say, Amen to it, that he may get all the work, and all the praise.

Use second, for examination. Try what interest you have in this privilege: if the veil be actually rent from the top to the bottom, with respect to you; try whether or not you have gone in within the rent veil of the temple, to the holy of holies. The veil was rent fundamentally, when Christ gave up the ghost; it was rent formally, when he entered into the holiest. The veil is rent objectively, in the preaching of this gospel; and now the question is, if the veil be rent subjectively, and so as you have the actual saving benefit of it in your own person. It is not enough that the veil is rent doctrinally for you, so as you have liberty to go into the holy place, but whether is the veil rent effectually to you, and in you, so as you have stept in to the holiest by the rent veil? And,

1. If you be a believer indeed, in whom the veil is savingly rent, then you have got a humbling sight and sense of the veil that interposed betwixt God and you, and have seen yourself to be without the veil. Did you ever see such a veil of wrath on God's part, and such a veil of guilt on your part? such a veil of a broken law, incensed justice, and injured holiness on the one hand; and such a veil of sin, darkness, unbelief, and enmity on the other hand, as hath made you to despair that ever the veil would be rent by you, or any creature in heaven or earth, and made you see yourself lost and undone, crying out, Men and brethren, what shall I do to be saved? Did you never see your sad state, as having a black veil standing up betwixt God and you? The exercise of persons about religion is suspicious, if they never saw the veil. Some will say, O I have seen many evils about me, and I have an evil heart, and an evil frame of heart: but I ask, man, did you ever see yourself to be in an evil state, in a state of distance from God; in a state of separation from God, by reason of the veil that was betwixt him and you? The effectual rending of the veil begins here, namely, at a humbling sight of the separating veil; the man sees himself without the veil, and so within the flood mark of God's wrath.

2. If the veil be effectually rent in you, then you have seen the glory of him that rent the veil, and the glory of God through the rent veil; something of the glory of God in Christ. The apostle tells us, Heb. x. 19, 20. That Christ's flesh, that is, his human nature, is the veil for us to enter by to the holy of holies; that is,

heaven or God's presence, God's face: so that in his flesh, or human nature of Christ, we may see the very face, the very brightness of the glory of God as in a mirror. Now, if the veil be rent in you, and the face of the covering removed, then you have seen the glory of God in Christ; you have seen God's law fulfilled by him, God's justice satisfied in him, God's holiness vindicated by him, and so God's righteousness declared in the way of saving sinners through him, as the propitiation in blood. Have you seen his glory as the only way to heaven, as God's way to you, and your way to God, as the Render of the veil on God's part and on yours; the glory of his death in the value and virtue of it; in the value of it, for rending of the veils that hindered God's access to you; and in the virtue of it, for rending of the veil within you that hindered your access to God? Have you felt something of this virtue in rending the veil of darkness and ignorance that was upon your understanding, and shining in upon you with the light of life? The effectual rending of the veil makes a man see some glory that is within the veil; have you seen God's glory then through the rent veil, and that God's glorious attributes are all glorified to the highest in this way?

3. If the veil be effectually rent, then you have cast the anchor of your hope within the veil, Heb. vi. 18, 19. After your soul, like a weary vessel tossed upon the waves of convictions, fears, terrors, could find no rest, God hath brought you at last into this haven of rest, to cast anchor within the veil; you have fled for refuge to the hope set before you; which hope you have as your anchor, sure and stedfast, entering into that within the veil, whither the Forerunner hath entered. Whither have you fled for refuge, when the law and justice of God was pursuing you for your debt, when they were ready to condemn you to hell prison? were you then made to flee for refuge to the Surety that God set before you, for paying of your debt, and to say, Lord, take bail of thy own Son for me? I despair of ever answering such a charge as justice and the law hath against me; but, O look for a discharge in the blood and righteousness of Jesus: and let that answer the charge. When Christ entered into the holiest with his blood within the veil, he sprinkled the mercy-seat, and when the soul takes hold of this blood and righteousness of Christ, as the ground of his acquittance from the charge of justice, then he cast anchor within the veil.

4. If the veil be effectually rent for you, then surely you cannot but have a superlative love for that glorious High-priest, who,

by his death, rent the veil, and went into the holiest for you. O can you say with Paul, He loved me and gave himself for me? Or, can you say with Peter, Thou that knowest all things, knowest that I love thee? Surely, they that love him not, know nothing yet savingly about the rending of the veil. It may be, some love him, and dare not so confidently say it as Peter did; but if you can say Amen to two texts of scripture, we may warrant you that you love him indeed. The one is a sad text, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha." 1 Cor. xvi. 22. The true lover of Christ can say, Amen; let them be even cursed that do not love him, and shall not love him. They that can say Amen to that now, they shall sit at Christ's right hand at the great day, and say Amen to the sentence of the great Judge, Depart from me, ye cursed. The other is a sweet text, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing," Rev. v. 12. The true lover of Christ can say, Amen; worthy, worthy, worthy is the Lamb to receive all praises, of all the redeemed, to all eternity. They that can set the Amen of faith to this now, they have begun to join with the triumphant company already within the veil; and they shall join with them forever hereafter, saying, Salvation to our God that sits upon the throne, "and unto the Lamb forever and ever." Indeed, if you love Christ at all, you love him with a superlative love; above husband, wife, children, lands, houses, goods, and worldly comforts. You do not love him at all, if you do not love him above all; and if you love him at all, the veil is rent, and you have got into the holiest in part; and if you will have patience, yet a little while and you shall get in fully. It is impossible that a man that truly loves Christ should ever go to hell.

5. If the veil be effectually rent, then all the veils on your part that continue to separate betwixt God and you, are matter of sad regret to you; the veil of indwelling sin and corruption, the veil of darkness and ignorance, the veil of remaining enmity, the veil of unbelief, these veils are whole and entire in the unregenerate; and though in believers these veils be rent, yet they are not removed; regenerating grace hath given them a rent that shall never be sewed up or healed again; but yet, alas! there are remaining veils within the believer, while here; though they be rent, yet they hang there, and many times sadly separate betwixt God and him; and hence he cries, O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death! O to be above corruption! O to be within the veil! that I may see him as he is, and be like

unto him. O! when shall all veils be removed? when shall the day break, and the shadows fly away? O! when shall the curtain be taken down? Christ stands behind the curtain, and does not manifest himself. Hath he been a veiled Christ at this communion? Then I am sure, believer, your heart will be saying, O that the curtain were drawn! O that the veil were rent in ten thousand pieces!

6. If the veil be effectually rent, then your heart will be effectually rent also; when the veil is rent, the heart is rent: and there is something it is rent for, and something it is rent from.

(1.) Something it is rent for: it is rent for sin. Indeed the sight of the rent veil, or of God reconciled by the blood of Jesus, will rend the heart for sin more than all the thunders of Sinai, or flames of hell; They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn. When a man reads his sins, as they are written upon the cross of Christ, with the red ink of his sin pardoning blood, O then he reads them over with tears of joy, and his heart is kindly rent from sin; then he cries, behold I am vile.—When the veil is rent, the heart is rent, not only for his own sins, but for the sins of others; Rivers of tears run down mine eyes, because of the wicked that break thy law. I beheld transgressors, and was grieved. They that can see God dishonoured, and hear men curse and swear, and blaspheme the holy name of God, and yet never be troubled about it, surely the veil remains upon their hearts, otherwise their hearts would rend for the sins of others, and of the generation: Set a mark upon the foreheads of them that sigh and cry, for all the abominations that are done in the midst thereof.—Again, when the veil is rent, the heart is rent for the Lord's anger and absence: nothing fears them more than the Lord's anger; O rebuke me not in thy wrath, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. Nothing affects them more than the Lord's absence; for these things they weep: Mine eyes, mine eyes run down with waters, because the Comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me. O the little lamentation after an absent God, an angry God at this day!—Again, when the veil is rent, the heart is rent for the calamities of the church, Jer. ix. 1; "O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughters of my people."
* * *

(2.) If the veil be effectually rent, then, as there are some things your heart will be rent for, so there are some things your hearts will be rent from. Why, your hearts will be rent from sin

as well as rent for sin; your heart will say with Ephraim, What have I to do any more with idols? what have I to do any more with lusts? All that expect to get into the holy of holies in the heavenly temple, are students of holiness and purity: He that hath this hope purifieth himself even as he is pure. Christ having rent the veil, entered into the holiest with blood; and believers are daily besprinkling themselves with that blood, that so they may enter in all sprinkled over with that blood also. Believers want not sin, and it cleaves to them here; but they are so far from cleaving to it, that it is the desire of their soul to be rent from it, and therefore their daily sins oblige them to make daily application to the blood of sprinkling.—Again, if the veil be effectually rent, then your heart will be rent from the world. O but this globe of earth, and all the glory of it looks but like a filthy mote, a piece of dung, to the man who hath got his heart within the veil. The glory of God in Christ darkens all created glory. What cares he for worldly pleasures, who hath Christ for his delight? What cares he for worldly profits, who hath Christ for his gain? What cares he for worldly honour, who hath Christ for his crown of glory? What cares he for the world's all, who hath Christ for his all in all? His heart is rent from the world.—Again, when the veil is rent, the man's heart is rent from the law: He that is married to Christ, is divorced from the law, Rom. vii. 4. The law, as a covenant of works, the believer hath nothing to do with it. He does not owe it a cup of cold water, as one says; for Christ hath perfectly fulfilled the condition of the covenant of works; and therefore, if the law challenge him, he sends it to Christ for a perfect obedience; if the penalty challenged him, he sends it to Christ for a complete satisfaction. He desires, with Paul, to be found in Christ, and would not be found in his own righteousness for ten thousand worlds: he sees so much unholiness in his own holiness; so much unrighteousness in his own righteousness; so much carnality, in all his spirituality; so much earthliness, in all his heavenliness; so much sin in all his duties; that he is sure God may damn him for his best duties as well as his worst sins: and therefore he hath no expectation from the law, but is rent from it, and joined to the Lord Jesus, saying, In the Lord only have I righteousness and strength—In a word, when the veil is effectually rent, the man is rent from Self: it is very hard indeed to rend a man from himself; self insinuates itself into all our praying, preaching, and communicating. However, the power of self is broken in all true believers. Instead of self-estimation he is brought to that, Behold, I am vile; he hath never a good word to

speak of himself, not a good thought to think of himself; but every time he prays, every time he communicates, he cries out, Behold, I am vile. Instead of self-justification, he is brought to that, I will lay my hand upon my mouth; I will not answer, I cannot justify myself, but must condemn myself, and justify the Lord. Instead of self-love, he is brought to that, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes: Self-loathing and abhorrence takes place. Instead of self-will, he is brought to that, Lord, what will thou have me to do? Instead of self-ease and carnal security, he is brought to that, O what shall I do to be saved? And after the first exercise about salvation hath landed in conversion, he is always exercising himself to godliness, and giving employment to Christ to carry on and complete his salvation, and restless till salvation be completed. Instead of self-fullness and sufficiency, he is brought to that, In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing: he sees himself empty of all good, and filled with all evil. Instead of self-confidence and hope, he is brought to that, We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God, which raised the dead. They are brought to despair in themselves. And instead of self righteousness, of which before, they are brought to that, All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. —Thus, in so far as they share of the saving benefit of the rent veil, so far are they rent from self: and thus, by these things you may examine yourselves, what interest you have in this privilege of Christ's rending of the veil betwixt God and you.

Use third, For terror to unbelievers, who, though they hear that the veil is rent, and so a free access to the holy of holies proclaimed, yet they are not at all concerned about entering in by this rent veil. The door of heaven is open to you, but you will not come in; the veil of the temple is rent, but you will not enter. O wretched creature, how can you answer that challenge, John v. 40; "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life?" You have no grace, no holiness, no repentance, no good thing; but, says Christ, you will not come to me that you might have grace, you will not come to me that you might have holiness, you will not come to me that you might have repentance, you will not come to me that you might have all good things that you need. The veil is rent, the door is open, but you will not come in. O! what will you do in the day of visitation?—What will you do, when he that rent the veil shall rend your soul and body in twain, and say, O slihter of the Son of God, come and give account of what use you have made of the sabbaths, sermons, and communion-

seasons that you enjoyed? Perhaps you are little thinking on death, but what know you but God will say to you, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee? I defy all the ministers on earth to assure you that you shall live to get another offer of Christ to-morrow. Many here will not come again to-morrow; and many here may never have another venture for heaven. O! what will you do, when he that rent the veil that you might have access to God, will rend these heavens, and come down to judgment? Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him! With what countenance will you look him in the face in judgment, when you did not care for a sight of his face in mercy through the rent veil? O what a dreadful voice will that be to you, when he will say, Rise ye dead, and come to judgment! Rise ye undervaluers of the gospel, and give an account of yourselves! Do you know, that while you are neglecting the gospel, and slighting the Son of God, you are saying with the Jews, "His blood be on us, and on our children?" The guilt of the blood of Christ is upon you, and upon the generation after you, that follow your example; and, O! how terrible will it be, when he comes to make inquisition for blood, for the blood of God which you trampled under foot! O! how will you then wish to be rent and ground in pieces, when you shall find all the curses of the Bible lighting upon you! O what will you do, when he that rent the veil, shall openly rend you from the company of God, saints, and angels, and set you with the goats on his left hand! When you shall see some of your acquaintances that are here, standing on his right hand, how will you then think with yourself, O what hindered me, that I did not consent to the gospel as well as they? You now join with them in the same congregation, but your hearts are disjoined from them; you separate from them in your choice, your affections, your disposition, and conversation; but ere long, there shall be another kind of separation; you that will not come in among them through the rent veil now, there shall be a veil hung up betwixt you and them, that shall never be rent; yea, a veil betwixt you and the glory of God; for you shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power: he that rent the veil to pieces, will eternally tear you to pieces, when there shall be none to deliver. Now, the veil is rent betwixt God and you, so as you may come to God's presence with boldness, through the new and living way that is consecrated through the veil; and you shall have God, and Christ, and saints, and angels, all welcoming you; for, the Spirit and the bride say,

Come ; and whoever will, let him come, for the veil is rent ; but if once you go down by the sides of bottomless Tophet, the veil that then shall be placed betwixt God and you, will never, never, never be rent, so long as eternity lasts. You will never hear again such a sweet word ; and, O what would you then give for such a word as that, Behold, the veil is rent, that you may come to God's favour and fellowship ? but no such news shall be heard in hell : now, only now, is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation ; to-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts ; but think of coming into the holy of holies, while you hear that the veil is rent, and nothing to hinder you.

Use fourth, for consolation to believers, to whom the veil is so effectually rent in twain, that from the marks given, they may conclude, they have made some entrance within the veil, by coming to a God in Christ, and casting their anchor within the veil. I have a word of comfort to say to you, though perhaps you are still complaining of many veils that separate betwixt God and you ; yet a little while, and you shall have a triumphant entrance ministered unto you, into the holy of holies above, whither the Forerunner hath for you entered ; for, "Behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom ;" therefore you shall come into Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon your heads ; you shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away, and then all veils shall be rent and removed for ever. I will tell you, for your comfort, of a few veils that then shall be rent ; for the rending of the veil of the temple, promises the rending of all veils in a short while.

1. Then, the veil of sin and corruption shall be rent in twain ; all the rents, all the strokes that sin gets by the word, the rod, the Spirit, never rends a body of death from you ; but still you are groaning under a sense of indwelling-sin, that separates betwixt God and you : but then, O then, believer, this veil shall be rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and from the bottom to the top ; both root and branch shall be rent and removed ; for, When he shall appear, you shall be like him : your conformity to him shall be complete ; you must go to heaven dragging a body of death after you ; but whenever you come to the port of glory, there will be a joyful parting ; for you shall take an everlasting farewell of all your lusts and corruptions ; then you will say, Farewell with all our hearts ; and glory to God that we shall never meet again. Blessed be God, we shall never see your face again.

2. Then shall the veil of darkness and distance be rent in

twain; for then darkness will give way to light, glorious light; and distance will give way to presence, glorious and everlasting presence. Now you say, I cannot see him, he is far away; but, says Christ, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory:" to be "with me where I am;" there is distance removed; to "behold my glory," there is darkness removed. Darkness and distance now, create doubts and fears; but doubts and fears will then take wings and flee away, never to return again; for, The face of the covering shall be entirely removed, Isa. xxv. 7, 8.

3. Then shall the veil of ordinances be rent in twain: any view we have of God's glory now, is mediate, through the intervention of means and ordinances; any glimpse we get of his beauty is through the dim glass of duties and ordinances; for, Now we see through a glass darkly, says the apostle; but the time comes when the glass shall be broken, and we shall see him as he is, in an immediate manner; Rev. xxi. 22. "I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb, are the temple of it." And then shall the saints be able to say, the half of his glory hath not been told, when they shall see him face to face, and not the skirts of his garments only.

The veil of scanty enjoyments will be rent in twain; the veil of passing blinks and interrupted views. The life of the saint here, is mostly a life of desire; he can never get his desire fully satisfied; and when you get any desirable meeting with the Lord, why, it is but a blink and away; your desires are but increased thereby, and your melancholy wants remain unsupplied: but within the veil all desires shall be satisfied, all wants shall be supplied; for, "In thy presence is fullness of joy; and at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." No clouds, no night, no desertion there; no such complaint as this, O why hidest thou thy face? The best communion and enjoyment here admits of interruption; but that which is above, is uninterrupted; no tempting devil, no deceitful heart, no dismal cloud to darken their day, or interrupt their vision and fruition of God. Christ is here only passing by us, and as a way-faring man, that tarries only for a night; yea, hardly for a night: no sooner does he enter, but he is away; no sooner does the heart begin to open to him sometime, than, alas! he is gone, Song v. 6. "I opened to my Beloved, but my Beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone:" but then their enjoyment shall be full, and everlasting, and uninterrupted; for, So shall they ever be with the Lord. Partial enjoyments will give way to eternally full enjoy-

ments; For when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away.

5. The veil of church-disorders and confusion shall be rent in twain. Many times you have reason to sigh and complain, that matters are all out of order in the church; the veil of confusion and disorder is upon it, and the glory departed; nothing but clouds in our sky. * * * It is with the church, as it is with particular believers, the Lord usually brings them to an extremity, before he give them a deliverance: the darkest night may usher in the clearest day; to them that fear his name the Sun of righteousness shall arise. Whatever dark eclipses the sun may be under at present, do not say the sun is gone out of the firmament, because it is a cloudy day; the clouds may grow thicker and thicker yet; yea, there may not only be dark clouds, but rain, and perhaps a terrible shower of wrath is coming; many things look like it: but though there should be both clouds and rain, say not the sun is gone, and will never return and shine again; he that rent the veil, will rend the clouds in his own time. Yea, the rending of the veil of the temple did foretell good to the church. It says, that he will rear up a more glorious temple, such as is promised, Isa. liv. 11, 12. "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones." Why, what is the meaning of all this? See it in verse 13. "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children." You see it is a time of great darkness in the church, so it is indeed; but here is a promise of light that shall arise, All thy children shall be taught of the Lord. Is it a time of great division and contention? so it is; but here is a promise of great peace, "Great shall be the peace of thy children." We hope there will be a more full accomplishment of this in the church, even in time; but when will all this come to pass? why, we may come to be tried with another kind of tempest before it come to pass; for, see how the promise is ushered in, "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted;" then follows the promise of a pleasant issue. But withal never expect a perfect church upon earth; we hope it will be more pure, but it never will be perfect, till that which is in part shall be done away. The time is coming, when the bride, the Lamb's wife, shall be presented to him without spot or wrinkle; when the union of the saints shall be entire, and the communion of saints shall be perfect. There

will be no contention, no division, no disorder in the general assembly and church of the first-born that are written in heaven.

6. The veil of militant graces will be rent in twain, and nothing but triumphant graces will have the throne: Now remains faith, hope, and love; but the greatest of these is love. Why, love is a triumphant grace; and faith and hope will resign to love the chair of state. There will be no need of militant graces in the church triumphant; no need of faith, where vision is; no need of hope, where fruition is; no need of patience, where all tribulation is at an end; no need of any fighting grace, where there is nothing but victory, light, life, love, liberty, joy, glory. You have a fighting life of it here, but then a song of victory; victory for evermore.

7. The veil of infirmities will be rent in twain: here believers have infirmities on their bodies, that have no small influence on the actings of their souls; infirmities on their souls, darkness and dullness in their intellectual powers; infirmities of the new nature, though created in Christ Jesus, though supported by his power, and guided by his grace; yet still it is a weak thing, like a newborn babe: but none of these infirmities are in them that are within the veil; they are become perfect; Then shall we all come in the unity of the faith, to a perfect man in Christ, Eph. iv. 13. Then that scripture shall be fully accomplished, Isa. xxx. 26; "The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days."

8. The veil of mortality shall be rent in twain; for, This mortal shall put on immortality; this corruption, shall put on incorruption; and death shall be swallowed up in victory. The veil of flesh, the clay tabernacle, will be rent in twain; "We know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:" 2 Cor. v. 1, 2. O was you ever brought to that man's saying, "O mortality, mortality! O time, time! that will not haste away, to let eternity come!" Was you never content to shake the sand-glass of time to win to eternity? was you never content to take death in your arms, and say, Welcome, welcome; O friend, welcome news, that mortality shall be swallowed up of life?

9. The veil of incapacity will be rent in twain: now you are not capable of that glory which you shall be able to behold and contain in heaven; your eye is so weak, that you cannot behold the

Sun of righteousness shining in his strength. Though light be the most pleasing thing to the eye; yet the meridian brightness of the sun cannot be looked upon without destroying the sight; because the faculty is not so strong, nor capable to receive the object: so it is here, we want a capacity to behold the light of glory; but within the veil, or in heaven, the faculty will be strengthened, and the capacity enlarged, to hold an exceeding great and eternal weight of glory; the want of which hath made some, in time, when their cup hath overflowed with consolation, to cry out, "Lord, hold thy hand, thy servant is a clay vessel, and can hold no more." Indeed it is little we get here below, and it is little we can hold, though we should get our fill; but in heaven the capacity will be so enlarged, that it will be able to hold a fullness of God, a fullness of glory, a fullness of the Spirit, fullness of joy at God's right-hand for ever and ever.

10. The veil of weariness shall be rent in twain; here we soon weary of praying and preaching, we soon weary of sermons and sacraments. I doubt not but many here may be wearied to the heart with this day's work. Indeed little wonder that the carnal heart say, What a weariness is this work? "For," as one says, "you may take a carnal man, tie him to a post, and then kill him with praying and preaching only." But even the spiritual man himself, while he hath a wearying body of death about him, he wearies of ordinances, he wearies of God's service; but in heaven, within the veil, they shall serve him without wearying or fainting, Rev. xxii. 3; there his servants shall serve him. Their weary service here is hardly to be called a service; but there his servants shall serve him indeed. O! will it not be a mystery, and a great wonder, if we, who cannot pray half an hour to an end, and hardly hear an hour to an end, but will be toiled, as if we had done some marvelous work, shall be brought to heaven, and never weary of the service of heaven? Here is comfort, believer, you shall through all the years of eternity, praise him, and never weary.

In a word, all the vials of trouble and trials will be rent in twain; There remains a rest for the people of God.—The veil of sorrow and anxiety shall be rent in twain; for, All tears shall be wiped from their eyes; Sorrow and sighing shall flee away.—The veil of sickness and uneasiness of body or soul shall be rent in twain; The inhabitants of that land shall not say, I am sick; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.—The veil of wandering thoughts and vain imaginations will be rent in twain; you shall not have a wrong thought or conception of

God throughout all eternity ; for all your heart-plagues, lusts, and corruptions, that you have been wrestling with all your days, will leave you ; and I am sure you will leave them with such pleasure and satisfaction, and be so glad to part with them, that you will hardly shake hands with them ; but rather say, the back of my hand to you : many a sad hour, many a sigh and groan have you cost me ; but it is well for me, that now I am quit of you for ever. And I cannot but say, that they who now have a glad heart to think of a parting with these, and a meeting with Christ for ever, they have gotten some communion with him this day.

Finally, The veil of time will be rent in twain ; and the streams of time will be swallowed up in the ocean of eternity. O how will you say with wonder then, O hath such a black and ugly creature as I was, gotten glorious Christ in my arms, never, never, never to part again ! O how will his kind looks dart a sweetness and joy inexpressible into your hearts, when you shall be led with the Lamb about the river of living water, when time shall be no more ! Take all this comfort into your hearts, believers, for the God of consolation allows you to rejoice for ever, and to rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, which you shall see and be for ever possessed of within the veil.

Use Fifth, For exhortation. All I shall now say, is this, if the veil be rent in twain by the death of Christ, O then come and see, come and take, come and wonder, come and enter, come and sing.

1. Come and see. When the seal was opened, Rev. vi. then the voice cried, Come and see : so, when the veil is rent, O come and see ; come and see. Turn aside and see this great sight, the veil of separation betwixt God and us rent in twain from the top to the bottom. What was to be seen within the veil of the temple, you are told, Heb. ix. 4, 5. There was to be seen the golden censer, the golden pot, the ark of the covenant, the tables of the covenant, and over it the cherubims of glory overshadowing the mercy-seat. What all these did signify, I cannot stand to shew ; but in short, they all pointed out the glory of God in Jesus Christ. Now the veil is rent ; then look into the holiest, and see the glorious mystery of redeeming love ; see the wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and grace of God, manifested brightly in the face of Jesus, who by his death rent the veil, that we might see heaven, and the glory of it.

2. Come and take. The pot of manna was within the veil, as you see in that forecited text, which signified Christ the bread of life. Now, that the veil is rent ; you may come to the holiest and

take manna: if you go away fasting this night, it will be your own fault; for you have liberty to come and take, since the veil is rent. Christ himself is the manna; and if you take him, you take all things with him that you need. Do you need a pardon? Why, the opening of the veil is a proclamation of pardon upon a jubilee-day. In the year of jubilee, the priests entered within the veil into the holiest; and there was a discharge of debt, and liberty proclaimed; so here is our jubilee; Christ our High-priest having rent the veil, and entered into the holiest, he issues out his proclamation of indemnity; he proclaims pardon of debt. Many a bankrupt drowned in debt is in this green; but behold, the cry is, Go forth ye prisoners of hope. There is a pardon in this pot of manna, if you will but take it; yea, there is life to your souls, and death to your sins in this pot of manna, if you will take it. *Object.* But you will say, I cannot take what is offered to me. *Answ.* I wish you indeed knew your own weakness, and sensible of it; No man can come to me, says Christ, except the Father draw him; But, O! hath God drawn you so far as that you are willing to take Christ, though you can do nothing; and willing that Christ should take you? Do you know what it is to believe? It is not to do some great thing by your own power, no: it is a grace that hath two eyes; with the one it looks to a man's self, and sees his own utter weakness, saying, Not that I am sufficient of myself to think any thing as of myself; and with the other it looks to God, and sees his infinite power, saying, My sufficiency is of God. So, that to believe, is to see that you can do nothing, and to employ the power of God to do all things for you, and in you that you need. Now, when you are called to take Christ, you are called to take and employ the power of God to do all things that you are called to do, but cannot do of yourself; this power of God is in your offer, and you may give employment to it: Isa. xxvii. 5; "Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me." Did you ever know before that the power of God was at your service? Take hold of his power, and give employment to his power, saying, Lord, let this power of thine be put forth upon an indigent creature, that I may take Christ. Behold, the Father offers him for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption: there is manna indeed, which you have for the taking in this manner, saying, Lord, take me, and I will take thee. Let thy power and grace be glorified upon me. If you be in earnest, it is a bargain; for he never called a sinner to take his Son upon any other terms, but that they only consent that Christ perform all the work, and take all the glory.

3. Come and wonder: "Behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom." Come and wonder, that all hinderances are taken out of the way of your access to God. Wonder at the love of God in sending his Son to rend the veil; wonder at the love of Christ in rending the veil, that you might have access to God; wonder that it was rent at all; wonder that it was rent in twain; wonder that it was rent from the top to the bottom; wonder at the thing, and wonder at the occasion of it. Christ gave up the ghost, and the veil of the temple was rent. The rending of the veil cost him his life, it cost him his soul; his soul was made an offering for sin, and then the veil was rent. O, is there no wondering at this? It would be an evidence of a good communion to you, if you were filled with wonder. A short wonder is better than a long prayer.

4. Come and enter. Not only see and take, and wonder, but also boldly enter into the holiest; not standing in the outer-court, as it were, or behind the veil gazing, or only putting in your hand by the rent veil, but come in wholly, and enter boldly. The veil is rent in twain; O then, come and enter by the rent. You may all come boldly to the holiest, by this new and living way that is consecrated through the veil. O may such a dog, such a filthy dog as I come? Yes, we use to say, When doors are open, dogs come in; the door is open, the veil is rent; let dogs come in and get a crumb. The Gentiles are called dogs in scripture; and it is said, Without are dogs, murderers, sorcerers, the licentious; but to all the dogs that are without the veil, we, in God's name, proclaim liberty to come in, and get what will save you and sanctify you. You say you have nothing to bring with you, no grace, no good. I tell you there is none here, but they have something to bring to Christ with them. What is that? Have you not much sin and misery to bring with you? have you not much want, weakness, and wickedness, to bring with you? Come with all your ills, in order to get all good: come with your sins, and get grace; come with your guilt, and get a pardon; come with your filthiness, and get cleansing; come with your wants, and get fullness. Let dogs come in and get a crumb: yea, a feast. There is nothing to hinder you, since the veil is rent. The law is not in your way, for that is fulfilled; the flaming cherubim is not in your way, for Christ hath rent the veil of God's wrath, and divided the red-sea of divine vengeance, that you might pass through. Have you a mind for heaven, man, woman? here is the way, it lies through the rent veil; and if you take not this way, you shall never enter there:

For there are two porters that will keep all unbelievers out, namely, justice and holiness. Justice will say, I must be satisfied; holiness will say, I must be vindicated, or else you shall never enter here: but if you come by this rent veil, you shall have open entrance into the heavenly kingdom. Christ will say to justice, Let such a man in, for I paid you all his debt; holiness, Let such a man in, for I gave you a perfect obedience for him; look upon him in me. This will satisfy both these porters to let believers pass. O then, come and enter through the veil that is rent. Christless soul, who will satisfy justice and holiness for you? These porters will never be bribed by you. Therefore, O come, and enter by the rent veil, for there is no other way to heaven.

5. Come and sing. If you have made entrance, O sing, Glory to God in the highest, that ever rent this veil. You might go home singing, if you took up the true meaning of the text, and turned it to a song; and sing it with understanding, "Behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom." Behold, the veil is rent, and shall never be whole again. Behold, the work is completed by the Son of God; the work is done, and shall never be undone. To the Author and Finisher of this great work be glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON VIII.

Covenanted Grace

FOR COVENANTING WORK.*

“Thou hast avouched the LORD, this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice: And the LORD hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldest keep all his commandments.”

DEUT. xxvi. 17, 18.

THE solemnity of this very day hath been great and remarkable, and somewhat exactly parallel to it you have in these words. From the preceding verse, God, by his servant Moses, binds all duties of obedience to his divine commands, upon this people of Israel, by a threefold argument. The first is drawn from the authority of God, verse 19. They were not the commands of Moses, but of God: infinite Wisdom framed them, and the power of the King of kings made them binding to them. This day the Lord thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes, &c. The second argument is drawn from his being their covenanted God, ver. 17; “Thou hast avouched the Lord this day, to be thy God,” &c. A third argument is drawn from their being his covenanted people, ver. 18; “And the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people,” &c. Here he covenants to make them his peculiar people, his obedient people, that they should keep all his commandments; and farther, verse 19, to make them a high people, and to make them “high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour;” and make them a holy people; “That thou mayest be a holy people unto the LORD thy God, as he hath spoken.” But I confine myself especially to the verses first read.

* This Sermon was preached at Sterling, December 28th, 1742, in the evening of the day on which the ASSOCIATE PRESBYTERY did, with uplifted hands, solemnly renew the NATIONAL COVENANTS.

I know the way wherein some go to work, in commenting upon this, and such like texts, is, as if there were but one mutual covenant between God and them here spoken of; whereof their part was a promise and oath of obedience; and God's part, a promise, that upon that condition he would do so and so for them; and thus turning it to a covenant of works, with stipulation and restipulation. But, we have not so learned Christ, nor the truth as it is in him, as to conceive it in this manner: it was a gross view of it, this way, that made the most part of that Israel of God, so soon to break all their engagements; they made a covenant of duty with God, without taking hold on God's covenant of grace, exhibit to them; and hence they so perfidiously break their covenant: and therefore, when God returned to them, he put them in mind of his covenant which they had forgotten, and put a difference between that covenant of theirs, and his covenant; "Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth,"—and "thou shalt remember thy ways, and be ashamed;" and I will do so and so for thee, "but not by thy covenant," Ezek. xvi. 60, 61. Whatever peculiar privileges, and temporal blessings, were promised to Israel of old, yet they being all typical of spiritual blessings, and the heavenly Canaan; and however dark this legal Old Testament dispensation was, yet it was a covenant of grace they were under: and hence they were under a special obligation to serve and obey him in a covenant of duty.

In the words, then, you have, more generally, these three things.

1st, Their covenant of duty and service to God, wherein they avouch him to be their God, and engage to walk in his ways, &c.

2dly, The foundation and ground of this their covenant of duty, and the grand encouragement they had to enter into it, namely, God's covenant of grace and promise, wherein he avouches them to be his; and promises to make them a holy and happy people: and happy would they all have been for ever, if they all had taken hold of this covenant of promise. But though a promise was left to them, yet many of them entered not into the earthly Canaan, nor to the heavenly either, "because of their unbelief," Heb. iii. 19. They were not all Israel that were of Israel. They were all avouched to be God's people in an external federal way, as they were a visible church in general; but there was only a small remnant that were his people, in a special, internal, spiritual, and distinguished sense, as being true believers, who laid hold on his covenant of grace, in order to their being capable to stand to their covenant of duty, and so show themselves to be his dutiful and

peculiar people: however, the outward dispensation of the covenant of promise respected them all equally, that they might build their engagement to duty, upon this foundation of God's covenant of grace, wherein alone their furniture for all duty was provided.

3dly, You have in the words the solemnity of this twofold transaction, relating to their covenant of duty, and God's covenant of grace, as the ground and encouragement of it: and the solemnity appears

1. In the manner wherein they assert their covenant of duty, and God asserts his covenant of grace; it is by a solemn avouching: they openly own, acknowledge, and confess him to be their God; and he openly owns, acknowledges, and confesses them to be his people.

2. There is a solemnity in the particularity of this twofold transaction; they are led to deal with God by their covenant, and God with them by his covenant, in such a particular way, that they act in a body as one man, acting and transacting with that one only, the living and true God; but with him as a promising God in Christ, covenanting with Christ, leading them to take hold of that covenant, every one in particular for himself, that they may be capable to devote themselves to him and serve him. Hence the words are, "Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God," and "the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people."

3. There is a solemnity in the universality of the matter engaged unto in this twofold engagement; they engage "to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice:" and, in order hereunto, God in his covenant engages, by his promise, to make them his, to make them holy, to make them happy, to do all their work in them and for them.

4. There is a solemnity in the date of this double engagement, this day; intimating that a remark is to be put upon the time wherein such a solemn thing is transacted; therefore, in the preceding verse, together with this text, *this day* is three times mentioned: **THIS DAY** the Lord thy God hath commanded thee; **THIS DAY** thou hast avouched the Lord to be thy God; and **THIS DAY** the Lord hath avouched thee to be his people. Moses took instruments upon it; and dates his instruments, that *this day* it was done. * * *

The date of the time, this day, applied here, both to his engagement, in the covenant of grace, and our engagement in the cove-

nant of duty, points out the necessary connection between these two; or the absolute necessity of his engaging for us, in order to our engaging to him; and though his engagement is last mentioned in the text, yet it is the first intended: for, though it is ordinary in scripture, that the duty is sometimes first named, and then the means and motives afterwards; yet surely, in the order of nature, the means and motives to the duty are first considered, and then the duty practised accordingly. Hence, Isa. lv. 7; "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." Here the motive is last mentioned, but yet it is the first thing intended and viewed by the returning sinner, in order to excite him to a compliance with the exhortation, and induce him to return. Thus, Isaiah xlv. 22. "Return unto me; for I have redeemed thee:" the motive and argument comes last, "I have redeemed thee:" yet it is first in view; for redeeming love believed, influences the gospel-return; "Return unto me; for I have redeemed thee."

Thus the ground and foundation of our solemn engagement is God's engaging first in a covenant of grace to us through Christ; and though this be last here mentioned, it is the first in order of nature and time both, as being the spring and fountain of the former. * * * The doctrine I observed from the text, is the following:

DOCT. That God's solemn engagement in Christ unto us, by a covenant of grace and promise, lays us under the strongest obligation, both to come under, and to be faithful to our solemn engagements unto him, in a covenant of gratitude and duty.

By our solemn engagements, I understand our avouching the Lord to be our God, and that we will walk in his ways, etc. By God's solemn engagements, I understand his avouching us to be of his peculiar people: and promising to enable us to keep all his commandments, and to make us holy and happy: and because, by these arguments drawn from God's being Israel's covenanted God, and hence their being his covenanted people, Moses binds all the duties of obedience to God's commands upon them; therefore, I say, that this is a strong argument and encouragement to be firm and faithful to our engagements.

I hope I need not stand upon the confirmation of the truth of it; the Preface to the Ten commandments teacheth us this doctrine; "That because God is the Lord, and our God, and Redeemer, therefore we are bound to keep all his commandments."

We are bound to avouch them, to know and acknowledge him to be the Lord, and our God, and Redeemer; we are bound to serve and obey him: which is much the same with this doctrine I am upon.

In speaking to it, through divine assistance, following the order of the text, I would essay these things.

I. Touch a little at the engagement of a covenanted people here, their avouching God.

II. At the engagement of a covenanted God, his avouching them.

III. Touch at the solemnity of these engagements, both of his and theirs.

IV. Prove the doctrine by scripture and reason, That God's solemn engagement in Christ unto us, by a covenant of grace and promise, brings us under the strongest obligation, both to come under, and be faithful unto our solemn engagements to him, in a covenant of gratitude and duty.

V. To make some application of the whole subject.

1. We are to speak of the engagement of a covenanted people: they are expressed in the first verse of the text, Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, etc. Where we may observe,

1, The nature of this engagement; it is an avouching; that is, a solemn confessing and acknowledging the name of God, according to that word, Psal. cxlvii. 12; "Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem, praise thy God, O Zion." And it is confessing him with the mouth, flowing from a believing in him with the heart; "For with the heart, man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Rom. x. 10.

2. Observe the matter of this engagement; which consists of two general points.

[1.] A solemn profession of faith, or of laying hold upon God's covenant of grace; that is, an avouching the Lord to be thy God. The foundation of this claim we have to him as our God, is not only the command of God, saying, "Thou shalt have none other gods before me;" and thereby requiring us to "know and acknowledge him to be the Lord our God and Redeemer:" but also his promise, saying in his covenant, I will be thy God; and a declaration of his name, saying, "I am the Lord thy God." This is his name: and when we take hold of this name, we not only acknowledge his sovereignty over us, as THE LORD; but also his propriety in us, as OUR GOD; otherwise we tear asunder, and rend to pieces his name, which is the Lord thy God; by which he

declares upon the matter, As sure as I am the Lord, so sure am I thy God. Here is the great name of this covenanting God in Christ. We have no other warrant, but one and the same, to acknowledge his sovereignty over us, as the Lord; and to acknowledge his relation to us, as our God. And shall we confess the one part of his name, and not the other? Or rather, shall we acknowledge the most awful, and reject the most amiable part of it? Wo would be to us for ever, if he be the Lord, and not OUR God! But our everlasting welfare lies in this, that he is the Lord our God: his name is, "I AM THAT I AM;" and when he explains this name to us, he says, "I am the Lord thy God." O solid everlasting foundation, for the assurance of faith! As sure as "I AM," so sure "I am the Lord thy God."

Now, here is the chief and leading matter of our engagement: our taking hold of God's covenant of grace, or of God as our covenanting God in Christ, and avouching him to be our God; and so to be our righteousness and our strength; our righteousness, that we may stand justified in him, as JEHOVAH, our righteousness; and our strength, that we may be sanctified in him, and have ability and furniture for our work and warfare from him. And so our avouching the Lord to be our God, is also a saying, We will go in the strength of the Lord GOD: making mention of his righteousness, and his only, Psal. lxxi. 16. Hence,

[2.] the next general, in the matter of the engagement, is a solemn profession of obedience, or a resolution, in the name and strength of this our God, "To walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice." Here is a five-fold expression of what may be supposed to be one and the same thing, but yet under distinct considerations; and so,

1. "To walk in his ways," or an engagement to do so, may import, a regard to his laws, as they are the beaten path, wherein he wills all his people continually to go on, by a progressive motion; and the ways wherein alone they can expect to meet with him, and enjoy his company and fellowship.

2. An engagement "to keep his statutes," may import, a regard to his laws, as they are statute and ordained in the court of heaven, to be a standing and established rule of faith and practice unto us.

3. An engagement to keep "his commandments," may import, a regard to the same laws of God, as they have a stamp of divine authority on them; we engage to regard them, as they have engraven upon them the authority of a commanding God.

4. An engagement to keep "his judgments," may import, a regard to the same laws, as they are the result of infinite wisdom, or as they have engraven upon the image of God, as a God of judgment, or whose understanding is infinite. And whereas these are all spoken of in the plural number, namely, ways, statutes, commandments, and judgments, it imports an engagement and resolution to observe all things whatsoever he hath commanded, Matt. xxviii. 28, without reckoning any thing too little or small, that hath his authority stamped upon it; for, "whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven:" Matt. v. 19. It imports, then, a regard to whatsoever truth God hath revealed, or duty he hath enjoined in his holy word, which principally teaches us, "What we are to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of us."

5. An encouragement to hearken to his voice, as in the text, may import a regard to the same statutes, commandments, and judgments, as they are the voice of God from heaven, to us upon earth; which is called, The "more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place;" 2 Peter i. 19. A more sure word than any other voice from heaven; yea, more sure than that voice that came from the excellent glory, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased," Matt. iii. 17. To hearken to his voice may also import, a due regard to the voice of God, as in his word, so in his providence, explained by, and in an agreeableness to his word, the "only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him." Hence we are to hear and regard the voice of God in all his dispensations: in his mercies, with thankfulness; and in his judgments, with reverence. We are called to hearken to him both in his word and rod; "The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name; hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it," Micah vi. 9.

In a word, these expressions import a resolution to cleave to all the ordinances he hath established among them; for, "He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation;" Psalm cxlvii. 19, 20.

Thus it includes a solemn engagement to adhere to all the degrees of reformation once attained to; and so of the same kind with that which we this day have been called unto.

II. The second thing proposed is, To touch a little at the engagement of our covenanting God in Christ, by a covenant of grace

which is the ground and foundation of this foresaid covenant of duty. This is expressed in the second verse of the text; and, "The Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee," etc. Here let me observe also the nature and matter of this engagement.

1st, The nature of it; it is his avouching: and that is his solemn confessing and acknowledging us to be his peculiar people; which we are to conceive of in a way agreeably to the glorious majesty of God we have to do with, who, since our fall in Adam, the first covenant-head cannot transact with us immediately, but in a new covenant-head, viz. the Lord Jesus Christ, who was given to be the covenant of the people; and in whom the covenant of grace stands fast. God could not promise to be our God, or to make us his people, but upon honourable terms; terms consistent with his infinite dignity; terms vindicating the honour of God's holiness, declared in the precepts of the law that we broke, and satisfying the justice of God, declared in the threatening of the law that we incurred: and because God, in a consistency with his declared purpose, could not engage to be any thing to us, but a consuming fire to destroy us, except upon these honourable terms; therefore he sent his eternal Son, according to the eternal concert between the Father and him, to assume our nature, and come into our law-room, to be the Lord our righteousness; and his engagement to do and suffer in our room, is previous, not only to any engagement of ours, in a covenant of duty and gratitude, but previous to God's engagement to be a God to us, or to make us his people: and Christ having both come under and fulfilling his engagements, with his whole heart and soul, saying, Lo, I come; I delight to do thy will, O my God, etc. See how the great God notified this to the world, some times with a behold; Behold my Servant, whom I uphold, Isa. xli. 10: some times with a Who is this? Jer. xxx. 21; "Who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me, saith the Lord." And, as the product of this engagement of Christ in our room, God not only came under a new engagement to Christ, and a new relation to him, to be his God and Father, upon this new-covenant footing, Psalm lxxxix. 26; but also under a new engagement and relation to us in him, as our God and Father in him, John xx 17: and therefore it immediately follows, in the forecited Jer xxx. 22, "Ye shall be my people; and I will be your God." And hence,

2. The matter of this engagement, in and through Christ Jesus is,

1. To make us his people: or to avouch, confess, and acknowledge us as his peculiar people, as he hath promised us in Christ Jesus, In whom all the promises of God are Yea and Amen, to the glory of God, and the promise, Ye shall be my people, necessarily imports the other, I will be your God; for, our relation to him, as his people, presupposes his relation to us, as our God in Christ. God appropriating us to himself, and we appropriating God to ourselves; he publicly owns us to be his, and we publicly own him to be ours. His acknowledgement of us to be his peculiar people, imports, that we are not our own, but his, so we are honoured with peculiar privileges; to be the people of his peculiar choice; Being set apart for himself: the people of his peculiar delight; His delights are with the sons of men: the people of his peculiar desire; He shall greatly desire thy beauty: the people of his peculiar pleasure; For the Lord takes pleasure in his people: they are the people of his peculiar pasture; he feeds them among the lilies. In a word, to be his friends, his favourites, his jewels, his crown, his glory; I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory.

2. The matter of his engagement in Christ unto us, in a covenant of promise, is to make us a holy people. This is both the end and design of his covenant of grace and promise; and it is the end and design of his bringing us under a covenant of duty and gratitude, that we should keep all his commandments. This is expressly promised in his covenant of grace; "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them," Ezek. xxxvi. 27. And though we are bound no farther to do, than he hath bound himself by promise to enable (whence we go forth depending only upon the grace and strength of our promising God) yet, for exciting us to our duty, and strengthening our hands therein, God hath called us to vow, and pay our vows to him: and so there is, upon the matter, a superadded obligation laying upon us, by our covenant of gratitude and duty; which, though it binds us to nothing but what we were materially, antecedently, or authoritatively bound to before, by the word of God; yet, corroboratively, it strengthens the obligation with the solemnity of an oath; upon which instruments are taken, such a day and date, "Thou hast avouched the LORD this day;" "and the LORD hath avouched thee this day." Hence,

III. The third thing I proposed to touch a little at, was, The solemnity of these engagements; both of ours, in a covenant of gratitude; and of his, in a covenant of grace.

1. The solemnity of the people's engagement.—Here I shall only observe, as in the explication, there is a solemnity in the way and manner of their covenanting; it is in a way of open avowing and avouching the Lord to be their God,—There is a solemnity in the particularity of their appropriating God to themselves; Thou hast avouched the Lord to be thy God: *THY* God.—There is a solemnity in the universality of the engagement; it relates to all things imported in keeping his statutes, commandments, judgments, and hearkening to his voice; as already explained.—And there is a solemnity in the day and date of the instruments taken upon the whole: *THIS DAY* thou hast avouched the Lord to be thy God, and to serve him.

2. The solemnity of God's engagement here, in a covenant of grace, is equally great.—There is a solemnity in the way and manner of his engagement; it is in a way of open avowing and avouching his relation to, and propriety in them.—There is a solemnity in the particularity of the choice he openly makes of them, as his peculiar people.—There is a solemnity in the universality of the promise in Christ Jesus unto them, as it respects all things that he calls them to engage unto, namely, the keeping of all his commandments. In Christ, our justifying head, they are all kept already as a covenant, and kept perfectly; he hath finished the work the Father gave him to do: but in him, as our sanctifying head, we are called to keep them gratefully and obedientially; not as a rule of justification and acceptance, (for, We are accepted only in the Beloved;) but as a rule of sanctification and obedience; and, for this end, he hath promised his grace to be sufficient for us; his strength to be made perfect in our weakness: and his promise in the gospel extends to all things commanded in the law as our duty.—And lastly, there is a solemnity in the day and date of God's engagement to and for them, upon which also instruments are taken by Moses, the typical Mediator between God and Israel: even so by Jesus Christ, our true Mediator between God and us, may I say, instruments are taken, that God's covenant of grace, for our behoof, is dated the same day, the same time with our covenant of gratitude with him; and it is well for us that these go hand in hand together: which leads me,

IV. To the fourth thing proposed, which is, to shew that God's solemn engagement in Christ unto us, in his covenant of grace, lays us under the strongest obligation, both to come under, and to be faithful to our solemn engagements to him in our covenant of duty. For clearing and evincing this, let it be considered,

[1.] We are by nature without God in the world, and highly guilty before God, through the breach and violation of the covenant of works; and, having broken our credit, God cannot trust us, nor enter immediately into any covenant again with us, nor suffer us to enter immediately into any covenant with him, but only in and through a Surety: therefore, the covenant is not made with us immediately, but with Christ; "I have made a covenant with my chosen," Psalm lxxxix. 3. We were never proper parties in that covenant, nor could ever subscribe to it as parties; but only as consenters in a day of power. Therefore, God's covenant of grace is a thing quite distinct from, and yet the ground and foundation of our covenant of gratitude and duty towards him, that hath provided such a well-furnished, new-covenant head for us.

[2.] Consider, we are by nature without strength; having lost our God, we have lost our strength and ability to do any service acceptable to God; therefore, in vain would we promise and swear to serve him in a covenant of duty, if he had not first given his word and oath in a covenant of grace, that he would be our God and our strength, who gives power to the saint, and to him that hath no might he increaseth strength.

[3.] Consider, that God exhibiting himself to us in a covenant of grace and promise, lays us under a manifold obligation both to come under and to be faithful to our solemn engagements, in a covenant of gratitude and duty towards him.

1. Gratitude itself obliges us to promise ourselves to him that hath promised himself to us; solemnly to avouch ourselves to be his who solemnly avouches himself to be ours. How should he regard our fits and starts at his service, if we would not resolve, through his grace, to be his fixed, settled and engaged servants? As in gratitude, so,

2. In point of ingenuity; we can do no less, since he hath the best right to us: if he hath loved us, and given himself for us, we ought to love him, and give ourselves to him. Also,

3. In point of equity; it is requisite, seeing he hath such a right to us, and shews such mercy on us, that we come under engagements to him again. "I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service," Rom. xii. 1. It is said of our Lord Jesus Christ, Luke ii. 22; that Joseph and Mary, "When the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord." Was our Emmanuel presented to

God in our room! And is it not equal that we, through his grace, present ourselves to him? Again,

4. In point of evidence, for shewing that we are interested in the covenant of grace; and for shewing the sincerity of faith in it, and love to the Mediator of it, and concern for his glory, we are obliged to give ourselves to him in a covenant of gratitude; for, grace shall "be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," Eph. vi. 24. Further,

5. In point of honour done to God, and for glorifying him on earth, and before the world, we are obliged openly to avouch him that avouches us; Zion, thy God confess. And as we ought to glorify God by making, so by keeping covenant with him: but still we are to beware of confounding his covenant of grace with our covenant of duty, by thinking the former is broken when the latter is broken. Finally,

6. In point of interest; the covenant of grace promises unspeakable advantage to them that are faithful engagers in a covenant of gratitude, and in a way of taking hold of his covenant; for, to such there is a promise, Isa. lvi. 7; "Them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar." There is nothing more pleasant and acceptable unto God; for, Who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me, saith the Lord? It is spoken of Christ, the great and first engager, whose solemn engagement in a covenant of grace, God declares his acceptance of, with a Who is this? But then it takes in all the faithful engagers, who come in at his back, and declares their faith and love by a covenant of gratitude and duty. But then,

[4.] Consider, that every thing in and about a covenant of grace, binds and obliges us to a covenant of gratitude, and to stand faithfully to it.

1. The order of the covenant binds us; it is well-ordered in all things: and this one part of the order of it, that duty follows upon privileges. The order of the covenant of works was indeed first doing, and then life advantage by it; but the covenant of grace promises life and salvation, God in all his fulness to be ours; and then follows all the duties of gratitude.

2. We are bound to gratitude and duty by the God of the covenant; the first leading promise of it is of God himself, I will be thy God; therefore thou shalt be mine.

3. We are bound thus by the Mediator of the covenant; he is the Surety, the Prophet, Priest, and King of the covenant; and it stands fast in him, that we may stand fast to him.

4. We are bound by the Spirit of the covenant; he is promised in these words, Isa. xlv. 3; "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." For what end? Why then it is said, "They shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses," Then shall one say, "I am the Lord's," "and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel."

5. We are bound by all the promises of the covenant; therefore it is said, Having these promises, dearly-beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

6. We are bound by all the blessings of the covenant; light, life, liberty, strength, and comfort, are blessings thereof to be bestowed for this very end, that we may be in case to glorify God, by a solemn dedication of ourselves and our service to him. See 1 Pet. ii. 9; "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." Again,

7. The blood of the covenant is binding blood; it was sealed with the blood of the Lamb of God: it is justice-satisfying and sin-pardoning blood; and when this blood is sprinkled on the conscience, it is cementing blood for binding us to God, and to grateful acknowledgment of him.

8. The oath of the covenant is a binding oath; God sware to Christ and said, "Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I must not lie unto David, his seed shall endure forever," Psal. lxxxiv. 35, 36. It is an oath to him relating unto us, and binding us to swear allegiance of gratitude, and grateful service to him that hath interposed his oath in our behalf.

9. The holiness of the covenant is a binding thing; God hath commanded his holy covenant; and one of the great ends and designs of it is, that his peculiar people might have this name written upon them, in letters legible by all the world, "Holiness to the Lord." See Jer. xxxii. 4. Ezek. 18, 19, 20. Finally,

10. The perpetuity and immutability of the covenant of grace is a binding thing; it stands always stedfast and unmoveable, and therefore obliges us to be stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, and in the duties of gratitude towards him, who is the Lord and changes not, and is faithful to his promise to us; and therefore we are bound to be faithful to our promise to him.

In a word his grace binds us to gratitude, and his love should constrain us to his service.

V. The fifth thing proposed, was, To make some application of the subject. Many inferences might be deduced from this doctrine.

We may see the danger of every legal method of covenanting with God, whereby people come under a covenant of duty and solemn engagements to serve God, and resting upon their vow, promise, resolution, and covenant; while yet they were never acquainted with, nor laid hold upon God's covenant of grace. No wonder then that their building fall to the ground, when it is not erected upon this sure foundation. It is possible some serious persons make a covenant with God, and think they do it with all their heart, and in the strength of promised grace; but then their dependence is more upon their covenant they made with God, than upon the covenant made with Christ; more upon their promises to God, than upon God's promise to them through Christ: and so, upon every failure, they plunge themselves into a mire of discouragement, disorder, and confusion. Legal ways of covenanting have been the ruin of many souls: as the old covenant of works is a broken covenant; so all legal covenants influenced by the old legal spirit, will be broken covenants: they are a bed too short for any to stretch himself upon, and a covering too narrow to wrap himself in. * * *

But, leaving other inferences, I come to close with an address to two sorts of persons before me, namely, 1. To those who have this day been avouching the Lord to be their God. 2. To all that have been witnesses.

1st, I would address myself, in a few words, to my dear and reverend brethren, including myself among them, however unfit I am for such a talk; yet, since you have put this exercise upon me, I presume to put you and myself in mind of three things. 1. Let us consider what we have been doing this day. 2. What God hath been doing this day. 3. What is incumbent upon us from this day while we live.

1. My dear brethren, What have we been doing? We have been avouching the Lord this day to be our God, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and to hearken to his voice.

We have professed this day, that we will have no more ado with idols; that we will have no other God but the living and true God: that this world and the god of this world, and the lusts of the world, shall never be our gods; but only the God and Father of

our Lord Jesus Christ: and, upon this profession, we have taken instruments before God, men and angels, that this day we have done it.

We have professed, that we have parted with our self-righteousness, and closed with Christ, as the Lord our righteousness, and esteem our own righteousness as dung; that we have taken hold of God's covenant of grace, and of the Mediator of it, as our only strength, our only Saviour and salvation: whereupon we have taken instruments, that this day we have done it.

We have professed, that we have gifted ourselves, and our all to the Lord, and have taken the Lord Jehovah for our all, in time and through eternity: and thereupon have taken instruments, that this day we have done it.

We have professed, that we will walk with God, in a way of duty towards God and man; that we will not live in the neglect of any known duty, nor in the commission of any known sin; but, through grace, keep ALL God's statutes, commandments, and judgments, and hearken to the voice of God; that we will be faithful in our ministerial work, and walk exemplarily before our people, as he-goats before the flock: and hereupon we have taken instruments, that this day we have done it.

We have professed that we, according as it is given to us of grace, will suffer for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, if we be called to it; and that we will be content, not only to be bound, reproached, persecuted, and imprisoned, but even to die for him: and when our name and honour, and Christ's come in competition, we will be content that our honour be laid in the dust, that his honour may be advanced, and his name exalted: and hereupon we have taken instruments, that this day we have made this profession.

We have professed, that we are willing to be instruments in his hands, to lift up the crown royal of our Emmanuel, that hath been so long profaned upon the ground, and instruments of reviving his long-buried work of Reformation; and that, through his grace, we will appear more and more for him, and his oppressed cause, truth, and heritage, notwithstanding of whatever oppositions are laid in the way; and that we shall be in nothing terrified by our adversaries: and hereupon instruments are taken in heaven and earth, that this day we have done it.

But, that we be not discouraged, disheartened in such great work, let us consider,

2. What God hath been doing this day, and that he is as solemn-

ly engaged for us as we are for him; for, the Lord hath avouched us this day to be his peculiar people; as he hath promised us, and that we should keep all his commandments. Our being led and determined to make such a confession and acknowledgment, and avouching of him this day, is a proof and evidence that he hath been here making a solemn confession, acknowledgment, and avouchment of us.

He hath confessed, professed, and acknowledged, that he is our God, which is presupposed to his avouching us to be his people or servants; and this he hath done in the declaration of his name, I am the Lord thy God; and in the publication of his covenant, I will be thy God; whereupon, by his allowance, I hope we have taken instruments, that this day he hath done it.

He hath professed and acknowledged, that we are his peculiar servants, whom he hath called forth to serve him in very peculiar circumstances; and that therefore, for our peculiar work, he will give us peculiar aid; that he will not let us go a warfare at our own expense; but that his grace shall be sufficient for us: and hereupon we take instruments, that this day he hath done it. Again,

In his avouching us to be his, according as he hath promised to us in his covenant of grace, he hath professed and acknowledged, that he will be surety for us for good, and be forthcoming for all that we have engaged to in our covenant of duty, and gratitude, knowing that without him we can do nothing. And that only by him strengthening us, we can do all things; therefore he hath promised that his strength shall be made perfect in our weakness; whereupon, by faith in his promise we take instruments that this day he hath done it. Again,

He hath, by avouching of us, confessed and acknowledged, that it is his will we should and his promise we should keep all his commandments: he hath not extended or enlarged the obligations of duty upon us, without extending and enlarging the encouragement and furniture for it; for, when he declares this is his will, saying, This is the will of God, even our sanctification; he says also, This is his work, I am the Lord that sanctifieth you, and that worketh in you both to will and to do: I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes: and hereupon, I hope, we are taking instruments in his own hand, which is the best hand, that this day he hath done it, by avouching us to be his. Again,

By avouching us to be his, as he hath promised to us in his

covenant of grace, he hath confessed and acknowledged, that he will make all his promises good, according to all our necessities. If, in his providence, he says, Behold I send you forth as sheep among wolves; in his promise he says, Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am thy God. If his call to us is, Go and teach all nations, his promise is also, Lo I am with you always to the end of the world: and hereupon we take instruments, that this day he hath done it.

In a word, God hath come under a bond and engagement to us this day, and his bond is, in another sort, more firm than ours; his is the bond of an everlasting covenant but ours is a mutable covenant, lasting no farther than as it hath a relation to his covenant of promise, and is maintained by it. We may break our covenant with him, but he cannot break his covenant with us. He hath infinitely more to lose than we, if he should break his word; for his honour is engaged, his name and glory is at stake; and what will he not do for his great name? Therefore, if we have taken instruments upon his covenanted engagement and avouchment this day, he will never allow us to withdraw our instruments but allow us to plead it at his heavenly court, his throne of grace, from this day and forward. Therefore I would, in a word, show,

8. What is incumbent upon us from this day and forward. I sum up all in one advice. If we would be faithful to our solemn engagement this day, let us live by the faith of God's solemn engagement this day, for his engagement to us in a covenant of grace, is the ground of our engagement to him in a covenant of gratitude: therefore, let us never depend upon our own solemn engagement this day, but upon God's solemn engagement to us this day, in his covenant of promise.

From this day let us depend upon his covenanted Spirit, his promised Spirit; for, by the power of his Spirit, the work is begun and must be carried on; "This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the LORD of hosts," Zech. iv. 6. Let us rest on his word, that said of the Comforter, "I will send him unto you." John xvi. 7.

From this day let us depend upon his covenanted counsel and conduct; for he hath said, "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not, I will lead them in paths that they have not known." Isa. xlii. 16. Let us trust in him, that he will guide us by his counsel, and afterwards receive us to glory. We have many proofs of his making darkness light before us, and crooked things straight; let us therefore still hope in his word.

From this day let us depend upon his covenanting presence; that when we go through fire or water he will be with us, Isa. xliii. 2, and bring us through fire and water to a wealthy land. Let us bless him, that hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," Heb. xiii. 5. Many will be against us, but if God be with us, and for us, no matter who can be against us, Rom. viii. 31.

From this day let us depend upon his covenanted blessing; for he hath said, "From this day will I bless you." Hag. ii. 19. From what day was it? Why, in the first chapter, God complained of that generation, that they still put off temple-building work, saying, The time is not come to build the Lord's house; just like this generation, that have been saying more than fifty years, It is not time to renew our solemn Covenants, or revive a Reformation-work; but God stirred up a remnant in the days of Haggai, who laid the foundation of the house of the Lord. And now, says the prophet, Consider, from this day; and again, Consider, from this day, verses 15, 18, 19, and a third time, Consider, from this day, even from this day will I bless you: from this day men may curse you; but from this day will I bless you. Let this encourage us to faithfulness against all discouragements from without. We may depend upon his promised blessing in life and death: his blessing maketh rich; and hath more unsearchable riches comprehended in it, than men or angels can tell. It may encourage us to follow him, whithersoever he goeth; and to be faithful to our engagement; for in this way his blessing will follow us, though death and the grave, to the glorious appearance of our Master in the clouds of heaven: For, "when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away," 1 Pet. v. 4. In this faith let us stand fast, depending upon him that hath said, "From this day will I bless you."

So far, I hope, my dear brethren will allow this address to them.

2dly, I would address myself in a short word to all that have been witnesses to the solemnity of this day: some of you are friends to this work, and some of you are enemies.

(1.) To you that are friends, I have two words to offer, if you be indeed the friends of Christ and his cause; friends to a covenanted work of Reformation.

1. From what you have seen and heard this day, you may take witnesses and take instruments, that God is yet the covenanted God of Scotland; though a covenanted people have departed

foom him, yet our covenanted God hath not quite departed from us. We forgot our covenant of duty, but God hath not forgot his covenant of mercy; and therefore hath mercifully revived his work in the midst of the years. Before the year 1643, was at an end, God brought these lands under a solemn League and Covenant, besides our National Covenants at other times; but these have been broken, burnt, and buried, and trampled upon; yet now before the year 1743, is at an end, God hath begun to set up a memorial of that reformation-work that was carried on by a solemn covenanting, from time to time: and therefore take instruments, from this day and date, that he hath not left himself without a witness, and that he will yet return and leave a blessing behind him, and repair all the breaches that have been made upon the carved work of his house, the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government thereof; and that he will yet be as the dew unto Israel; and make us revive as the corn, and grow as the lily, and cast forth our root as Lebanon.

2. From what you have seen and heard this day, and at this time, you may learn, that, when God's call to this covenanting work shall come to your door, you need not be afraid to avouch him solemnly to be your God; for, he will not be behind you, but will avouch you as solemnly to be his people. If you take hold of his covenant of grace, you need not fear to enter into a covenant of gratitude and duty; for the grace of his covenant will carry you through all the duties of your covenant: he will not be a day behind you; for the day that you avouch him, that day will he avouch you; yea, his avouching of you goes foremost, for he hath prefaced his commands with it, "I am the Lord thy God." But when he calls us to such solemn work, he delays his open avouching of us, till once we have openly avouched him. Think it not enough, that your hearts have joined in this work with us this day; for though it is well, if your hearts have closed with God's covenant of grace, and you have devoted yourselves to him in a covenant of gratitude, if it be only between God and you, this may be your safety: but is there not something farther incumbent on you, for reaching the end of God's declarative glory, when that hath been so much darkened in this day? It must come to an open avouching of God, if we would glorify him before the world, or confess him before men, in the hope of being confessed by him in the great day. When God appears in his glory, and builds up Zion, and hears the prayer of the destitute, and looses his prisoners: what end does God propose by all this? See it Psal. cii. 21. It is,

“To declare the name of the LORD in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem.” Therefore, let us pray for the accomplishment of that word, Zeph. iii. 9; “Then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, and serve him with one consent.” But,

(2.) I would next address myself to you who are enemies, and have no good will to such work as this, of avouching the Lord to be your God. I have a word to say to you; and it is in short a very awful one. You hate to come under engagements to serve the Lord, and sure I am you are not serving such a good master as he is. You are serving the God of this world, and rejecting our God and Master. Our Master is a Saviour, but your master is a destroyer; ours is a Redeemer, but yours is a murderer: your carnal mind is enmity against God, and against the work of God, and the city of God; but know, that God will “make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people; all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it,” Zech. xii. 3. You that hate to be engaged for God and his cause, what if I must tell you, that God is engaged against you? He is engaged by promise to Christ, that he “will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him,” Psal. lxxxix. 23. Yea, I must tell you, that since this is a solemn instrumenting day, we must take instruments against you, if you remain slights and rejecters of our Lord Jesus Christ, and refuse to pay allegiance to Zion’s King. We hereupon take instruments against you, that this day we have been avouching him to be our God, and promising through his grace to serve him; and this day you have been rejecting him, and are resolving to continue in the service of the devil, the world, and your lusts. Alas! how dreadful is your case, if God be taking instruments against you, saying, This day you have rejected ME, and this day I have rejected YOU; your souls abhor ME, and my soul abhors YOU! If this be his farewell word to you, then I will tell you what will be the last word that ever you will hear him say, even, “Depart from me, ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” In that great day, you must answer for what you have seen and heard this day, by the recognition of conscience. Then this day will be a witness against you on that day: and we who are professing to be witnesses for God, must be witnesses against you, that we avouched him, and you avoided, and turned your back upon him.

But since it is not yet come to the last day with you; nor is God come yet to his last word, so long as the day of grace lasts; there-

fore hearken you this day to his word of grace: for, now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. We make, in our Maker's name, an offer of him to you; yea, he makes an offer of himself, saying, Whosoever will let him come. O Sirs, will you go with this man, who is EMMANUEL, God with us, and God for us? We have avouched him this day to be our God; and you have as good right and warrant to avouch him to be yours, as ever we had: and though you should not do it with the outward solemnity of your hands lifted up to him, at this time, yet we call you in his great name, to do it with the inward solemnity of your hearts lifted up to him; for he hath come down to you in a declaration of his new-covenant name, as well as to us, saying, "I am the Lord thy God." He speaks to you not only authoritatively, saying, I am the Lord; but most affectionately, as a Saviour, I am THY God.

Well, Sirs, will you not this day avouch him, and avow and acknowledge him to be the Lord your God and Redeemer? Does he claim relation to you, and will you claim none to him? This is the day that the Lord hath made, for giving you this offer; and every day is not an avouching day, every day is not a covenanting day. O Sirs, you never saw such a day, and perhaps never will! Let not this day be lost; let not the evening of this day be lost; but, when God is yet saying, Come, come to me, I am the Lord thy God; O take him at his word, saying, Behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God.

May the Spirit of power accompany the call, and make it effectual, that instruments may be taken upon it in your behalf, as ours, That THIS DAY WE HAVE AVOUCHED THE LORD TO BE OUR GOD, AND THIS DAY HE HATH AVOUCHED US TO BE HIS PECULIAR PEOPLE, FORMED FOR HIMSELF, TO SHEW FORTH HIS PRAISE.

SERMON IX.

THE NATURE AND EXCELLENCY OF

Gospel Purity.

*“There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.”—PROV. xxx. 12.**

IT is a sad sentence when God passes it upon any, “He which is filthy, let him be filthy still:” “he that is unjust, let him be unjust still:” Rev. xxii. 11. “Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone,” Hos. iv. 17. O how sad is it when God says, concerning such a person, Let him alone! Ministers and ordinances, Let him alone; Word and Spirit, Let him alone: let no word that is preached do him good; let no threatening of the word awaken him; let no promise of the word allure him; let no precept of the word draw him: let him continue hardened against all that can be said from the word; Let him alone; let him live and die under the power and guilt of sin, under the wrath and curse of God: he is a filthy man, and she is a filthy woman, and let them be filthy still. Oh! dreadful sentence! And yet it seems to be passed against the generality of people in our day; and yet few or none are touched with it: let us think on it in sad earnest; for, as my text saith, “There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.” * * *

1st, Let us improve this doctrine for information. Is it so, as has been said, That purity is an excellent thing, and of absolute necessity to denominate a true saint? Then,

1. Hence see the difference between justification and sanctification. Sanctification, or purity, is necessary and excellent, in all the respects that I have formerly named: but yet it is not necessary for justification, so as to be the ground thereof. It is necessary to be the evidence of justification; but not the ground thereof: the

* Two preceding sermons on this text are omitted in this selection.

ground of justification is only Christ's righteousness. Many are utterly bemisted in this point; they confound justification with sanctification. Though, indeed, they be as inseparable as head and body to a living man, yet there can be nothing more different. They are most distinct. (1.) Justification comes from the merit of Christ; sanctification comes from the Spirit of Christ. (2.) Justification makes a relative change, by bringing us from enemies to friends, from condemnation to absolution; sanctification makes a real change, by healing our inward maladies and plagues. (3.) Justification gives us a title to heaven; sanctification gives us a meetness for heaven. (4.) Justification takes away the guilt of sin; sanctification takes away the filth, and power, and pollution of sin. (5.) Justification is by a righteousness without us; sanctification is by a righteousness within us. (6.) In justification there is the imputation of Christ's righteousness and sanctification; but in sanctification there is the implantation of grace, and something subjectively imparted; not imputed to us, but wrought in us by the Holy Ghost. (7.) Justification is but one act and once acted; sanctification is a continual action, or a progressive work. (8.) Justification is perfect and absolute; sanctification is imperfect, and but begun. And hence, (9.) Justification is equal, and alike in all believers; no man is more justified than another: sanctification is unequal, in some more, in some less, according to the measure of the gift of Christ: justification is perfect the first moment; sanctification is never perfect till a man die. (10.) In justification we are passive, and do nothing; but in sanctification we are active; for, being acted, we act; being moved, we move and do work, being set on work by the Spirit of God: is there any thing more distinct than these two? (11.) Justification answers the law, as a covenant; sanctification answers it as a rule. (12.) Justification makes a man accepted; sanctification makes a man acceptable. * * *

2. Hence see, that there is no justification by the deeds of the law. Why? because, though this purity and conformity to the law, be thus necessary and excellent for denominating a saint, and evidencing of justification; yet it is imperfect in time, and so cannot be the matter and ground of justification: no righteousness, but a perfect one, can justify us before God. Do any of the saints reckon their purity and piety to be their righteousness before God? No, by no means: David trembles at the thoughts of this; and he deprecates it with abhorrence: O Lord, "enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified,"

Psal. cxliii. 2. Purity may justify us before men; but we cannot appear before an infinitely holy God, without a perfect holiness; nor before an infinitely just God, without a complete satisfaction: and these are only to be had in Christ. For, when our purity and righteousness is laid in the balance of God's holy law, MENE TEKEL is written on it; it is found wanting: we are but unprofitable servants; and our righteousness is as filthy rags. If any poor deluded soul be expecting that God will justify him, and accept of him, and shew favour to him, because he does as well as he can, and because he performeth this and the other good duty, and hath a good heart to God, meaneth well, and the like; it is evident the man knoweth not himself, that he knoweth not the purity of God's holy law, and the impurity of his own heart, otherwise he would fear to think of standing upon that ground before God.

3. Hence see the necessity of a law-work, in some measure and degree. No man will run to the Surety, till, by the law, he hath the knowledge of his being quite insolvent, and a bankrupt. What man will run to the fountain for cleansing, if he does not see that he is defiled and polluted. If purity be so necessary, then a law-work, discovering our impurity, is necessary also; that knowing the malady, we may apply to the remedy.*

4. Hence see the reason why God treats mankind as he doth, both with judgment and mercy. Why, the world is polluted; and God hath a mind to purify it. Why doth the Lord shine upon you with the sun of a kindly providence? It is even to melt you, that you may part with sin, and that his goodness may lead you to repentance. Why doth he cast you into a furnace of affliction? It is to purge away dross; and that you may come forth as gold tried in the fire. Why was the whole earth washed with a deluge? Why, it was polluted, and needed to be cleansed. And why will he again melt it with fire? Because it must be purified before it be a new earth.

5. Hence see the necessity of the open fountain for sin and uncleanness. The blood of the Lamb is a fountain: it is not a rivulet, or a stream, that quickly dries up; no, no: it is a fountain, a never failing fountain. It is not a fountain sealed: anciently, in these hot countries, when they got a fountain, they reckoned it a precious treasure, and sealed it; people had not promiscuous access to it. Yea, but here is a fountain open; every man, every woman is welcome to come and purify themselves at it, and bathe in it, to

* See Sermon entitled "Law Death, Gospel Life."

wash till they be whiter than the driven snow. It is not only open for the house of David, for the royal family; but to the inhabitants of Jerusalem: it is tendered to the whole visible church. And it is open for sin and uncleanness; for all pollution whatever. O what need of this fountain among such poor polluted sinners!

6. Hence see the reason of what is a paradox to many in the world, and yet what is the experience of the saints: it lets us see, I say, why some folk long so passionately for death sometimes; yea, would choose rather to die than to live: why, the children of God know there is no perfect purification, but by death; and that death will purify them more than all the sermons ever they heard, than all the providences with which they were ever tried, than all the prayers they ever put up, and all the tears ever they shed. It is a mad fancy of the church of Rome, and it was an ignorant fancy of some mistaken divines, and Greek fathers, that there is a state of purgation between this and heaven: but we see from the Bible, that in a moment the soul, separated from the body, is made pure. The thief upon the cross, the same day that he is converted, he is glorified; "To day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." O how will the believer, when groaning under a sense of sin, long for the day of dissolution, saying, When shall the day break, and the shadows flee away, when there shall be no more sin, no more pollution?

2dly, This doctrine may be applied for lamentation, that there is such a scarcity of this necessary and excellent thing, purity; and such a plenitude of the contrary evil, even of all manner of impurity. Oh! may we not lament that there is such a famine of piety and purity, and such a fullness of impiety and profanity? I might here tell you, 1. Somewhat of the evils of impurity, that we should lament over. 2. Some of the evidences of it.

[1.] We are to acquaint you of some of the evils of impurity. It is a lamentable thing, that there should be so little purity, and so much impurity. For,

1. This impurity mars all our excellency. We lose our excellency by sin and impiety. It takes away the peace of a good conscience, which should be a continual feast: There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked, It takes away God from us; Your iniquities have separated between you and your God. Is not this one of the reasons why God is so far from this generation? It is a filthy generation. And if our pollution take away God from us, should it not trouble us? Let a carnal man lose that which he makes his god, and see how he will be troubled for it: his heart will even die within him, as Nabal's did; and he will be much per-

plexed. Oh! how heavy should it be to us, that our impurity and defilement doth us such a mischief as this!

2. It clouds all our profession. Men may profess what they will; but if they remain defiled and impure, and if they do not fight against it, wrestle against it, profess against it, their profession is but a screen to their atheism; "They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate," Tit. i. 16.

3. It brings on the wrath of God, if it be not removed; "God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he will whet his sword," Psalm, vii. 11, 12. O Sirs, if God begin to fire against a sinner, or a sinful and impure people, his wrath will be insupportable. It is true, God stays long before he come forth with all his indignation against a polluted people: but then it is the worse, and there is the less hope of mercy when he begins to destroy; for then he will strike them dead with the next blow, and make a full end. Is not the Lord threatening to do so with this generation, whether we see it or not? When the cup of iniquity is full to the brim, be sure that the cup of wrath is full also; full of the vials of dreadful vengeance. But death, and hell, and wrath, are matters of jest and mockery to a filthy and impure generation, whose very mind and conscience are defiled: but though their consciences be seared, and their souls be sleeping in security, yet their damnation slumbereth not; for the abominable shall have "part in the lake, which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death," Rev. xxi. 8. Oh! is not this matter of lamentation, that we are in such danger, by reason of the defilement and impurity of the day we live in. But, say you, how do you prove the charge? This leads to the next particular, which was,

[2.] To mention some of the evidences of impurity: they, indeed, are many. May not he that runs read innumerable grounds of lamentation? What means the abominable whoredom, adultery, uncleanness, drunkenness, and all manner of wickedness; swearing, lying, cheating, stealing, Sabbath-breaking, contempt of the word and ordinances, that take place? Do not they all manifest, that the generation is not washed from their filthiness? Is not profanity, impiety, and immorality, become open, avowed, and professed, and shameless?—But I shall close at this time, by offering only these three general evidences of want of purity, that we may see matter of lamentation here.

1 The first evidence is in the impurity of our affections. Are they not carnal and impure? Surely where a man's treasure is.

there will his heart be also. What are your morning thoughts, and daily meditations? Whether are they conversant about earthly or heavenly things? It is indeed matter of exercise to a child of God, that he finds his affections carnal, and earthly, and vain: but the impure man lets the devil, and the world, and a thousand lusts, run away with his affections all the day, and all the week, and all the year; and he hath never a sore and grieved heart for it.

2. Another evidence is, the impurity of our speeches, which are the fruits of the affections: for, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," saith Christ: and, "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things," Matt. xii. 34, 35. When the heart is full of any thing, it will be ready to utter itself: as if you jog a full vessel it will run over; so the heart that is full of the world, will run over the lips, and be always speaking of that; or, if an impure man play the hypocrite, and vent his hypocrisy in some good speech, yet he is out of his element; it is not his natural dialect, or easy to him to employ his tongue for God. It is true, the godly may sometimes have their tongue tacked, as it were, to the roof of their mouth; but it is not always so.

3. The next evidence is the impurity of our actions. How do you act towards earthly things, and heavenly things? What pains are you at about earthly things? And how little pains are you at about heavenly and spiritual things? Is not that an evidence of carnality and impurity?—How do you act with reference to sin and duty? How little care do you take to avoid sin yourselves, or reprove it in others? And how little care do you take to perform the duties of religion, whether secret or social?—How do you act with regard to God and yourselves? How much time do you take for yourselves and your own things? And how little time do you allot for God and the things of God? Doth not this evidence your impurity?—How do you act towards the world and religion, when they come into competition? The world saith, there is a business must be done; God saith, there is a business must be done: they interfere; the one of them must be neglected; well, the man lets God go, lets religion go, rather than his dear worldly affairs. This discovers impurity.—How do you act with reference to the word? The impure heart doth not relish the purity of the word, or the things that are of God: for, he that is of the flesh, savours the things of the flesh; but he that is of the

Spirit, savours the things of the Spirit. Now, when you hear the word, do you savour nothing but earthly and carnal things? Why, the vain man will pick out the vanity in a sermon: if he can catch at any word, that will feed his vain mind, he lays hold upon that: the curious man will notice the curiosity that is in it, and relish that; he that is learned will observe the learning in it, and applaud that: but he that is spiritual, will find out the things that are spiritual, is well pleased with, and feeds upon them. See 1 Cor. ii. 6.—In a word, how do you act with respect to conscience and interest? When the keeping of a good conscience and worldly interest come to be in competition, by our way of acting then, we may know who is our master, God or the world; for, till then, we know not who is our master: but when conscience commands one thing, and the world another, so that now the world and religion go not hand in hand, here is the trial of a pure heart. As a dog follows two men so long as they go together, and you know not who is the dog's master, of them two: but let them come to a parting road, and one go one way, and another go another way, then shall we know which of them owns the dog. Why, Sirs, sometimes religion and the world go hand in hand: while a man may have the world, and a religious profession too; while it is so we cannot know who is the man's master, whether God or the world: but stay till the man come to a parting road; God calls him this way, and the world calls him that way: why, if God be his master he follows religion, and lets the world go; if the world be his master, then he follows the world, and the lusts thereof, and lets God, and conscience, and religion go.

Oh is it not very lamentable that there are so many evidences of want of purity, that necessary excellent thing! And even among the children of God, O how little purity! Are they not fallen from their first love? Fallen from the heaven that sometimes they have been in, to the very centre of the earth? How far art thou grown earthly minded? How doth this declining come upon you by degrees, or ever you are aware? Like Nebuchadnezzar's image, whose head was of gold, the arms and breast of silver, the thighs of brass, the legs of iron, and the feet of clay; so it is with many declining Christians in our day; they have had a golden head, and begun with a golden age, but now they are come down to the clay feet. How heavenly-minded have you once been? but now, how earthly-minded art thou? How pleasant were duties and ordinances formerly, perhaps? But now, how tedious, wearisome, and irksome? How zealous have you been for

God's glory, and against all sin? But now, how cold and lukewarm?—O sinner, see the necessity of more purification, and deliverance from that consumption of grace, and decay of purity, that was, and is taking place in you: and cry to God to send the Holy Ghost, whose office and function it is to sanctify, wash, and cleanse you.—Lament the impurity of the day, and your own impurity; and lay your soul at the side of the purifying fountain, and in the way of purifying means, looking to the Lord to bless the means to you.

There are two things relating to this subject that the generality of people are very great strangers to. The one is the sin of their nature; and the other is, the nature of their sin; and yet these two things should be much laid to heart by us all; namely, the sin of our nature, that we carry a dead corpse, and a body of sin and death about with us; and the nature of our sin; that it is a transgression of, and disconformity to the law of God. Though it be a misery to have a sinful heart, yet it is a mercy to see it to be so: For, conviction is the first step to conversion. And though there be many, as to their state, vile and filthy enough to be damned; yet there are few, as to their sense and conviction, vile and filthy enough to be saved: nay, they are vile in God's eye; and yet pure in their own. "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness."

3. The next use we make of the doctrine, shall be for reproof and conviction. This doctrine reproveth all manner of impurity, impiety, and unholiness, that stands opposite to this purity and holiness, whereof I have shewed the necessity and excellency. It reproveth all that filthiness that is opposed to this cleanness. And here is a large field, a vast theme: we know not well where to begin, or where to end; there are so many pollutions, and so much filthiness of flesh and Spirit to be reprov'd. We might here go through all the ten commands, and show how manifold sins and impurities are reprov'd, in opposition to every one of them. Oh! that God himself would fasten a reproof and conviction of sin upon our hearts and consciences, for carrying home this use the more closely, both upon the wicked, that are under the power, and upon the godly, that may be under the prevalency of sin and impurity. I shall, on this topic, 1. Produce some kinds of impurity and filthiness, that we should all take with, and be convinced of. 2. Produce some witnesses for proving either the total or partial want of purity and holiness; that the crime being proven, we may take with it, and condemn ourselves.

[1.] I would tell you some sorts and kinds of impurity and filthiness, that we should all take with, and be convinced of. There are especially these three sorts. 1. The impurity and sin of our nature. 2. The impurity and filthiness of our hearts and thoughts. 3. The impurity and filthiness of our life and practice, especially living under the gospel.

(1.) As for the pollution of our nature. This, it is evident, many never thought of, never were convinced of, never challenged themselves for ; and yet it is a great predominate root-sin : and if it be not removed we are filthy still. Now, in order to fasten a conviction of the greatness of this pollution of our nature, consider the greatness of it in these particulars.

1. That when the leprosy and contagion is universal and overspreading, then it must be great : but so it is here ; the pollution, and defilement, and sin of our nature, is an universal leprosy, it overspreads all our faculties ; our understanding, will, affections, reason, conscience, memory, and all are defiled ; become altogether filthy : we, being conceived in sin, and brough forth in iniquity, are nothing by nature, but a body of sin and death.

2. When the leprosy and contagion is so great, in an house, that nothing will help against it, but the pulling down of the house ; then the leprosy must be very great : but so it is here, the sin of our nature is such, that nothing will cure it, but the pulling down of the house. Some think to mend the house by education : but all the lime and mortar of acquired parts and accomplishments will not do, unless the nature be renewed by regeneration : and even after regenerated, his leprosy breaking out, nothing will wholly remove it but death's pulling down the house entirely.

3. Consider, that sin which is most unwearied, and which a man is most unwearied in the pursuit of, that must needs be very great : but such is the sin of our nature, it is most unwearied, as the fountain is unwearied in sending up water. A man may be wearied in drawing up water out of the fountain ; but the fountain is not wearied in bubbling up water : so, a man may be wearied in sinful actions ; but sinful nature is never weary. A man may be wearied with looking to some particular object ; but his eye is never wearied readily with seeing and looking ; because it is natural for the eye to see : so, a man may be wearied with some particular sin ; but the natural man is never weary with sinning, because, it is so natural for him to sin.

4, Consider, that this sin that is the ground of all our relapses and returns to sin, must needs be very great. Now, what is the

ground of all our relapses and returns to sin, after all our repentance and reformation? Even our nature, or the sin of our nature. Suppose water be heated and warmed, it cools again; heat it again, and it cools again; why? Because coldness is its nature: and so, why do men return again and again to sin, after all their repentance and reformation? why? It is their nature.

5. That sin that is least lamented, and whereby our other sins are most excused, must be a great sin. Now, of all sins, the sin of our nature is least lamented; and thereby our other sins are most excused. Bear with me, for it is my nature; I am passionate, but it is my nature; I am so and so disposed, but it is my nature: men excuse themselves by it; and hence it is not lamented, it is not mourned over.

6. That pollution that is most predominant, must be a great pollution: now, the sin of the nature is the pollution that is most predominant. Many marks have been assigned of the predominant sin; and some actual sin may reign above other sins. But the sin of the nature is the predominant sin: it is the sin that reigns unto death, Rom. v. 21—O then take home the conviction of this sin: and seek to have it broken in the power of it.

(2.) The impurity and pollution of our hearts and thoughts is what we are to take with, and be convinced of. Alas! how little is the impurity of the heart bewailed! Many think their thoughts are free: but before God they are not free; but bound to obedience to his law, who searches the heart and tries the reins, to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings; and even according to the doing of his heart: for the thoughts are the deeds of the heart; and it is, indeed, deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, Jer. xvii. 9, 10. Now, the sin and pollution of the heart is great, if you consider these following particulars.

1. The sin that is most incurable, is a great sin: but the sin of the heart is a most incurable sin. As a secret, hidden wound within the body, or a disease within the bowels, is the most incurable: And such are the sins of our thoughts, and the plagues of our hearts. We need, therefore, to know the plague of our hearts and to be convinced of it.

2. The sin that is a parent to other sins, must needs be very great: now, sinful thoughts are the parents of sinful actions, both in the godly and ungodly.—In the godly: as in the case of Abraham, Gen. xx. 11, 12. "I thought surely the fear of God is not in this place;" and therefore I said, "She is my sister." She was

indeed his sister, and he lied not in saying so: but he dissembled, and hid the truth, using an unworthy shift for his preservation. And where began this evil, but in a sinful thought? I THOUGHT that the fear of God had not been in this place.—In the ungodly, it is so likewise; Psal. l. 21; “Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.” The wicked steal and lie, and get drunk, and commit adultery, and deceive, and slander others. And how are they led into this, but by thoughts? “Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.”

3. By sinful thoughts our formerly committed sins, that were dead, are revived again, and have a resurrection by our bosom ones; by our contemplating the same with delight. As the witch at Endor called up Samuel that was dead; so, a delightful thought calls up a sinful action, that was dead before. Hereby our sins, that were in a manner dead before, are revived, and have a resurrection.

4. By sinful thoughts a man may sin that sin, in effect, which he never did commit in act; and so the Lord may punish him for it. As the Lord said to David in another case; Because it was in thine heart to build me an house, I will build thy house. So saith God to a man, in a way of punishment; because it was in thine heart to do this evil, though thou didst it not, I will punish thee for it. By the sins of our hearts and thoughts, a man may sin that sin, in effect, which he never did commit in act. Christ reckons the adulterous thought, adultery; the malicious thought, murder. Alas! how will the day of judgment give other views of sin than now we have, when the whorish thought will be judged whoredom; and the adulterous intention, adultery; and the malicious thoughts, murder, though it was never actually committed!

5. By sinful thoughts, a man doth repent of his repentance. A man sins, and afterwards is sorrowful for and repents thereof; and then after his repentance, he thinks on his sin with delight. What is this but to repent of his repentance? As by your repentance, you are sorrowful for your sin; so, by musing on your sin, with delight, you repent of your repentance: now, is it not a great evil for a man to repent that he repented?

6. That filthy mud, that cannot be searched to the bottom; that deep mystery of iniquity, that cannot be sounded, it is so deep, must be very great: and so it is with the sin of the heart; It “is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” Jer. xvii. 9. In a word, “Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries,” etc. Matt. xv. 18, 19.

(3.) The impurity and pollution of our lives and practices, especially, under the gospel, is what we are to take with, and be convinced of. And sins under the gospel, are great sins. Why?

1. Sins under the gospel, are sins against the remedy: and of all sins, sins against the remedy are the greatest. The great remedy against sin, is the gospel of the grace of God; the good news of a crucified Christ, a Saviour, whose name is Jesus, because he saves his people from their sin. The promises are the remedy also: and therefore, to sin under the gospel, is to sin against the remedy; yea, it is a sinning against the greatest obligations of mercy and grace that are offered: and so, by our sinning against these, we engage the very mercy and grace of God, our greatest friends, to become our greatest adversaries.

2. The more repugnancy there is between the sin and the sinner, the greater is the sin: even as it is worse for a judge to be unjust, than another man. Now, there is here a great repugnancy between the gospel, and the man that sinneth under the gospel; for he professes the contrary.

3. Sin under the gospel, is the most hurtful and mischievous, both to ourselves and others. To ourselves: as poison that is taken in wine, or something that is warm, is the most venomous; so, sin under the gospel is the deadliest poison: why? because it is warmed with gospel heat. And to others it is hurtful; because they are the more hardened thereby.

4. Sin under the gospel is most deceitful, having specious pretences and defences; and so it is the worse. A man under the gospel hath readily many shifts for his sins; many distinctions to palliate his sin; much knowledge to cover his sin. And by this knowledge, perhaps, he is able to defend his sin, by many distinctions: as, that it is a sin of infirmity; it is an occasion for grace and mercy to abound; and many such ways may grace be abused to the encouraging of sin. Now, those bred under the gospel, are able to defend themselves by knowledge fetched from the gospel; therefore they are the worst.

5. Sins under the gospel throw contempt upon the great things of God: even the glory of God, the grace of God, offered in the gospel. And how great is that sin that casts contempt upon the greatest love, the richest mercy, the sweetest offers, and upon the great salvation!

6. Sin under the gospel is the most dangerous sin; and therefore it is great. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" Heb. ii. 3. He that sinneth under the gospel, cannot

sin at so cheap a rate as others though he sins the very same sins that others commit, who are not under the gospel. Why? He that knoweth his master's will, and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.—O Sirs, be convinced of these sins, and the evil of them: the sin of your nature, the sin of your heart, and the sin of your way under the gospel; for they are great sins and impurities.

[2.] I would produce some witnesses, for proving of the great want of purity, whether total or partial. Many witnesses may be brought in to prove the charge.

1. The first witness is the power and prevalence of sin. Where sin is up, holiness is down. Are sins and corruptions as many and as strong with you, as they were ten, twenty, or thirty years ago, notwithstanding of all the means you have enjoyed, and sermons you have heard, and engagements you have made? The power of sin doth witness and evidence either the want or weakness of purity.

3. The third witness is the easy and frequent falling before temptation and motions to sin. When temptation touches, it takes. No sooner are you tempted than you are conquered. Does not this discover the want of purity; and that it is either wholly wanting, or at a low ebb? Those that were eminent in holiness, in scripture, were eminent in resisting temptation; as Joseph, Daniel, and others. When a man needs little, or has no temptation to lead him to sin, it witnesseth against him, that he is impure.

4. The fourth witness is fears and faintings in a day of adversity; "If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small," Prov. xxiv. 10. Do you fret under affliction, or faint under adversity? That is an evidence of the want of purity, and the weakness of grace.

5. The next witness is barrenness and soul-leanness; Isa. xxiv. 16, "I said, My leanness, my leanness; woe unto me!" Look to them that have my grace, and see what poor and lean graces they have: how little faith, how little love, how little zeal, how little repentance, how little knowledge; how much unbelief, how much ignorance, how much untenderness in their walk, how much neglect of duty, how much of a legal spirit in duty, etc.; how much laxness of principle, and levity of spirit; how much pride of duty, how much pride of preaching, pride of praying; how much apostacy, unstedfastness, and unconstancy: the goodness of many is like the morning cloud, and early dew, that passeth away.

6. Another witness is indifferency. The great indifferency that is among many professed Christians, shews their want of purity: they are indifferent whom, and what they hear; indifferent whether they perform duty or not; whether they attend ordinances or not: Galio cared for none of these things. Surely, where there is much indifferency, there is little holiness, little purity.

7. The seventh witness is gross immorality. And here, will not the gross abominations of the day and generation, and of the congregation witness against them, that they are not washed from their filthiness?—Is the drunkard washed from his drunkenness? Is the whoremonger washed from his whoredom? Is the adulterer washed from his adulteries? Is the malicious man washed from his malice?—Are not many become shameless in sinning, when the Lord is calling for mourning? “And in that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth: And, behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine: let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we shall die,” Isa. xxii. 12, 13. There were a pack that made a jest of dying, and made a mock of a future state: “Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we shall die:” if we must have a short life, let us have a merry one. Here is atheism rampant; denial of a future state lying at the root of their brutal sensuality.—Many discover their gross immorality by mock confession: like the French king that carried a crucifix in his hat; and when he had done any thing amiss he would kiss that, as a sufficient atonement. Many who call themselves Christians, when they have committed any gross sin, they confess it, with a God forgive me; returning with the dog to the vomit.—They evidence their immorality by their unreprieveableness; as is manifest from their carriage to them that admonish them: do they count them their best friends? Nay, their heart rises and rages against them. How stand they affected towards the word, when it reproves them, and rubs upon their lusts, and crosses their delights? They count it enmity and folly.—They evidence their gross immorality by their filthy communications, and filthy conversations, Col. iii. 8. 2 Pet. ii. 7.

8. The eighth witness is carelessness about, and contempt of the means of purity. Doth the neglect of the means of purity witness against you? For example, prayer is a mean; secret prayer, social prayer, family prayer, fellowship prayer: do you live in the neglect of these? Yea: then doth not this witness your impurity?—The word is a mean: hearing the word attentively,

reading the word diligently, hiding the word in your heart carefully, like David; Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee. Now, what diligent use do you make of the word? Are you careless in hearing, especially on week-days, notwithstanding of convenient opportunity? Are you careless in reading the Bible from Sabbath to Sabbath? Why, the very dust of your Bibles will witness against you. I have read of one, that presented Antipater, the king of Macedon, with a book, that treated of happiness; he refused it, saying, I am not at leisure. Many have the book by them; yea, presented to them by Christ, that treats of everlasting happiness, but they slight the present: I am not at leisure, say they. They have opportunity of hearing the word opened on week-days, as well as Sabbath-days; but they are not at leisure. They have means of knowledge, diets of catechising, for clearing the same word; but they are not at leisure. They have many precious seasons of grace, seasons of prayer, seasons of duty; but they are not at leisure. They take leisure to their own work, their worldly work; yea, for idle conversation: but they have no leisure for God's work, their soul's work, eternal work.

What! are not these things so many witnesses against you, that you are impure? I might produce multitudes of more witnesses; but by the mouth of two or three witnesses, every truth shall be confirmed: and these witnesses that I have adduced at the time, are sufficient for proving the charge. O then, will you take with the reproof; and take home the conviction of your impurity and unholiness?

I shall close with two advices, in order to deliver you from this impurity that prevails.

Advice 1. Seek after the knowledge of Christ, and the things of Christ. Knowledge of Christ, in a saving way and manner, will strike at the root of all impurity: for, Beholding his glory, we are changed. And particularly, seek after the knowledge of this purity and sanctity, that I speak of, in its agreement with, and difference from justification: for, the confounding of these two, makes many legal dreams in the world. Wherein it agrees with justification, and wherein it differs, I have had occasion formerly to enlarge upon. They agree thus; 1. In their efficient; the God that justifies, is also the God that sanctifies. 2. In their end; they are both for the glory of God. 3. In their subject; the elect sinner believing: the man that is justified, is also the man that is sanctified. 4. In the instrument, namely, faith. Though in divers respects we are justified by faith, and also sanctified by faith, or

purified: yet, in justification, faith justifies as a passive instrument, as a vessel receiving the water; in sanctification, faith sanctifies and purifies as an active instrument, as a root and a spring bubbling up the water.—In justification, faith is a hand receiving, a receiving hand: in sanctification, it is a working hand.—Also, justification is first, in order of nature; sanctification is next: as the good tree is before the good fruit.—In justification a man is reckoned righteous; in sanctification, he is made righteous: in justification, he is declared righteous, by a judicial sentence; in sanctification, he is fashioned, and made righteous, and holy, by a spiritual change.—In justification, I have Christ for the Lord my righteousness; in sanctification, I have him for the Lord my strength. Our righteousness for justification is in him, as the author and worker of it: our strength for sanctification is in him, as the root and fountain of it, from whence it is communicated to us.—In justification, he works all our works for us, and we do nothing: in sanctification, he works all our work in us; and makes us do, while he worketh in us both to will and to do.

Advice 2. Having thus been brought by the knowledge of Christ and his grace, to a renewed state, then, pursue your spiritual enemies and lusts, and be daily throwing stones at them, till they be killed. I allude to 1 Sam. xvii. 40, where David, in defeating Goliath, took five smooth stones out of the brook, and cast at him. In allusion to this, I will tell you of five stones that you should daily cast at your lusts. (1.) The stone of instituted means, and appointed ordinances. Is prayer a mean? Is the word a mean? Use these means in the Lord's strength. (2.) The stone of scriptural arguments; such as Joseph's argument; Shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? David's argument; Shall I do so and so? Then would I offend the generation of the righteous. (3.) The stone of gospel promises: such as that; I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean. I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit, &c. Having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit. Plead the promises, and cry for the grace promised. (4.) The stone of Christ's mediation and prayer; John xvii. 15, 17, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." While they are in the world, keep them from the evil of it. Improve the intercession of Christ. (5.) The stone of Christ's death and passion. His crucifixion is that, in the virtue whereof sin is crucified. Improve his death, and look for virtue to come from thence.—Look to the Lord for grace and skill to cast these stones into the head of Goliath.

SERMON X.

THE NATURE AND EXCELLENCY OF

Gospel Purity.

(CONTINUATION.)

“There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.”—PROV. xxx. 12.

CIVILITY is a very comely thing; but if it be not attended with sanctity, it but gilds a man over, and is not true gold. A man may have civility, and civil honesty, and yet go to hell: but sanctity and purity is the beginning of heaven. The one is not above the sphere of nature; the other is supernatural: for as the earth naturally can bring forth grass, but cannot bring forth corn, except it be plowed and sown; even so, any man may naturally be civil, but he cannot attain to any life of grace, or true holiness, except God plow up the fallow ground of the heart, sow the seed of grace, and make it take root downward, and bring forth fruit upward. Therefore, trust not to common civility and sobriety, whatever external comeliness and excellency be in it; but rather be afraid of it, lest you mistake it for real grace: why, because the sober devil carries more to hell, than the profane devil; for the profane man, being in a dirty way to hell, he is sooner convinced of his filthiness and misery, and more readily reclaimed: but the civil man being in a more cleanly way to hell, is so conceited with an opinion that he has grace already, that it is harder to bring him to true repentance. “There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.

It is a very sad and a very dreadful thing for people to be dreaming, that they are going to heaven, and fancying that they are in very good terms with God, and yet are in the straight road to hell, having God for their enemy, and enemies to God; Enemies in their minds by wicked works. Yea, there are many

such, that if ministers deal plainly with them, and tell them that they are enemies to God, and never had a spark of true love to him; all that we get of them, is God forbid; we hope it is otherwise: or else, say they, We hope it will be otherwise, and God will have mercy on us: and so there is no more of it, they remain hardened in their enmity, and yet hardened in a vain imagination, that all is well. O Sirs, if that be your case, will you let the word of God sink into your conscience, for conviction. "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness." I now come,

To another use of the doctrine, which shall be for trial and examination. Examine and try whether or not you have any share of this gospel purity: whether or not you be washed from your filthiness. It is a matter of great moment that you are called to enquire into. God calls you to examine yourselves, and prove your own selves: and seeing purity and holiness is the great preparative for everlasting happiness, a mistake in your search may make you miserable to all eternity. I shall here, 1. Offer some negative characters, pointing out those that are not washed from their filthiness. 2. Some positive evidence by which we may try, whether or not we be washed from our filthiness, and partake of this gospel purity, which we have held forth in the nature, necessity and excellency thereof.

[1.] We are to offer some negative characters, pointing out those that are not washed from their filthiness, but are filthy still. Upon the last use, I offered several witnesses to be produced for testifying the impurity of the day we live in; and shall not resume what I said, but offer some things further, by which we may try how impure we are and the generation is. And, though some of the particulars I am to mention may take place, in some measure, with the godly that are washed, yet those who are under the power of these evils, the unmortified power, unlamented and unrepented dominion thereof, were never washed from their filthiness: the text says, There is a generation that are not washed from their filthiness, though yet they are pure in their own eyes, and self-conceited, which is the particular sin that I reserve to be spoken to in the third and last doctrine: and therefore shall not insist upon it here. But, you see, besides this, all other sins and abominations, and impurities are included in the text; and therefore it gives us occasion to speak of all manner of sin, while it says, There is a generation that is not washed from their filthiness.

1. There is a generation of atheists, that neither fear God nor

regard man: they say in their heart, There is no God; and vainly wish there were none. There is a generation of deists, which is but a second edition of atheism, whereby the providence of God is denied; and so the God of providence blasphemed: but beside the gross, contracted, and almost professed atheism of many, what a huge generation is there, that was never purged from their natural atheism! And though they would take it ill to be called atheists, are evidently and practically so, while, though they profess to know God, yet in works they deny him. Surely these are not purged from their filthiness.

2. There is a generation of ignorant persons, that know not God, know not religion, know not the principles of Christianity; they are grossly and stupidly ignorant, notwithstanding the means of knowledge: they are artfully ignorant, neglecting opportunities of instruction. They are ignorant of Christ, and the way of salvation through him: ignorant both of law and gospel; the covenant of works and covenant of grace. Are these washed from their filthiness? No; It is a people of no understanding, saith God; therefore he that made them, will not have mercy upon them; and he that formed them will shew them no favour. And beside the grossly ignorant, there is a generation that hath a smattering of knowledge, some notional views of gospel mysteries: but they never had the eyes of their understandings opened; the God of this world having blinded their eyes: My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. They are not washed from their filthiness; no: the ignorant person is filthy still.

3. There is a generation of mockers, that despise all things, serious and sacred. If they come to church to attend ordinances, they but slight and despise these ordinances in their hearts. If they hear a preaching, they but despise and contemn the word that they hear, and know not what it is to hear to edification. If public prayers be offering up, they but despise the same; their eyes are roving, and they know not what it is to join in prayer with their souls. If public psalms be a singing, they despise that piece of worship, and can sit with their mouths close, when the mouths of others are opened, to sing praises to God. I have sometimes observed, with regret, how, while the congregation were professing at least, to praise God with open mouth, some will sit with such a close mouth, as if they were openly professing that they despised and contemned that heavenly exercise. They that love not to join with a congregation on earth, to praise God, how unfit are they for joining with the heavenly company, whose exercise is to praise

him for ever?—There is, I say, a generation of mockers and despisers ; and some that slight and despise ordinances altogether, of whom God saith, Behold, ye despisers, wonder, and perish. Surely these are not washed from their filthiness.

4. There is a generation of hypocrites and formalists, that surely are not washen from their filthiness, that make a fashion of reading, and hearing, and praying, and praising, and singing ; and rest satisfied with the external performance of duty, and were never acquainted with the love, the power, the life of religion ; that have a name to live, but are dead. Wo to you hypocrites ! for ye make clean the outside ; but are not washen from your internal filthiness : you are as whited sepulchres, having a fair outside ; but within are full of rottenness and putrefaction.

5. There is a generation of legalists and moralists : they go about to establish a righteousness of their own, and will not submit to the righteousness of God. They are your pretenders to works, and holiness, and righteousness ; but discover their want thereof, by their estrangement from, and ignorance of the righteousness of Christ. They seek heaven in a legal way : they “ seek to enter in, and shall not be able,” Luke xiii. 24. They seek salvation, but they seek it not by faith ; but, as it were, by the works of the law. They pretend respect to the law, and yet affront it by refusing the only law-biding, law-fulfilling righteousness of Christ. They profess holiness, and yet are not washed from their filthiness ; for they are under the law. For that word, Sin shall not have dominion over you ; for you are not under the law, but under grace, may be read just backward, with respect to them : Sin shall have dominion over them, because they are not under grace, but under the law.

6. There is a generation of superstitious worshippers and ceremony-mongers, who will worship God in ways not enjoined in his word. A heathen Socrates would say, “ God will be worshipped with that kind of worship which himself hath commanded : ” and surely, those that profess themselves Christians should fear and learn. Now, I not only here mean, all gross superstition, of whatsoever sort, but all impurity of worship. Surely they are not washen from their filthiness, who have no concern upon their hearts to stand up for the purity of religion, in its worship and ordinances, in opposition to all mixtures and corruptions whatsoever. Nothing exasperates a holy God more than this, that there should be defilements in his worship ; for mixture in his worship, not only crosses his command, but impeaches his wisdom, as if we should supply the defects of his word, by our inventions : therefore, God

condemns it as will-worship, saying, Their fear toward me, or their worship of me, is taught by the precepts of men, Isa. xxix. 13. Col. ii. 22, 23. In a word, it makes God's worship a vain worship; "In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men," Matt. xv. 9. As mixing copper with gold debaseth the metal, it cannot pass: therefore, God giveth that awful certification, Rev. xxii. 18, 19; "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."

7. There is a generation of erroneous persons; that err in heart, and err in practice, and err in principle. Some have no principles at all, but Latitudinarian; they are anything you please. Others are of abominable and corrupt principles, subversive of the gospel, and destructive to pure religion and undefiled. It was an old principle long ago, which is yet living, "That the doctrine of free grace, and justification by faith, without the works of the law, was an adversary to the law of Moses and to holiness." No wonder then, that some have this doctrine to defend against such a charge, when Christ himself had this ado; I am not come to destroy the law but to fulfil it. It is a day of error; and to speak of all the errors that are like to be imbibed and drunk in, were a task not to be managed in a passing word, but would take much time. Pollution in principle, is a great pollution: and where the error is in fundamentals, surely the person is not washed from his filthiness.

8. There is a generation that makes no manner of bonds of offence: to offend the generation of the righteous, is become a common and easy thing with many professors; and yet the Lord says, Wo to the world, because of offences! better that a mill-stone were put about his neck, and he thrown into the midst of the sea, than to offend one of those little ones. Offences must come; but wo to them by whom they come. Surely, these that have no regard whether they offend, and lay stumbling-blocks in peoples' way, or not, they seem not to be washed from their filthiness.

9. There is a generation that are drowned in security and stupidity, having no sense of sin or danger: though sin be eminent and danger imminent; they go on incorrigibly, in their own evil way; and live securely notwithstanding all the means of mercy

and motives of judgment, the Lord gives for their recovery. When the language of providence, and the alarms thereof cry, Arise, O sleeper, and call upon thy God. While the stormy tempests threaten the shipwreck of the church and state: and particularly the storm of division and animosity threatens the overthrowing the church visible; yet they sleep on, saying, All is safe. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep. When security is universal, surely it is a sign we are not washed from our filthiness.

10. There is a generation of apostates, who begin in the spirit, and end in the flesh; that begin, like Nebuchadnezzar's image, with a head of gold, but end with the feet of the image, that were feet of clay. Apostasy, and backsliding, and defection are no rarity in our day, wherein the love of many waxeth cold; and the church hath left her first love; and many backslide with a perpetual backsliding; and are, it is to be feared, or will be of these who draw back to perdition. Concerning all such the scripture speaketh very awfully: The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways. Whoso putteth his hand to God's plough, and looketh back, is not fit for the kingdom of heaven. Surely, habitual apostates, who return with the dog to the vomit, and the sow that was washed, to the wallowing in the mire, are not washed from their filthiness. A generation that is making defection from God, his work, cause, and interest, are not washed.

11. There is a generation of lukewarm Laodiceans, who are neither cold nor hot, whom God threatens to spew out of his mouth; having no zeal for God, no public spirit to witness faithfully for the cause and interest of Christ. Instead of this, carnal policy, under the false notion of prudence and moderation, doth carry many off their feet, while they follow the counsels of flesh and blood, and condemn, reproach, and discourage those who take other measures, and desire to be faithful. If any zeal for the declarative glory of God appear with this or the other person, in a day of general lukewarmness, no wonder that the particular person, who would make any appearance against the common defection, be flouted for singularity, as if they set up themselves, and would be reckoned eminent beyond all others: But calumny will never make zeal culpable, nor lukewarmness justifiable. However, the neutralising temporizer is abominable to God; he who cares not whether the ark or dagon be set up, whether Christ or anti-Christ prevail: He that is not with me is against me, saith Christ upon this head. I have read of Anastatius the emperor, that he

was, by the hand of God, shot to death with a hot thunder-bolt, because he was lukewarm in the catholic cause, and not zealous against the Arian faction, which became so universal, that it was said, The whole world was turned Arian.

12. There is a generation of profane persons, like Esau, who, for one morsel of meat, sold his birth-right. Many, for a little morsel of worldly good, will sell their souls, and sell their heavenly inheritance. Many, for fear of losing any little outward inheritance, or temporal advantage in the world, will make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. Many think they make a good bargain at a public market, (such as you have in view this week,) though they cheat their neighbour with never so many lies and falsehoods, in buying and selling, if they may but gain a little worldly advantage upon them. They will quit with their conscience, before they quit with a sixpence. Surely these are not washed from their filthiness.

But what shall I say? There would be no end of speaking to this purpose.—There is a generation that have no care of their own souls, nor the souls of others: they are running fast to hell; and, by their ill example, drawing their children to hell with them; their friends and neighbours to hell with them.—There is a generation of the vile licentious, and adulterers, and unclean persons, that go on, without remorse or reformation; and to whom the custom of the sin hath worn out the conscience of the guilt. Most certainly they are not washed from their filthiness.—There is a generation of drunkards and tipplers, that cannot mortify the lust of drunkenness unto drunkenness: it is their right hand and right eye, which, because it cannot be cut off, or plucked out, it is like to go to hell with them. They are not washed from their filthiness.—There is a generation of horrid swearers, and profaners of the name of God, whether by broad oaths, or minched oaths; not to insist upon the open perjury, by the abominable use and abuse of state oaths. O the perfidy and perjury of the nation! Surely the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, 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, Hos. iv. 1, 2, 3.—There is a generation of liars, who make no conscience of speaking the truth to their neighbours: They are of their father the devil, who is the father of lies. Are they washed from their filthiness? No: There shall in nowise enter into the New Jerusalem any thing that defileth, or worketh abomination, or maketh a

lie.—There is a generation of Sabbath-breakers, to whom God's holy day is as little hallowed and sanctified as any other day: though they come to the church for the fashion; yet they do not make conscience to abstain from thinking their own thoughts, speaking their own words, or doing their own works on the Lord's day: No; if it were not for the custom, they would not make so much as any outward mark of distinction. Are they washed from their filthiness? No, by no means.—There is a generation of malicious persons and fire-brands, living in the fire of contention and discord: not living in love, nor following peace with all men; but living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another: loving to have an ill tale to tell, and an evil report to make of one another: pursuing idle clashes, and entertaining them. Surely they are not washed from their filthiness.—There is a generation of unjust and injurious persons, who think nothing to build up their own worldly fortune upon the ruin of their neighbour's estate; not remembering, that which is won by theft, robbery, injustice, or oppression, is won at the peril of their souls and the curse of God. Of the same nature is injustice in judging and determining of causes, at whatsoever court, whether civil or ecclesiastic, when friendship and courtesy is preferred above justice and equity; and when the decision of judges goes not by justice, but by favour, or fraud, or bribery. Surely all such are not washed from their filthiness.—There is a generation of rotten-hearted professors, that join in intimate society and close familiarity with stated enemies to God and religion, and monstrous swearers, profane, loose, abandoned, and malignant persons: they reckon them, perhaps, to be good fellows and honest neighbours, and have not the least reluctance at intimate fellowship with them; and, it may be, prefer their company to that of the godly and serious. They walk in the counsel of the ungodly, they stand in the way of sinners, and sit in the way of the scornful, and yet would be called professors. But it seems plain that they are not washed from their filthiness.—There is a generation of prayerless persons; they bow not a knee to God in their families, and perhaps as little in their closets. The prayerless man is an impure man; he is not washed from his filthiness.—There is a generation of proud and selfish persons; if they pray, or bring forth any fruit, they are but empty vines that bring forth fruit to themselves. Spiritual pride and self is as great an enemy as God hath: and even pride of duties, pride of prayer, pride of preaching, pride of grace, proud desires of being applauded and thought better of than others, where it is in its reign, evidences the

person is not washed from his filthiness.—In a word, there is a generation of unregenerate persons, which include all the Christless and graceless world, that were never convinced or converted, never drawn to Christ in a day of power. Surely all they who were never born again, of water and of the Spirit, whose operations are like water, who were never saved by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, they are not washed from their filthiness.

[2.] The next thing proposed, on this use of trial and examination, was to assign some positive evidences of those that are washed from their filthiness and made partakers of gospel purity. It is possible some may imagine, if all be excluded that I have named, there will certainly be few behind of the generation, that is washed from their filthiness. Indeed, I own, they are but few; for all are excluded who are under the power, reign, and dominion of any of those sins that I have been naming. But, for the help of the few, that they may know they have something of gospel purity, and that others may further know that they have it not, and so may be humbled, and cry to the Lord for it, I shall offer but these two means, or evidences, at the time, by which it may be tried. Try this purity then, 1. By the root of it. .2. By the fruit of it.

1. Let this purity be tried by the root and spring of it. And,

1. This gospel purity is rooted in a divorce from the law. This may seem a paradox to some, that purity, holiness, and conformity to the law, should be rooted in a divorce from the law: Yea, but it is a truth of the eternal God. Accordingly Paul declares of his own experience, Gal. ii, 19; "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." No living unto God, in point of purity and sanctification, until we be dead unto and divorced from the law, in point of justification. We must renounce it as a rule of acceptance, before we improve it as a rule of obedience. We do not make it a standard of holiness, so long as we make it a condition of life: for, while we do so, we are under the law, and so under the power and dominion of sin, and strangers to the grace of God, which only doth effectually teach to deny ungodliness and wordly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly. Now, have you ever been divorced from the law, by the killing stroke of conviction, and by the mortifying stroke of humiliation? Have you been convinced of the evil of sin, the guilt of sin, the power of sin; of the righteousness of God, though he should destroy you; and of the spirituality and extent of the law, so as the commandment coming, sin hath revived and you died?

2. This gospel purity is rooted in a marriage union to Christ; Ye are dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye might be married to another, even unto Christ, that ye may bring forth fruit unto God, Rom. vii. 4. As there can be no lawful children before marriage; so, no acceptable fruit unto God, no true piety, before marriage union to the Lord Jesus Christ, without ingraftment into this blessed vine, without whom we can do nothing. Now, try your purity by this root of it.—Know you nothing of a marriage manifestation of, and union to the Lord Jesus Christ, having been divorced from the law, by a work of humiliation laying you low? Have you got a discovery of Christ, in a gracious manifestation of his glory? For, beholding his glory, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory.—Got you ever a view of the marriage contract? Did he never say to you, I will be your God, ye shall be my people? Did he never say, I will betroth thee to me forever, in loving-kindness, in tender mercies, and in faithfulness; declaring that his covenant is your charter, his righteousness your garment, his Spirit your guide, his fullness your treasure, and his faithfulness your security?—Know you nothing of the marriage proclamation? Did the Lord never say to you such a word as that, Come unto me, and you shall find rest to your souls, poor, weary, and heavy laden creature? Did he never court you by the gospel, saying, as Rebekah's friends concerning Abraham's servant, with relation to Isaac, Will you go with this man?—Know you anything of the marriage consent? I will go with this man. Did he ever make you willing in a day of his power?—Know you nothing of marriage between Christ and your soul? Hath he ever embraced you by his love, and made you to embrace him by faith?—Surely gospel purity is rooted here.

3. This gospel purity is rooted in the inhabitation and operation of the Spirit of Christ; "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes," Ezek. xxxvi. 27. Try, then, the Spirit is for accomplishing the forementioned effects. The Spirit maketh a clear revelation of the grace of God in the gospel. The Spirit having convinced of sin and unbelief, doth beget faith, even the faith of the word of grace, the faith of the death of Christ, the faith of the mercy of God in Christ, and the faith of the promise: and by faith the believer receives the Spirit; that is, more and more of the Spirit. In the first approach of the Spirit to the heart, when he works faith, we are purely passive; but afterward the Spirit is received: Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? And now the Spirit dwelleth in the

heart, as the root of all purity and holiness there; and then he works, and operates, and influences: this is the sap which comes from the root Christ. The poor soul finds, that without new breathing, new influences of the Spirit, there can be no good motions, desires, affections; this is the well of water, put within the believer, springing up to everlasting life. Hypocrites may be fed with common influences, like pools from the clouds; but believers have a living spring within them, springing up like a spring well internally, even when there are no external motives many times.

4. The gospel purity is rooted in a principle of faith: so we read, **Acts xv. 9**; that their hearts were purified by faith: for faith doth not only justify the person, but also purify the affections and heart of the person justified. Faith is a working grace, **1 Thess. i. 3**. In what works it? It works thus, even working out filthy corruption. As unbelief and infidelity pollutes a man's heart; and therefore Paul joins the unbelieving and the defiled together, **Tit. i. 15**; so also, on the contrary, it is the work of faith to sanctify the heart: and therefore as Paul, in the former place, joins unbelief and defilement together; so, **1 Tim. i. 5**, faith unfeigned, and a pure heart are coupled together. Now, faith purifies by drawing water out of the wells of salvation: having united the person to Christ, the fountain-head, it draws vital influences from all Christ's perfections and attributes; from all his offices, from all his promises, from all his providences, from all his relations; from his names, his righteousness, his fullness, his purchase, by its frequent actings through the help of the Spirit of Christ, which is given them.

And particularly, faith improves the death of Christ for this purpose. By his death he hath appeased the wrath, and satisfied justice, and hath obtained the communication of God's favour, and all the fruits of it, whereof this of sanctification and purification is one. Christ, by his death, hath taken out of the way the great obstacle of our sanctification, and that is our conceiving of God as an enemy, and so being under the fear of God's wrath: for now, that Christ hath died, and this is revealed to us, this may beget in us kindly thoughts of God, and deliver us from our fears; and so should we understand that word, "There is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared," **Ps. cxxx. 4**. One would think if it were, there is wrath with thee that thou mayest be feared, they would understand it better. Why, I tell you, while people fear the Lord and his wrath, that is no holiness: for devils fear him and his wrath; yea, they believe and tremble at his wrath, and yet have no holiness, no purity. But, while we "fear the Lord and

his goodness," as it is, Hosea iii. 5; while we fear him in a filial way, from the faith and belief of mercy and goodness, this is purity and holiness. Now, Christ, by his death, hath removed the great obstacle, viz. a slavish fear, and introduced the greatest encouragement, even the declaration of God's greatest mercy, and richest grace to poor sinners: and faith's views hereof doth encourage us to love and serve the Lord.

In a word, faith improves, and embraces, and pleads the promise of sanctification; such as, I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean; from all your filthiness will I cleanse you: I will put my Spirit within them: I will put my fear in their heart: I will subdue their iniquities: I will save you from all your uncleanness: All which are Yea and Amen in Christ.—Now, try your purity thus by the root of it.

2dly, Try your purity by the fruits and effects, parts and evidences of it; such as these following.

1. Gospel purity makes a man love God, because he is pure. Can you say from the bottom of your soul, that however impure and unholy you are, yet you love God because he is a pure and holy God; a holy God that hates sin? I look upon this as a sweet evidence of one that hath the stamp of God's holiness upon his soul. A hypocrite may love God because he is good, merciful, and the like: but can he love him because he is a holy God that hates sin? No. Now, is that the language of thy soul, Give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness?

2. Gospel purity makes a man love the people of God, because they are pure. A man may love the people of God because of some other reason, and yet have no purity: but to love them because of their purity; and the more pure and holy they are, the more to love them, this is an evidence of being passed from death to life. Many would rather choose to be in a drunken club and cabal, than in the company of those that fear God; they are kept under restraints while with them: but the man that is washed from his filthiness, His delights are with the saints, the excellent ones of the earth, Psal. xvi. 3.

3. Another fruit and evidence of gospel purity is, it makes the man love the word, because of its purity: "Thy word is very pure; therefore thy servant loveth it," Psal. cxix. 140. The word is the mean and instrument of purity; Now are ye clean through the word that I have spoken. Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth. Now, to love ordinances, and to love the word, for this very

reason, because of its purity, is evidential of a person's being purified in part.

4. Gospel purity makes a man hate sin, because of its impurity, and stand at a distance from it, under that consideration. He hates sin because of its impurity, and because of its opposition to holiness: and therefore he hates every sin; "I hate every false way," Psal. cxix. 104. He hates secret, as well as open sin; "I hate vain thoughts," Psal. cxix. 113. He hates little sins, as well as great, if any can be called little, seeing there is no little God to sin against, no little hell to punish sin in. Little sins have brought on great punishments; as Lot's wife looking back to Sodom; Adam's eating the forbidden fruit; fifty thousand men of Bethshemish slain for looking curiously into the ark, and Uzzah for touching it. The saints know that the least sin cost Christ's precious blood; and therefore dare not think little of, or indulge themselves in any sin.—Further, Gospel purity leads a man to stand at a distance from sin. It is true, the child of God may fall into sin; but his way of sinning is like the wicked man's way of serving God. A wicked man may go to duty, he may go to his prayers; but he is only a bungler at it; he has no habit of grace, no dexterity for duty before God: so, a godly man may commit sin, and try that work sometimes; but he is a bungler at it, he has lost his habit and dexterity of sinning through grace; and therefore it is said he cannot sin; He that is born of God cannot commit sin.

5. Gospel purity inclines a man to make advances in religion; he forgets the things that are behind, and presseth forward; he can never be pure enough: he goes from strength to strength; The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. It is true, there are ebbings and flowings of grace; the person may be going sometimes backward, at other times forward: but his ordinary course is like the sun; it may be under a cloud, and out of view, as if there was no sun at all; but then it breaks out from under the cloud again, and always makes farther advances in his race. So, the child of God may be under a cloud; grace may be under a cloud and disappear, as if it was no grace at all: but then it breaks out again further advanced; for, the man grows in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ; hath more experience of the Lord's pity and favour; more insight into the mysteries of the gospel.

6. Gospel purity makes a man see and lament his own impurity and unholiness: he is afflicted with his want of purity, and with his own vileness and defilement, saying, with Job, Behold, I am

vile; and with Asaph, So foolish was I and ignorant; and with Abraham, I am dust and ashes; and with Agur, I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man; and with Paul, I am the chief of sinners. The man is humbled under a sense of his own vileness, and of the plagues of his own heart. Tears, instead of gems and pearls, were the ornaments of David's bed, when he was fallen from his purity.

7. This purity makes a man to be afflicted even for the impurity of others: this was the case with David; I beheld transgressors, and was grieved: "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law," Psalm cxix. 136, 158. It had the same effect upon Jeremiah; "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" Jer. ix. 1. "And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof," Ezek. ix. 4. Why, the godly man, in other men's sins, sees the badness of his own heart: and by mourning for the sins of others, he comes to be pure, even from the sins of other men; whereas people are guilty of other men's sins, while they do not mourn for them, but rather approve of them.

8. This purity is evidenced by a conscientious and diligent use of the means of purity. The Lord works out, and carries on this work of sanctification; makes it go on by the means which he hath appointed us to use: and when we use his appointed means, though the effect do not presently and discernibly follow and appear; yet we may conclude that the work is going on. Even as when the children of Israel were compassing the walls of Jericho seven days, and seven times upon the seventh day; some of them might possibly be disposed to say, What means our compassing the walls; they do not fall by our compassing them, or using this mean? However, every compassing of the walls was a bringing down of the walls, though they fell not till after the seventh times compassing on the seventh day, Josh. vi. Even so, the diligent use of means, in the way that the Lord hath appointed, is our indispensable duty; for, though it is not always evident, that the means hath any success, for bringing down the walls and high towers of sin; yet every compassing of the walls, at God's command, is a sign the work is going on; and at last the walls shall fall flat to the ground.

SERMON XI.

THE NATURE AND EXCELLENCY OF

Gospel Purity.

(CONTINUATION.)

“There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.”—PROV. xxx. 12.

MANY, by a fair profession, a false conviction, and a spurious conversion, seem half way to heaven, who yet will lodge for ever in hell. He who sits down at half-way, and rests there, will never come to the end of his journey, but is still afar off. O Sirs, it is to be feared, that the most part of you, that even come so near to Christ, in approaching to his house and ordinances; yet you are as far from him as light is from darkness, or darkness from light: and we need not go far to prove the charge; for, if you be not washed, you are far from God and Christ; yea, you have no part in him: “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me,” said our blessed Lord to Peter. If you be not washed from the guilt of sin in justification, and from the filth of sin in sanctification, you have no part in Christ, and so are far enough from him: and this is the state, not of a few, but of a multitude; “There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.”

Having finished the doctrinal part of the subject, discussed so much of the application, we are now prosecuting an use of trial; but in regard we have treated the negative part of this use more largely than the positive, we shall offer some things farther upon the last of these; not with a view so much to multiply particular marks, as for offering general rules, by which you may examine this matter. As it hath already been tried by the root and by the fruit of it; it may be further examined by the parts of it, by the perfection of it, by the means of it, and by the end of it.

3dly, We proceed then, in the third place, to try this gospel purity by the parts of it. This purity, holiness, or sanctification is twofold, either habitual or actual.

1. There is habitual purity, which lies in the infusion of all the habits of grace. And this habitual holiness may be tried by these two special parts of it, viz. the illumination of the mind, and the renovation of the will.

(1.) There is here the illumination of the mind: this is a special part of purity and sanctification; "Ye have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him," Col. iii. 10. The mere natural man, that lies in his natural state, he neither doth nor can perceive the things of God, 1 Cor. ii. 14. Here then is purity to clear the understanding. The pure and sanctified man is renewed in the spirit of his mind. We are a mass of darkness by nature; We know nothing as we ought to know. We are blind as moles, and can give no subjection of understanding to divine revelation; nor give a full assent to the truths of God, having no subjective persuasion thereof: yea, we know nothing as we ought to know. Though we may have a form of knowledge, yet, in seeing we see not, while we want the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God. Sin, entering into the world, hath blindfolded us all: the devil, having got the victory over us, doth even throw glamor over our eyes, or beguile us with a false deception; and we are become fools: folly is bound up in the heart of every natural man. And however some may seem to be exempted from this character, such as these who are called statesmen, and great wits, and politicians; yet, while in a natural state, their wisdom is but foolishness in God's sight, 1 Cor. i. 20. The profound philosopher, and high pretender to reason, is but a fool in the sight of God: professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.

Now, when the Lord purifies a man, he takes this poor man, who is so ignorant of God, even as blind as a mole in the things of God, and as dark as a dungeon, and makes him light in the Lord: the light of the gospel shines in with evidence upon the man's soul, so as he is made to give full credit to the truths of God, and to the God of truth. The high reasoning that was in his mind, against the gospel of Christ, even his vain imaginations, whereby he exalted himself against the knowledge of Christ, these are brought down by the weapons of the gospel warfare, the sword of the Spirit, in the hand of Christ. These reasonings that he had before are silenced: the man sees a glory in God's perfections, in the face

of Jesus Christ, that he saw not before: he sees a beauty in God's dispensations, which he saw not before: he sees a majesty in God's ordinances, which he did not see before, and could not perceive: he sees a loveliness in the precepts of God; nothing whereof could be perceived before: he sees a sweetness in the promises, which he thought very little of before: he sees an excellency in the saints, whom he contemned before: he sees a reality in what is divinely revealed, which was but fancies to him before: he sees also a certainty in a life to come, and in a death and a wrath to come, which he never gave full credit to before: he knows now there is a God, whom before he only thought he knew, but was really ignorant of; he sees him to be a just and holy God, a good and gracious God, a God in Christ reconciling the world to himself.

Now, all sanctification and purity enters in at this door of illumination; and therefore you may try by this: for the grand difference between the saint and the hypocrite lies in this, the one is darkness, the other is light in the Lord. Let the hypocrite do what he will, profess what he will, he is still but a mass of darkness, and knows nothing of God. Whereas, let the saint, the believer, be at never such a low ebb, yet he is a person whose eyes God hath opened: though sometimes, indeed, he may be asleep, and so not actually beholding the light; yet this habitual change is wrought, the eyes of his understanding is enlightened.

(2.) Another special part of of this habitual purity and sanctification, is the renovation of the will and affections. The natural man is rebellion against the will of God; his will by no means will stoop to the will of God: and here is the work of sanctification in the will, that it makes it flexible, bends and inclines it to obedience to God's will: "He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God," John viii. 47. Man's will is totally depraved, and desperately wicked: by nature it is inclined to everything that is bad, and averse from everything that is good: it is the greatest enemy that God hath out of hell, and as great an enemy as he hath in hell; for, every man that hath an unrenewed will, he hath a devil in his breast. The will, unrenewed, is the very picture of Satan; the man is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be: and whatever he may pretend of kindness to God, and the people of God, yet he hates God, and everything that hath God's image upon it.—His affections are totally vitiated, his desires being toward that which is dishonourable to God, and hurtful to himself: his delights are placed upon a thing of nought. His sorrows are especially because he cannot get his will; and his

will is neither for God's glory, nor his own good. His greatest grief is because he cannot get his wicked will gratified, or his carnal affections satisfied.

But now, when the Lord purifies the man, and sanctifies him, he takes away the heart of stone, and gives the heart of flesh. This wicked will is called the heart of stone, because it is inflexible, it will neither bow nor bend; you may sooner break the man than bow him: while his corrupt will remains, there is no possibility of the man's inclining to that which is spiritually good. Now, when the will is changed, the faculty remains, but the quality is changed; the cursed quality, whereby it was wholly inclined to evil; whereby it was so inclined to wickedness, that there was no drawing the man off from his own ways; yet God takes this away in sanctification, so that now, the man is inclined to good, as before he was inclined to evil.—The will is now subject to the will of God, and to the law of God, and made to say, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Let my will be submissive to thine; let it be as a weather-cock, to turn about with every blast of the breath of thy mouth; with every signification of thy will in the word. The man is now inclined to seek the Lord, and to serve him: yea, he hath a natural and native inclination to do that which is good; and a native aversion from that which is evil, though his will be but in part renewed, and when he would do good, evil is present with him: there is flesh lusting against the Spirit, yet he is really renewed, so as it is the habitual frame and disposition of his soul, to serve the Lord in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of his life.—His affections are renewed; he now is made to desire God as the chief good; to delight in him as the only portion; to love him as his best friend; to hate sin as his greatest enemy; to be sorrowful for that more than for any other thing; to be angry at sin in himself and in others; and to be well-pleased and satisfied with the revelation and device of salvation, through grace, by the righteousness of Christ, and that Christ should be made of God to him wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

And thus you see the parts of habitual purity: this is the habit of grace, though it be not always exercised and discerned, as it is in acquired habits; e. g. A musician hath the habit of music, or playing melodiously, though he hath not always the instrument, or harp in his hand: so it is in infused habits; a man hath the habit of grace, habitual purity, though it be not always drawn forth into actual exercise. **And therefore,**

2. There is actual purity, by which we ought to try ourselves. And this actual purity hath these two parts, viz. a dying daily to sin, and a living daily to God and righteousness.

(1.) In actual purity there is a dying daily to sin; and that is called mortification: he that is in Christ hath crucified the flesh, with the lusts and affections. Now, this dying to sin, is when one doth daily more and more fall out of conceit with sin; when he is actually fighting against it, hating it, and endeavouring the crucifixion of it; when his aversion from it is more strengthened, and his inclination to it is more and more weakened. But perhaps one may say, How shall I know true mortification? Why, it is universal, opposing all sin; and it levels at the very root thereof in original sin; O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? It levels at secret sins, as well as open; O cleanse thou me from secret faults. It strikes at beloved sins; it is a cutting off the right-hand, and plucking out the right eye. It is also evangelical, flowing from a principle of love to God in Christ; and acted in the virtue, and by the faith of the death and crucifixion of the Son of God: and hence a man is said to be crucified with Christ, Gal. ii. 20.

(2.) A living daily to God, and to righteousness, is another part of actual purity, by which we ought to try our sanctity; and it is usually termed vivification. This way of living, is when a man is so far alive to God, as that he is actually delighting in the Lord, and in his company more and more; desiring to have more communion with God in Christ; and when the Lord's service becomes still more the man's recreation and element; and when not only the house of Saul is growing weaker and weaker, but the house of David is growing stronger and stronger, by the man's growing in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and living by the faith of the Son of God.—Now, in true vivification, the man not only hath life, but is lively; not only ingrafted into the true vine, but drawing sap and virtue from the same; not only married to Christ, but bringing forth fruit to him.

Now, these are the parts of purity and sanctification, by which we should examine ourselves: and, I fear, the opening thereof may discover the total want of purity in the most, and the partial want of it in the best of folk; even the great want that believers themselves labour under, with respect to these things. But, however, though believers themselves may see their great want hereof yet they may be in case to draw a comfortable conclusion there-

from, and it may be this, namely, "What I hear the minister tell me of these parts of sanctification, I know I have sometime a day understood it to my blessed experience, and therefore have good ground to expect, that I shall know more of it in the Lord's time and way; for, he that hath begun the good work, will perfect it; and therefore I will quietly await his return."

4thly, Let us not only try our purity by the parts, but also by the perfection of it. I do not mean a perfection of degrees, which will not take place till the believer be in heaven; but the gospel perfection, which even takes place on earth, and by which the believer, in scripture language, is sometimes said to be a perfect and upright man. And this perfection of purity, I think, in general, lies in this, When a man is pure in God's sight. This seems to be especially pointed at in the text, as the reverse of that self-conceited purity therein held forth: "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness." They are pure in their own sight, but not pure in the sight of God: intimating, that the gospel-perfection of purity lies in a man's being pure in God's sight. Of this purity the apostle speaks, Col. i. 22, where Christ is said to present his people "holy, and unblameable, and unproveable" in his Father's sight.

QUEST. What is it to be pure in God's sight, so as we may examine this purity by the gospel perfection of it?

ANSW. 1. This gospel perfection is that purity in God's sight, which implies internal heart uprightness, evidencing itself in faith and love, which can act in the sight and presence of God, as being the product of his blessed Spirit.

I call it a heart-uprightness or heart-purity, because the man that is thus pure, is not only pure outwardly, in the sight of man; but pure in heart and spirit, in the sight of God, who is a Spirit. Many pretend to holiness; but, like the Pharisees, they make clean only the outside of the platter: but the truly pious and holy soul is most careful to have the heart right with God; and solicitous how to be cleansed from all filthiness of the spirit, as well as the flesh. He indeed finds much heart impurity; but the soul of him is grieved at it, and he most ardently desires to be cleansed; Wash me, and I shall be clean; Create in me a clean heart. He is exercised about the heart, crying to Heaven for more and more purity, and daily flying to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. They are much in secret crying for purity: and even when they win not to a secret chamber; yea, perhaps, when they are in the midst of company, they will, now and then, be darting up some stolen look

to Heaven, and their hearts praying, "O for holiness! O for conformity to the Lord! O to have heart enemies destroyed, and strong corruptions broken!"

Again, I said this purity in God's sight, evidenceth itself in faith; it acts in a way of believing, trusting to the faithfulness of God in the promise, and the power of God to accomplish the same: looking for help no other way but in and through our Lord Jesus Christ; receiving the word of faith, and putting to the seal that God is true; casting the burden of the soul upon the Lord by faith; also, the man believes as in the sight of God. It is not enough to be called and accounted a believer, and to reckon yourself such; but to be a believer in the sight of God, is the main business: when the person, through faith, sees an excellency in Christ, so as to count all things but loss and dung for him: and when the poor soul can say, as in the sight of God, "Lord, thou knowest I have no other refuge to run to but thyself; and though thou shouldst kill me, yet will I trust in thee, for all the good things in the covenant, which is all my salvation, and all my desire: here will I rest, and here will I stay myself."

Again, This purity in the sight of God evidenceth itself in love; and this is love in the sight of God, when a man can say before God, The desires of my soul is to thy name, even to the name of Christ. The man loves so, as that the name of Christ is to him as ointment poured forth: he loves so, as to long for more fellowship with God in Christ: he loves so, as wherever he sees the image of God, he loves it: they love his image that shines in his precept, in his promise, in his people. They love the Lord so as to hold him, and they do not let him go; and to such a degree, as to break their heart when he goes away, saying, O! ten thousand worlds cannot fill his room!—Many are the pretensions of love: O! whom should we love but sweet Christ? will some say. But all is mere flattery; they care not whether he be absent or present. They pretend love to him; but they take other things in his room. * * * They can take pleasure in idols; they can take pleasure in other things, in the want of Christ. They are not like the blessed psalmist, who said, I remembered God, and was troubled; I refused to be comforted. Nay, but true love, in the sight of God, will make a man take no comfort, or satisfaction, in any thing, while the beloved is gone. And again, it makes a man have common friends and foes with him; and it makes his cause their cause: yea, it makes them more troubled at any dishonour done to him, than any affront

offered to themselves. If they see Christ honoured, their heart rejoices; and if otherwise, their hearts are sore afflicted.

Further, I said on this head, that this purity acts in the sight and presence of God: the man sets God before him acknowledging him in all his ways; desiring to do nothing without his counsel, and to do every thing by the direction and conduct of his blessed Spirit.

Finally, I affirmed, upon this head, that this purity acts in the sight and presence of God, as being the product of his holy Spirit. This is true purity in God's sight that is the production of his holy Spirit, in his gracious saving influences. Nothing passes current in heaven, but what is coined there, and comes out of it. The thing that you do yourself, man, woman, it wants the king's stamp upon it: Whose superscription hath it? It is but the product of your own heart. But that only which is the fruit of the Spirit of God, is good and pure in his sight. If you bring false coin to a king, that you have coined yourself, or if it be discovered that you have done it, you put yourself in hazard of death thereby; even so, your duties that have not the right stamp, and wherein you have not been influenced by the Spirit and grace of God, instead of saving you, they put you in hazard of death and damnation.

2. This purity in God's sight, which is its gospel perfection, implies a man's having all the members of the new creature. The child new-born, if it hath all its members, is a perfect child, though it is far from being perfect in all respects; it is far from having perfect wit, perfect strength, perfect knowledge, perfect prudence, etc.: but it is perfect, in respect that it hath all the needful parts of body.—So this gospel perfection of purity, is, when a man hath all the habits of grace; and when faith, love, hope, humility, zeal, and all the fruits of the Spirit are planted in the soul; when all these members, which make up the new man, are perfect, then is a man pure in the sight of God. A man may have a great deal of fair outward shew before the world, and yet have not one of these members of the new creature at all: not one fruit of the Spirit planted in the soul; not one habit of grace: he acts from a natural conscience, and from a common conviction of sin and duty; and though it be by common grace that he is enabled to do any thing, yet the strength of nature is still more than any strength of grace received, and so it turns all to itself. As when you cast clean water into a puddle, it becomes all puddle: so here, all is turned to self; and the man acts from self as his principle, and for self as

his end. The believer is perfect in this respect, as to the perfection of parts, in opposition to the unbeliever. And some believers, in this respect, are more perfect than others, even as to the perfection of parts: for, though all believers have the habit of all graces, yet it may be such, as they have not the exercise of some graces; like children they are born with their hands and legs indeed, but they are lame from their birth, and have not the exercise of them; and they continue so still. This imperfection even some believers may labour under.—Here is one that hath strong faith, lively hope, fervent zeal, and some good works that discover it: but it may be they are defective in point of humility, meekness, sobriety, brotherly kindness, and the like. There is another, perhaps a gracious person, that hath much love, meekness, sweetness of temper, brotherly kindness; but extremely defective in zeal for the declarative glory of God, so as he doth not valiantly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. But, when one hath all these habits, and together with the habit, the exercise of them all, then that person may be said to have an evangelical perfection, and to be pure in God's sight.—Let this be another rule and help to try yourselves by.

3. This gospel perfection implies a person's having all the spiritual senses of the new creature, and the lively exercise of them; "Strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil," Heb. v. 14. You may go to some places, and you will see very lively pictures, and as comely to behold as ever man or woman, with an excellent ruddiness in their face; and, at a distance, you would think they have life: Well, but they have no senses; and far less have they any exercise of senses: "Eyes have they, but they see not; they have ears but they hear not; noses have they, but they smell not:" they have no sense, no feeling. Here is a sad blemish and defect. Thus many idol Christians there are, that are merely painted images, and exactly drawn. Look to them, and compare them with some real Christians, you would think them far superior to, and beyond them. O! there is no comparison between that poor silly creature, and this man, who is so much extolled for his wit, reading, gravity, sobriety, and the like. Yet the omniscient eye of Jehovah may see his blemishes and defects, and want of spiritual senses, which he only hath the appearance of before men; but the other hath in reality before God: yet this man, who is pure in the sight of God, may seem to be nothing in comparison of the other, that casts such a dash, and

cuts such a figure. If one who hath many blemishes and defects in his body, stand beside a lively well-done picture, what a base creature doth he appear beside that lively well proportioned image! yet notwithstanding he hath that perfection of life and sense, which the image wants: so, here is one that you would think he hath faith, love, knowledge, and all the members of the new creature: but, alas! the great matter is, the want of spiritual life and senscs.

(1.) They have not their seeing; they have no true faith, or spiritual discerning: They have eyes, but see not: they have eyes; that is, they have an image of faith, a form of knowledge; but, in seeing, they see not; for they want the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God.

(2.) They want their hearing; they are deaf to the things of God: They have ears, but hear not: they have ears; that is, they have an uptaking of words; but, in hearing, they hear not. If you say to them, Did you hear? Yea, says the man, I am not deaf. Well, did you understand? Yea, perhaps better than yourself, say they. Yet after all, they do not hear the voice of God in the law, so as to awaken their conscience; nor the voice of God in the gospel, so as to quicken their souls: they hear not his voice in the rod, so as to humble them; nor in his mercies, so as to melt them, and engage them to himself.

(3.) They want their feeling; they feel not their sins that are sinking them down to the pit. Though, perhaps, they are called men of sense; yet they have no sense this way: they feel neither the sin of their nature, nor the plagues of their heart: they have no feeling either of the guilt of sin, or the power of sin. They do not feel sin in the fact of it, the fault of it, the filth of it, the folly of it, the fountain of it, the fruits of it.

(4.) They want smelling; they find no sweet-smelling savour in divine things: They have noses, but they smell not. Not so as to other things; they smell what is most for their profit, credit, and honour: but they never find the ill smell that is upon error and sin. They can stay in the places where God's name is profaned, his truths wounded, and his people mocked, and not be affected with the ill smell thereof. And, on the other hand, they can hear Christ tendered, grace proclaimed, and the gospel promulgated, and yet never be ravished with the sweet savour thereof.

(5.) They want their tasting; they taste not the bitterness of sin, on the one hand, so as to see it to be an evil and bitter thing; nor

the sweetness of the word of grace, on the other hand, so as to prize it more than their necessary food.

Now, if we try our purity by this rule, it will difference some believers from other believers, and all believers from unbelievers.

It will, in the first place, difference some believers from other believers; yea, the most of believers may find themselves defective, with respect to this piece of gospel perfection, in purity and holiness. Here is a believer, I shall suppose, that hath got his eyes open; but, alas! he hath not a good discerning; he wants a quick understanding, so as to discern either between precious and vile, or between good and evil, truth and error; yea, he is readier to choose that which is wrong than that which is right: his senses are vitiated; he hath not, so to speak, the taste of his mouth. Like a person under some disease, or indisposition, that calls every bit of meat that he makes use of bitter; and everything he eats tasteless; even so, some that are believers may be so indisposed, and have their senses vitiated, that in the best of preaching, they find no good; in the soundest of sermons, they find no sweetness; in the most pleasant gospel truths, they find no relish, especially in a day of controversy about truth. The discerning of some believers is so small, that they know not truth from error; but halt between two opinions, and may be, suspect, every word that is said, and walk in darkness; and, perhaps, side with error rather than with the truth. But then it is, that gospel perfection takes place, when all the spiritual senses are present, and in a lively vivid exercise. Many, even believers, have their senses vitiated, by reason of spiritual indisposition, and want of spiritual health, which weakens every sense, and every member and limb of the new creature. Some believers, at some times, labour under a disease of the conscience, a disease of the understanding, a disease of the judgment, even about necessary truth; lameness in hands, and feet, and tongue, so as they are out of capacity to speak for God, work for God, and walk after God; and this lameness and indisposition is sometimes observable by men; so Paul saw Peter walking with a crooked foot, when he symbolized with the Jews and dissembled, in so much that Barnabas was carried away with their dissimulation; whereupon he reproved him, and withstood him to the face, because he saw that he walked not uprightly, Gal. iii. 11,—14. But whether it be discernible to men or not, yet God sees and observes all the failures, in point of gospel perfection, in holiness and purity.

But, in the next place, it will notwithstanding, difference all believers from unbelievers: for, though believers have their blem-

ishes, by sin, yet they are not under the power of sin, as unbelievers are: and though they have their senses many times vitiated, yet they are not altogether destitute of spiritual senses, as unbelievers are. The graceless man may have his natural senses, his rational senses; and common senses; but no gracious spiritual senses.—The man hears, but he is a senseless hearer. It may be, indeed, when the Lord is much with the speaker, at certain times, the word may have such expressions, that the natural conscience may be roused, and the natural affections raised: but to have spiritual senses, and spiritual graces exercised, that he cannot have, being destitute of them; and so, at best, is but the senseless hearer. Spiritual sleep, and deep security prevails mightily; so that, like a man in a sound sleep, he may be joggled up a little, and so open his eyes, as it were, a little; yet he is incapable of discerning duty, for he falls over again.—The man prays; but his prayers are senseless prayers: he is senseless as to every spiritual exercise.—The man sings in the family, or with the congregation, by raising the voice; but he hath not sense to make melody with his heart to the Lord.—Try your gospel purity and perfection by these things.

4. This gospel perfection imports a constant advancement from the perfection of parts to the perfection of degrees; a pressing towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus; a longing for a state of perfection, without being satisfied till we arrive at the height of it; “Let us go on unto perfection,” Heb. vi. 1. The believer, the pure and holy man, aims at perfect light, perfect knowledge of God, perfect delight in him; and perfect love to men; that is what his soul aspires after: and the Lord reckons this man according to what he would be at, rather than what he is. He would be at perfection; and God reckons him according to what he so ardently desires after. Legal perfection he hath not, in himself, but in his head, Christ, who is the Lord our righteousness: but this gospel perfection he hath from his glorious Head, according to the measure of the communication of the Spirit, making him aspire after perfect sanctification. For, as his justification is perfect already; so shall his sanctification be perfected in glory, where all impurity and imperfection shall be done away; and where the image of Christ shall be visible in every saint: for they shall be like him, because they shall see him as he is. Now, towards this gospel perfection do all believers natively incline; whereas, unbelievers have no such high aim.—By these things you may try gospel purity as to the perfection of it.

5. This gospel purity may be tried also by the means of it. Besides what I said concerning the root of purity, examine your purity likewise by the means whereby the Lord brings it about, and in what method. I shall here but name these two or three things, that may be grounds for your trial and examination. The Lord brings about this gospel purity, by these and the like means.

1. By discovering the man's impurity to him. Whoever are made pure in the eye of God, are first made impure in their own eyes. The text supposed, that those who are pure in their own eyes, are impure in the sight of God: and it says, that when God washes them from their filthiness, they are not pure in their own eyes. A clear conviction of impurity, of sin, and uncleanness, is both a piece of purity, and also a mean thereof. It is a part of holiness to have eyes to see our own vileness and wickedness; and the sight thereof is a mean of making the creature restless and uneasy till he be washed. The Lord, when he hath a mind to purify a person, lets him see what a devil he is; and what a hell of wickedness, and what a black hoard of abomination is within. And,

2. He doth it, by discovering his grace and mercy to him.—The Lord purifies and sanctifies by the revelation of his grace and truth; and, indeed, grace and truth come by Jesus Christ: as a Priest, he purchases this grace; as a Prophet he reveals it; and as a King, he applies it. And this revelation of grace brings sanctification; "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men. Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world;" Tit. i. 11, 12. "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth," John xvii. 17. In this revelation of the grace of God in Christ, the fountain opened is seen; even the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, Zech. xiii. 1.—The merciful government of God in Christ is discovered: The soul looks on this King of Israel as a merciful King. And Benhadad's servants said unto him, "Behold, now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings: let us, I pray thee, put sackcloth on our loins, and ropes upon our heads, and go out to the king of Israel: peradventure he will save thy life." 1 Kings, xx. 31. The soul now counts these subjects happy that stand before such a King; "Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom," 1 Kings x. 8. Now the soul laments its bondage to other lords, Isa. xxvi. 13, and ardently

desires to be the subject of this gracious and glorious King. And so thus the Lord brings to this sanctity.

3. He purifies by reconciling the heart unto God, from the sense of God's being reconciled to us. The faith of God's love and goodness makes the soul submit in a loving way, and lay down the weapons of defiance. As a traitor, having found the gracious favour of his prince, in pardoning his treason; his naughty heart, that before was full of treachery, is overcome with this undeserved favour? and his hatred is turned into love: so it is here; when the sinner, the traitor, comes to perceive the love of God, in pardoning such a traitor and rebel as he, his wicked heart is overcome with that kindness, the faith of the love of God venting itself in the death of Christ; and so the faith of the blood of atonement purifies the heart, and frees it from the natural enmity.

4. He purifies by continual supplies of grace, and strengthening the soul to wage war against sin, and strengthening it against corruption. There are several ways whereby he strengthens the soul. I presuppose, that, by this time, the man is in Christ, and being in Christ, strength and virtue comes from the glorious Head; and that by these and the like means.—Sometimes he strengthens by making the soul look again and again to Christ, as having all fullness of grace, and a fullness to be communicated; and as being exalted of God for this end, to communicate gifts, and graces, and the Spirit of grace, Acts v. 31.—Sometimes he strengthens the soul, by helping it to plead the promise of sanctification. The believer sees, that as he is ready to distribute of his fullness, so he is faithful to accomplish his promise; and the promises of sanctification are manifold. At these breasts the man sucks by faith; and as the child is strengthened and nourished by sucking the breast; so the believer, by the prayer of faith, sucks from the promise of grace, e. g. the promise of the Lord pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin; and so derives strength.—Sometimes he strengthens by giving the soul some joy and comfort, and so encouraging it for giving battle to the enemies: Believing, we rejoice: and rejoicing, we are strong: for the joy of the Lord is our strength. The more heaviness, the more weakness; but the more joy, the more strength, so the more purity. Sometimes he strengthens by giving the Spirit of prayer and helping to wrestle with him for the blessing; I will not let thee go till thou bless me, said the patriarch Jacob. Thus the Spirit helps our infirmities, and maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered. The psalmist experienced both the energy of

the Spirit, and the effect thereof: "In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul," Psal. cxxxviii. 3.—Sometimes he strengthens, by shewing his name and office: by shewing that his name is JESUS, because he saves his people from their sins: and that it is his office, his work, his business, to save by his grace, and sanctify by his Spirit, and purify by his blood.—In a word, Sometimes he strengthens, and so carries on the begun work of purity and sanctification, by restoring the soul, and granting manifold recoveries after falls; by bringing the man out of this and the other horrible pit, into which he hath fallen by his iniquity: for, this work of purity is carried on through many vicissitudes and changes; through many cross winds, and many a severe battle, and sad victory obtained by enemies; through many fears and faintings. Sometimes the man falls down, and then he gets up again; sometimes he is plunged, as it were, into the bottom of hell, in respect of the power of sin, and the blackness of the pollution, in which he sees himself so mired as that he cannot get out; and at other times he is lifted up to the mountain top, and his feet set upon the high places of Jacob. Sometimes he is ready to give clean over; at length hope doth not revive again: for the Lord encourages the man to hope, by speaking into the heart, or sounding into the soul such a word as that; There is hope in Israel for all this: or such a word as that, "Fear not;" "for the Lord will not forsake his people for his great name's sake: because it hath pleased the Lord to make them his people," 1 Sam. xii. 20, 22.—By these, and the like means, the Lord encourages the soul to return, after his lowest falls; and raises him up, as Peter was raised from his shameful downfall. The Lord looks toward the man with a tender, merciful, and compassionate eye; and then he is strengthened to lament his sin, to weep bitterly, to look up to the Lord for grace and forgiveness.

Now, by these, and the like means, doth the Lord purify the soul, and carry on the work: and so here is another large field, wherein you may roam, to try and examine, whether you know these things to your experience, or not; whether the Lord be working them, in a saving manner, in your soul; if he hath purified, and is purifying you, by discovering your impurity, viz. by the revelation of his grace, by killing your enmity with his love, and by strengthening your soul, in the manner I have shown.

6. Let us now examine this gospel purity by the end of it. As we have already tried this point by the root, the fruit, the parts,

the perfection, and the means of it; we may now examine this gospel purity by the gospel end of it. I shall not enlarge upon this here, but rather refer it to be more fully spoken to in a motive upon the use of exhortation. Only, in so many words, the true end of Gospel purity and sanctification, is not to pacify conscience, nor to satisfy justice, nor to purchase heaven, nor to work out a righteousness for our justification: all these ends are legal; and the proposing of them is no end of purity, or mark of holiness: But the true end of gospel purity and sanctification is, to glorify God, to edify our neighbour, to testify our gratitude to God, and to evidence our justification.—Let me touch a little at this point.

The great end, I say, of purity and sanctification is not to be a ground or cause of justification; but to be a fruit and evidence thereof. The gross ignorance of this point of doctrine, in the present generation, makes it necessary to inculcate and establish it.

1. The great end of gospel purity, or sanctification, is not to be a ground and cause of justification. They who think to be justified, pardoned, accepted, or admitted to God's favour, by any purity, goodness, righteousness, or holiness, whether done by them, by the strength of nature, or wrought in them, by the strength of grace, they overturn the gospel, and discover themselves to be strangers to the nature of true purity, which doth not work a righteousness for justification; but flows from justification, as streams from a fountain. If men could fly to heaven, by the wings of their own works; or get up there, by the ladder of their own righteousness, what need was there that God should set up another ladder to heaven for us? If we consult Gen. xxviii. 12, we will find that Jacob gets a discovery of a ladder, the foot whereof did stand on the earth, and the top of it did reach heaven. Which pointed out both the *person* of Christ, being God-man, who was both to stand on earth and reach to heaven, in his human and divine natures united; and also the *office* of Christ, that, as Mediator, was to reconcile God and man, by the sacrifice of himself; and so join heaven and earth together, the most distant extremes, by the blood of his cross. Heaven is accessible only by ascending up this ladder, viz. CHRIST, the Lord our righteousness. O Sirs, it is a great word, JEHOVAH our righteousness! and it may give us honourable thoughts of the alone ground of justification. The merit and righteousness of Christ, which is the alone ground of justification, is infinite merit; because of the eminency of the person, being God-man, Jehovah in our nature, fulfilling the law by his obedience to the death. The law violated, was but a creature; but he that was

made subject to it, is the Creator. The holiness of the obeyer, in this case, exceeds the holiness of the law. What a noble ground of justification is here? The transgressor of the law is but a man; but the satisfier is God-man, whose obedience brings in more honour to the law, than if men and angels had obeyed for ever. Hence the justification of believers is perfect; as perfect in time as ever it shall be in glory; because the righteousness of Christ, which is the matter of our justification, is the same for ever: and perfect in every true believer, whether his faith be weak or strong; even as a thousand pound received by a palsied hand, is a thousand pound, as well as a thousand pound received by a heathful hand. O the security, unchangeableness, and perfection of justification! Indeed, the sense of justification is according to the degree and exercise of faith; but the truth of it is according to the truth of faith.

Now, this righteousness of Christ, and no purity, no obedience, no grace, no holiness of ours, is the ground and cause of justification. And if you have gospel purity indeed, you will never, if you be in your right senses, propose this as the end of it, namely, that you may be justified; for that belongs only to the righteousness of Christ: "In the LORD shall all the seed of Israel be justified," Isa. xlv. 25. But,

2. This purity is the fruit and evidence of a justification: and as we know a tree by its fruit; so may we know justification by sanctification; Show me thy faith by thy works, James, ii. 18. We are to shew our faith of this righteousness of Christ, for our justification, by our works of purity and sanctification: There is "no condemnation to them which are in Christ," Rom. viii. 1. What is the fruit and evidence of this? Why, they "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." The man that is a good tree, a justified man, will bring forth good fruit. The good fruit doth not make a good tree; but the good tree maketh the good fruit: so, the fruit of sanctification doth not make a man to be justified; but justification maketh a man produce the good fruit of sanctification. Herein lies the difference between works in the new covenant of grace, and works in the old covenant of works; or herein differs legal and evangelical purity. In the legal way, work is first; and then justification thereupon: but in the gospel way, justification is first; and the works follow thereupon. So, in the old and new Sabbath: The Sabbath instituted in Paradise was the seventh day in order, after the six working days; and was suited to man's state of innocency, and did most properly belong to the covenant of

works, which promised life and rest, after perfect works of righteousness wrought by us; "The man which doeth those things, shall live by them," Rom. x. 5: But the Christian Sabbath is the first day of the week, before our six working days; and so is fitted to the new covenant, which promised rest to the conscience, in a way of believing, and that before they do works of righteousness: but these works, and this righteousness, do necessarily attend and follow upon justification. As the same day that the waters went off from the earth, and were gathered into the sea, the earth was adorned with grass, herbs, flowers, and trees and was fruitful, Gen. i. 9, 11; so when the deluge of wrath goes off from the soul, in justification, it is presently adorned with the graces of the Spirit, and called a tree of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified. Wherever a man is justified, there also he is sanctified and purified. If you be justified, you will shew it so, as it may be evident to yourself and others, by your study of purity. And if you be purified, you will endeavour, through grace, to make this one of the ends thereof; and this will be your design, that you may shew to others, and be convinced yourself, by having certain evidence of your being justified: for, where there is no purity at all, there is no evidence at all of justification and pardon; even as the body without breath is a body without life, Jam. ii. 20. Where there is little purity, there is little evidence of justification; where there is much purity, there will be the clearer evidence of justification. Though the Lord can, and doth sometimes, make the believer's justification evident to him, in other ways than by the evidence of it in sanctification; and though justification is not up and down, according to the changes in sanctification: nay, justification is always equal, constantly the same, always perfect in the believer; like the sun in the firmament, always full, whatever waxings and wanings there may be in the moon of sanctification, and whatever changes take place in it: and he ought to be assured of this, even when his purity and sanctification is at the lowest; yea, like the moon, disappearing for a while out of view. Surely, he is not to doubt; he ought not to doubt of his justification, by Christ's righteousness imputed, because of the waning of his sanctification by a righteousness imparted: but where there is no imparted grace at all for sanctification, that a man can either see in himself, or reflect upon, as what he hath seen sometimes, or lamented the want of; where there is nothing of all this, I say, there can be no comfortable evidence of sanctification.—Try yourselves then by these things, and look to the Lord to assist you in the trial.

I sum up all this use of examination with these questions. If you be washed from your filthiness, I ask you, Was you ever shaken out of your refuges of lies, your old rotten natural faith and good works? Have you ever been brought in to Christ, and made to close with him for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption? Have you ever been begotten again to a new and lively hope, through faith of him? Have you ever known what it is to have Christ dwelling in your heart, and reigning in your soul, by his word and Spirit? Have you ever known what it is to have faith working by love? And this love discovering itself by a love and respect to all the commandments of God, and by a hatred to every false way? If you can, in the sight of God, answer YEA to these questions, then I can say you have been washed from your filthiness, and made partakers of gospel purity: but if you be in a doubt about it, and at a loss what to say, O live not contentedly in a doubtful state, but seek that the Lord would resolve your doubt, and that you may find the matter resolved to you by the Lord himself. If you never found any of these things, and are not an absolute stranger thereto, O man, woman, who are in that case, however pure you are in your own eyes, yet you are not washed from your filthiness: and while the filth of sin remains, the guilt remains also; and while the guilt remains, the wrath of God abideth upon you: and therefore, as you regard the glory of God, and your eternal salvation, fly for your life out of that state; take no rest there, but go immediately to God, and cry earnestly to him, "That he may pity you, and purge you, and wash you, for his name's sake." Tell him, "Lord, what will all things avail me, if I live and die in my sins, and perish forever."—May the Lord himself direct you.

SERMON XII.

THE NATURE AND EXCELLENCY OF

Gospel Purity.

(CONTINUATION.)

“There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.”—PROV. xxx. 12.

THE judgment of God is according to truth; and it is by the judgment of God we stand or fall. It is not what this or that man judgeth us to be, or what we ourselves imagine we are, that will contribute to our safety, or bear us out; for we cannot judge right, unless we judge of ourselves according to the word of God; and to judge of ourselves thus, is to judge according as God judgeth. What God takes us to be, that we are; but we are not always what we take ourselves to be. Some take themselves to be Christians, who yet are but anti-christians. Some take themselves to be friends of God, who yet are enemies: “There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.”

A generation of sinners, that live in sin impenitently, do make room for a deluge of wrath. One Achan troubles the whole camp of Israel: and what wrath then may multitudes of sinners bring upon a church and people! The text speaks of a multitude; and, perhaps, multitudes of impure and unsanctified sinners were never greater than at this day wherein we live; and hence it is a day of wrath: for, it could never be more truly said in any period, than of our day, “There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.”

We have already improved this doctrine in an use of information, lamentation, reproof, and examination; we now proceed to another use of the point.

The fifth use that we make of the doctrine shall be for terror to

all that are not washed from their filthiness; but are filthy still, impure still; were never renewed, never purified, never sanctified: but remain under the power of sin and corruption; and are utter strangers to all that purity that hitherto I have been speaking of. There is ground of terror to all the wicked of the world, that are altogether filthy, and to believers, who are partly so, and do not watch, but indulge themselves much in impurity.

1st, This doctrine affords ground of terror to the wicked, that never were washed from their filthiness, but are going on in a course of sin, drunkenness, licentiousness, revelling, and all manner of immoralities. Alas, Sirs! consider how miserable you are, and are like to be. Look to your sad and dismal case in life, in death, and at the day of judgment. And, O if the Lord would awaken your conscience, seriously to ponder your dangerous situation.

[1.] Look to and be persuaded of it, that you are truly miserable in life. And,

1. While in that impure state, you are an utter stranger to God; "At that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:" Eph. ii. 12. You are without God, the author of hope; without Christ, the foundation of hope; without the covenant of promise, the ground of hope; without the grace of hope: you are in a hopeless case, while you refuse to fly for refuge to the hope set before you; to Christ, for wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification.

2. You are contrary to God, and God is contrary to you: your nature is contrary to God, and God's nature is opposite to you. Your principles, your practice, your nature, your aims, your mind, your affections, are all opposite to God, while you are altogether filthy.

3. You are out of case for communion and fellowship with God. What! communion between light and darkness! Nay; you have communion and familiarity with the devil: The strong man armed keeps the house. The whole world lieth in wickedness, in time, in the arms of the wicked one. You are, as it were, fast lulled asleep in the arms of the devil.

4. You are a slave and a drudge to every lust. And, alas! what base degeneracy, that now, your immortal soul is a drudge to the devil, a slave to lust, a servant of sin, and an associate with the wicked!

5. You are under the curse while in that situation. See what a

number of dreadful curses you are under, mentioned Deut. xxviii. 9; "Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out," etc. Cursed in your name, it shall rot; cursed in your house, it is the habitation of the wicked; cursed in all your religious performances, for your prayer is an abomination to the Lord; and cursed in all your civil actions for the very "plowing of the wicked, is sin."

6. You are under all the dismal evils that attend this impurity; such as, to be abhorred of God, a torment to yourself, useless in the world, an apostate from God an object of wrath, and at last excluded from heaven.

(1.) One evil attending this impure state, is, that the man is abhorred; he is an object of God's abhorrence, if he be filthy still: for, God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; and he cannot behold it so as to take pleasure in the sinner. Do you think that God can take pleasure in a man who is wallowing in his sin? No; there must be a covering from the eyes of God's holiness: and I know no covering and mantle but one of two, either the red scarlet covering of the Redeemer's blood; or the dark and black mantle of avenging wrath to eternity, to veil it from the eyes of the omniscient and omnipotent God.

(2.) Another evil, beside what hath been mentioned, is, that this impurity is a torment to the man. So much defilement, so much vexation; and the more purity, the more peace and inward serenity: Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them; but no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.

(3.) There is this evil in it also; this impurity makes a man useless in the world. A man that is wallowing in wickedness, he is the most useless creature in the world; that which the psalmist calls altogether filthy, the apostle quoting it, Rom. iii. 12, calls it altogether unprofitable; to let us see, that the man that is altogether filthy or defiled, is useless as a vessel, the nastiness of which is so incorporated with it, that it can never be used again.

(4.) This defilement makes way for apostasy. The man that is destitute of gospel purity, is in a state wherein he is capable of total apostasy. The true gold will abide the fire; but the furnace carries off the dross. The good wheat will abide the wind; but

the wind carries away the chaff. They altogether filthy are ; They all aside are gone. What makes so much defection and apostasy in our day ? Why, men abandon their profession, abandon their principles, grow remiss in their practices, relinquish their first zeal, and leave their first love : why, they are defiled ; they are not washed from their filthiness.

(5.) This defilement makes way for wrath and judgment to be poured forth : For these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience, Col. iii. 6. Trouble and anguish to every soul of man that doeth evil ; for, the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of man, Rom. i. 18. A day of wrath, a day of calamity is threatened, because of the impurity of the generation, that are not washed from their filthiness.

(6.) This defilement excludes from heaven. No pollution can dwell in the higher house ; when it began to enter, the authors of it were cast down to hell : There shall in nowise enter into it any thing that defileth, or that worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, Rev. xxi. 27. Is not all this most terrible !

[2.] As you are miserable in life, so you will be miserable at death : then conscience begins to roar ; for its black book is opened, and the long roll, the black roll of sins appears ; and then the devil, who lulled you asleep in sin, and tempted you to sin, will present the heinousness thereof, and tempt you to despair. Then your friends, relations, comforts, and enjoyments of the world, will bid you an eternal adieu : and then no more offers of Christ, or grace, or salvation. Sin, the sting of death, not being taken away, death will be most terrible and dreadful. When the awful messenger approaches, with his dismal appearance armed with his mortal dart, ready in an instant to strike through the miserable creature, with what amazement will the poor soul be filled ! How unwelcome will the near approach of this mighty conqueror be to the poor sinner !

[3.] The polluted soul will not only be miserable at death, but also at the day of judgment : for, Christ will be revealed from heaven, taking vengeance on them who know not God, and obeyed not the gospel. Then the awful and final sentence will be pronounced, Depart from me, ye cursed ! Ah ! terrible sentence ! Depart from me ! Depart from the chief good and happiness, to be miserable to eternity ! In this sentence is wrapt up all misery ; and what will frustrate all the vain expectations of the wicked at that day. If you should say, O ! let us not go far away : Nay :

depart from me, out of my sight and presence; and that is far enough to them: for ever banished from the presence of God, the presence of bliss. O! if we must depart, let us depart with a blessing: No; depart from me, ye cursed: depart with the curse of God, the wrath and vengeance of God! O! if we must thus depart, let us go to a good place: No; depart from me, ye cursed, unto fire: the place of torment, the place of perdition, the place of burning. O! if it must be to fire, let it be but for a short time: No, no; depart to everlasting fire, to dwell there through an endless eternity; depart to everlasting fire, fire that cannot be quenched; Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. O! if it must be so, let us depart with good company; let us have some heartsome company with us: No, by no means; depart with the devil and his angels. Oh! the miserable case of those who live and die in their sin! They must be sent to the devouring Tophet! to swim for ever in the river of fire and brimstone! Ah! dreadful state! You will appear before the judgment seat in the devil's livery; and must share of his misery to eternity. Inconceivable and permanent misery!

2. This doctrine affords ground of terror also to believers, who though they are washed habitually from their filthiness, yet lie under much actual pollution, without due application to the fountain; there is ground of terror from this doctrine to such. Though we cannot preach the same terror to them, as to the wicked; and cannot say they shall be condemned, or go to hell, or yet become liable to the curse of the law; yet the Lord hath a rod for the back of his children: If they break his law, though he pardon their sin, yet he may take vengeance on their inventions. And we are not to think light of the rod of correction and chastisement, which the Lord may use with his children, who are unwatchful; for there is something very terrible therein, whatever way we view it, either with respect to temporal, spiritual, or eternal matters.

[1.] There is something very terrible in the chastisements of God, with respect to temporal concerns. And,

1. The rod may be upon your body, in sore sickness, fevers, gouts, gravels, tormenting pains; such as these we read of, Deut. xxviii. 58, 59, and verses 22, 27. The Lord may put you upon the rack day and night, with exasperating pains, and agonizing torments. Is not this a dreadful rod?

2. The rod may be heavy in respect of your families; heavy sickness and afflictions upon your husband, wife, and children.

The Lord may make your children a cross to you, your relations a burden to you, and your most intimate friends and concerns a trouble to you. He may take away the desire of your eyes with a stroke, and leave you desolate and destitute. This is a sore trial.

3. The rod may be grievous in respect of your name. You may be tried with great reproaches, and be made a by-word among your neighbours: to the psalmist it was a sword within his bones, when he was reproached. This sword may pierce you: you may be left to fall under infamy and disgrace. Yea, the Lord may so far leave you, as to let you fall into scandalous evils, and become a reproach to the Christian name. And is not this a heavy chastisement?

4. The rod of correction may be sore with respect to public calamities; such as these we read of Ezek. xiv. 21; "For thus saith the Lord GOD; How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast?" Sword, famine, pestilence, and captivity are heavy judgments.—What a terrible thing is the sword? It may be bathed in the blood, and sheathed in the bowels of your dearest friends; and, perhaps, in your own bowels.—What a sad rod is the famine? Hereby tender mothers have been made to eat their own children; and men obliged to eat their own fingers, and the flesh of their own arm; one part of the body to maintain another.—What a dreadful rod is the pestilence? See it described, Psal. xci. 3, 6, 10. See also Deut. xxviii. 59, 60, 61.—What a sore chastisement is it to be led away into captivity? Thou mayest be carried away to a strange land; from father, mother, friends, and acquaintances; where thou knowest not a face, Deut. xxviii. 48, and to fears of still greater judgments, ver. 65,—67.

[2.] The rod of correction has something very terrible in it, when we view it with respect to spiritual matters.

1. The Lord may give loose reins to your lusts, and let you be overpowered with corruptions, so as iniquity shall prevail. He may give you up to the lusts of your heart; a most mischievous and pernicious enemy.

2. The Lord may let the devil loose upon you; that roaring lion to buffet you, and to do what he can to devour you. This was a correction which Job, Paul, Peter, and many others, were tried with.

3. You may be tossed with doubts and fears about sin and duty;

and neither know what way to go, nor which course to steer. You may be quite wrapt up in darkness and perplexity.

4. You may be deserted of God, and left to go mourning without the sun: and though you would give all the world for a sight of his face, yet not be favoured with it. This was the case with Job; "I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him," etc. "Oh that I knew where I might find him," Job. xxiii. 3, 8.

5. You may be brought under terrors, as Job was; "The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit," Job vi. 4. "Thine arrows stick fast in me," Psal. xxxviii. 2.

6. You may be left to despair and to distraction, through the terrors of God; "The terrors of God do set themselves in array against me," Job vi. 4. "While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted," said Heman, Psal. lxxxviii. 15.

[3.] Chastisements are terrible with respect to the fears concerning your eternal state. You may be brought to the very brink of despair, as was just now observed concerning Heman: to be in doubts and fears about your everlasting welfare; your hope may be perished, in a manner, "from the LORD," Lam. iii. 18. The Lord may carry towards you like an enemy and a stranger: your spirit may be sunk, and your heart faint; yea, any thing but hell, and the breaking of the covenant. Yea, the Lord may even take a child by the neck, as it were, and shake him over hell, as if he was designing to throw him into the flaming lake. He may drop in hot wrath into the conscience, and kindle a little hell within him. And though all be but fatherly chastisement, and in love, yet no views of love may the person have; but apprehend God as an enemy, being left to this unbelieving fear of his vindictive wrath. God may break him with breach upon breach; and run upon him like an enemy. Yea, the road may be heavy in its nature: the sickness, e. g. may be a sore sickness; it may be extraordinary in its kind, so that you may be ready to say, No sorrow like your sorrow. It may be manifold in its number; one messenger of evil tidings after another; breach upon breach. It may be growing in its degrees; still worse and worse. And it may be long in its continuance, perhaps; so long as that you may lay under it all your days.—O what ground of holy fear then hath even the child of God, if he be not watchful and circumspect!

The sixth Use that we make of this doctrine shall be for consolation to the godly, who are exercising themselves to godliness,

and students, actual students of purity: growing and advancing in purity. Here I would lay before you, 1. Some marks and evidences of those that are growing in holiness and purity. 2. Point out some grounds of consolation for such.

1. We propose to lay before you some marks and evidences of advances in holiness, and a man growing in purity.

1. Spirituality in the intervals of duty, as well as in the performance of duty, is a true mark of growth in holiness: spirituality between duty, as well as in duty. If a man should seem never so religious in duty, if he gives latitude to himself in the intervals, he looks not like one that is growing and advancing in purity. Moses's face shined as much when he came off from the mount, as when he was on the mount.

2. Conflict with spiritual sins, and spiritual evils, is an evidence hereof. When a man is helped to conflict against heart-sins, which lie most hid and remote from the eyes of the world; and obtains some spiritual victory and conquest over them it is an evidence of purity. When the heart rises, with all its strength, against spiritual pride and self, and self-ends, it evidences some advances in holiness.

3. When a man is exercised in spiritual duties, and in internal duties of religion: not only busied about external duties, but especially is exercised about those and the like internal ones, viz. Meditation, mortification, self-examination, self-resignation, self-loathing, self-judging, self-condemnation; praying in the Spirit, watching over the heart, applying the blood of Christ, the death of Christ; applying the promise and the word to his own soul: when it is thus with a person, it is an evidence of his making some progress in purity and holiness.

4. When a man is carried on to religious duties, by spiritual principles and internal motives: when a person is acting from a sense of divine love, from a sense and desire after Christ's spiritual presence, and from the sweetness and excellency of communion and fellowship with a God in Christ.—These are some evidences of a person's growing in purity and holiness.

2. We proceed next to point out some grounds of consolation for such persons.

1. The more purity you have, the more like God. And, O what comfort accrues from this, to be like to God; to be conformed to the Son of God! The more likeness, the more love. The Lord cannot but delight in his own image: He himself is holy; and cannot but delight in the holiness and purity of his people.

2. The more purity, the more ripe for heaven: you are thus

made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light; for no unclean thing can enter into the heavenly Jerusalem. And, O what comfort arises from this, that, you are a candidate for the glory of the New Jerusalem!

3. The more purity the more communion and fellowship with God; "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 will manifest myself to him." "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him," John xiv. 21, 23. The godly person, by his impurity, may greatly mar his fellowship with God: but by advancing in holiness, his communion is promoted.

4. The more purity, the more communication of good things from God; the more holiness you are possessed of, the more will God give you: He "will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly," Psalm lxxxiv. 11. When he gives this grace to walk uprightly, he will be still adding more: And every new addition of grace, and communication of love, will make the babe of grace leap cheerfully in the soul; for they that walk in the "fear of the Lord," will walk in "the comfort of the Holy Ghost," Acts ix. 31.

5. The more purity, the more will the truth and reality of all your other graces be notified to you; particularly these three cardinal graces, Faith, love, and hope, 1 Cor. xiii. 13.—Faith, in its sincerity is hereby notified; for, if it be true faith, it will purify the heart. The man that says he believes, and yet walks on in a course of sin, it shows his faith to be but a fancy.—Love is, in its sincerity, notified hereby; for, true love proceeds from a pure heart: The end of the commandment, is love out of a pure heart.—Hope also is notified and made known; for, he that hath this hope, purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

6. The more purity, the more sense of pardon and justification.—There is comfort, that your sanctification doth not affect your justification; and that failures in purity, doth not diminish your justification. And as it is the property of sovereign grace, that it is neither moved by any good in the creature; nor hindered by any evil in the creature: so, it is the property of justification, that neither the believer's sins makes him less justified; nor his holiness makes him more justified. This is indeed the privilege of all justified believers: but the more pure that the believer is, the more comfortable sense has he thereof.

Believers, by justification, stand in the favour of God, upon the same ground on which Christ, as Mediator, stands in his favour; for you are accepted in the Beloved. Christ, as Mediator, is beloved for his righteousness' sake; The Lord is well-pleased for his righteousness' sake. He is highly exalted of God, and honoured of him, because he gave himself to be obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Christ is beloved and accepted of God upon this ground; and you are accepted in him upon the same ground. Why then, if Christ and you stand upon the same bottom, upon the same ground, consider how sure that ground is: surely, there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus; no liableness to condemnation. If any will assert, that the believer, after all, may become liable to condemnation, while he remains in mystical union with the Son of God, which is for ever, and remains favoured of God, or accepted upon the same ground that Christ is, let them answer for the dishonourable thought that this imports concerning the Son of God himself. Can the ground upon which Christ stands, in the favour of God, ever fail? Nay; it were blasphemy so to imagine: Neither can the ground upon which the believer stands, in the favour of God, ever fail; for they stand upon the same ground, namely, the mediatory righteousness, which is as much imputed to the believer, as if he himself had, in his own person, fulfilled it: It is reckoned to the believer, as if he himself had, in his own person, satisfied divine justice, and fulfilled the divine law: And hence, whatever can be said of the happiness of the saints now in heaven, in point of security from vindictive wrath; I say not his holiness, but his happiness; in this respect, the same may be asserted of the believer on earth, in point of justification.

“Why then,” say you, “the believer may do as he pleaseth, and sin as he listeth; for there is no fear of him.” The world, truly, mistakes matters, with respect to the true believer. A carnal heart, never renewed by grace, may indeed deliberately argue thus; “If I was secure as to that event, viz. that I would never go to hell, but shall infallibly be brought to heaven, then I would drink, and debauch, and sin as I please.” Such a disposition, and way of talking, is very agreeable to a man that is in a carnal natural state; but it is cross to the very nature of a believer. And, if any say they are believers, and yet would use that doctrine of grace at this rate; why, their very speech bewrays them, and says they are not believers: because no believer, as a believer, can say so.

But it may possibly be urged, May not the corrupt part of the

believer say so? Yea; and if it do, it shall be destroyed for so saying: for that which defileth the temple of God, that will God destroy. If the old man of corruption thus defile God's temple, God will destroy that old man: he will destroy it with the fire of his vindictive wrath and vengeance: for the old man of sin in the believer, may indeed be said to be under the law, and shall be condemned. Though the believer, as he is a believer, is ever freed from condemnation; yet his sin and corruption is, and shall be condemned; and God takes many ways to do that: yet so as vindictive wrath shall never touch the person of the believer in Christ.

But let us take the believer at himself, and see if this be consistent with the grain of the child of God. Your sin is pardoned; therefore, go and take your fill of sin. God hath delivered you from hell; therefore, go and walk in the way of hell. God hath loved you with an everlasting love; therefore, vent your enmity against God to the uttermost. He acts like a God of love to you; therefore, act you like a devil against him. God will honour you with the enjoyment of himself for ever in heaven; therefore, go your way and dishonour him as you can. Oh! no, no. Such expressions would offend the generation of the righteous, and of true believers: it would make the hairs of their head to stand; if we may be allowed the expression, and their bowels to tremble; for the quite contrary is ingrained in their new nature: Shall we thus requite the Lord? Shall we render hatred for love.*

The more sense of justification, the more purity; and the more purity, the more sense of justification: and yet neither your purity or sanctification, nor failing therein, doth influence your justification, or affect it; for it remains still perfect, and invariably the same.—So much for an use of consolation to the godly.

The reader may see this point of doctrine copiously handled, by consulting the Sermon entitled "Law-Death, Gospel-Life."

SERMON XIII.

THE NATURE AND EXCELLENCY OF

Gospel Purity.

(CONTINUATION.)

“There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.”—PROV. xxx. 12.

IF WE knew what a pure and holy God we have to do with, our own impurity would be hateful to us. God is of purer eyes than that he can behold iniquity: we are of such impure eyes, that we cannot behold his purity. Yea, though our eyes were purer than they are; yet God is so perfect, that we cannot see his perfection: even as the sun is so bright, that we cannot see the brightness of it. But as the stronger the eye, the better sight will it get of the sun; so, the purer the soul is, the more clearly will it see the holiness and purity of God: “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.” O! what is the reason, that God is so little seen, and is so far out of sight, with the generation? Why, the generation is impure and defiled; and what aggravates the matter prodigiously, is they do not know so much; “There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.”

We have already made a very copious improvement of this subject, the excellency of gospel purity; it only remains now, that we conclude the subject, with a particular address to the conscience.

The seventh Use, therefore, that we make of the doctrine, is for exhortation and direction. It is so, as has been said, That gospel purity is so excellent a thing? Then let me exhort you, in the words of the prophet, “Wash you, make you clean,” Isa. i. 16. O seek to be washed and purified from your filthiness. Seek to be partakers of this gospel purity and holiness. I have already preached several sermons upon this one doctrine; and they may

not only be so many witnesses, that the doctrine we inculcate, is a doctrine according to godliness, tending to advance holiness, and not to encourage licentiousness, let reproachers say what they will; but they may be so many witnesses against a polluted generation, that neither are washed from their filthiness, nor have any desire to be washed, but are filthy still.

Let me now exhort both the wicked to seek after purity, and the godly to seek after more of it. As we have already insisted so long upon the applicatory part, I shall put both these together for gaining of time. And to enforce the exhortation, we shall, 1. Adduce some motives. 1. Offer some directions.

1st. By way of motive to the study of purity, consider, that this gospel purity eminently tends to the following things. 1. The glory of God. 2. The honour of Christ. 3. The credit of the gospel. 4. The good of both ourselves and others.

[1.] This gospel purity and holiness eminently tends to the glory of God. And it cannot fail to do so, in regard God himself is holy: holiness is an essential quality of his nature; impurity is the very reverse thereof: sin is that abominable thing which his soul hates. The more impurity that there is in the world, the more is God dishonoured; but the more purity and holiness, the more is he glorified. As impurity is an open dishonour done to God; so external purity is a glorifying of God before the world: therefore says our Lord, Hereby is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit. And he positively enjoins, that we should make our light so to shine before men, that they seeing our good works may glorify our heavenly Father.

Further, this gospel purity tends to the glory of God, is as much as it is the end of our election; for, he hath chosen us in him that we should be holy and without blame. He hath called us hereunto; for, he hath not called us unto uncleanness, but holiness. It is agreeable to his will; for, this is the will of God, even your sanctification. It is the livery in which his servants serve him; for, they serve him in the beauty of holiness. It is obedience to his commands, because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy: and again, Be ye perfect as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. It is the badge and spot of his children; for, holiness becometh his house forever.

In these, and many other respects, gospel purity tends to the promotion of God's glory. Why, in one word, the great and ultimate end of gospel purity is just this, that whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God. And this is one of the great marks and

characteristics, whereby it is distinguished from the finest painted hypocrisy.

But, perhaps, some may be ready to say, How shall I know, if the glory of God be my great end in my purity and holiness, and all that I do?

I confess, this is the great question that determines the controversy between two great competitors, the one a pretender, the other a lawful sovereign, viz. whether Self, or the great Jehovah, be the God to whom the devotion of our purity is paid; whether God or self be our ultimate end. I shall offer a few thoughts in answer to the question.

1. The man that entirely acts for the glory of God, in the study of purity, he can trample upon his own happiness, when it comes in competition with the glory of God: he sees this to be of more worth than a thousand heavens; and therefore, the self-denied believer, before the glory of God should suffer, would in a manner, venture his all, though the venture would never be to his loss. Blot me out of thy book, says Moses. Let me be accursed, saith Paul. Why, the thing that prompted them to this, was zeal for the glory of God.

2. If the glory of God be your great end, in the study of holiness, and all you do, all your duties, then your desire will be to wait on the Lord in times of absence, as well as in times of presence. Out of the depths will you cry to God; and out of the belly of hell will you look again to his holy temple. "I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him," Isa. viii. 17. When self hath no encouragement in its hand, even then to glorify God, by waiting on him obedientially, evidences that the glory of God is the end aimed at; even when the soul is content to live by faith, when sense is gone.

3. When one hath God's glory for his end, in the study of holiness, then the more assurance he hath of the love of God in Christ, the more earnest is he in the pursuit of purity and holiness. As he grows in God's favour, so will he grow in likeness to God. Assurance will not make him slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. It is otherwise with the selfish hypocrite; his false assurance weakens his hand, and slackens his diligence in duty: because he thinks his state secure, he takes his nap. Why, so far the glory of God is not his end, but self-love. Something of this may take place indeed in the believer: but I speak of the natural fruit of his assurance; and especially the more

clear it is, the more earnest will he be in the pursuit of holiness, and the more diligent in the Lord's work, knowing that his labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

4. If the glory of God be your great end, in seeking after gospel purity, then you will have a constant conflict with self: you will find self creeping in, and intruding itself into all duties; into your prayers, hearing, reading, praising, communicating, etc. It will be a burden to you: O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death? The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these two are contrary the one to the other.—O therefore study holiness, seek after gospel purity, because it so much tends to the glory of God.

[2.] Consider, for motive to seek after this gospel purity, that it greatly tends to the honour of Christ. Christ's errand into the world was to save sinners from their impurity and sin; He came to seek and save that which was lost; and to finish transgression, and make an end of sin. He shed his precious blood to be a laver for washing away all filthiness of the flesh and spirit; for, his blood cleanseth from all sin: and he suffered without the gate that he might sanctify the people. The more purity and holiness that abounds in the world, the more doth Christ see of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied. The more impurity that prevails, the more is his blood trampled upon; but the more purity that takes place, the more is the virtue and efficacy of his blood manifested; and consequently he is the more honoured. The impure person is a dishonour to Christ; but the holy man bears a resemblance to him, and so puts honour upon him.

Further, That gospel purity, wherever it takes place, tends mightily to the honour of Christ, will appear if we consider the following particulars.

1. This gospel purity is just an imitation of Christ as an example; for, he gave us an example, that we should follow his steps. It is an answering of the design of that copy, pattern, and example which he set before us: it is a following of the Lamb whithersoever he goeth; a cleaving to him in tribulation and adversity, as well as in prosperity.

2. Because it flows from love to Christ, and an high estimation of him: I say, this purity flows from love to him. And those who love this purity, however unholy they see themselves to be, they love him the better, on account of the holy pattern he has given them; the better, that he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and sepa-

rated from sinners. It is a good sign of some gospel holiness, when the soul can say, he loves God, because he is a holy God; and loves Christ, because he is a holy Christ. This purity flows from an high estimation of Christ, whatever those who have it may lose for his sake, and for cleaving to his truth, cause, and way, in pursuit thereof. It is a good sign of gospel purity when a man is losing his honour, credit, riches, wealth, and outward advantages for Christ, and yet retains an high esteem of him: such a man is selling all for Christ, the pearl of great price; and esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. He hath the glory and honour of Christ in view, and wants to promote it.

3. This gospel purity tends to the honour of Christ, because in the study and pursuit of it, the soul desires nothing more than perfect conformity to him, and full enjoyment of him. The breathings of the soul under the influences of this gospel purity, are, "O to have that which is in part done away! O to be like unto him in humility, patience, zeal, and unblamableness! O to be like him in holiness, and to see him as he is!"

4. This purity tends to the honour of Christ, because all the believer's efforts, in prosecution of it, are in a dependence on Christ's strength: We are not sufficient of ourselves; to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God. When I am weak, then am I strong. I can do all things through Christ strengthening me. And so the believer subscribes, with heart and hand, to the truth of these blessed words, that proceeded out of his mouth, John xv. 5; "For without me ye can do nothing." And to that precious promise, 2 Cor. xii. 9; "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

5. This purity tends to Christ's honour, because that, in prosecution thereof, and the duties that advance it, nothing short of Christ himself will satisfy the believer. The man can distinguish between Christ in a duty, and liberty or a frame in duty; between Christ in prayer, and a frame in prayer. The hypocrite, if he gets the frame, there he rests content, without any other Christ: but the believer, though he loves a good frame, and desires liberty in duty, as the chariot in which Christ is conveyed to his soul; yet he will not satisfy himself with the chariot, if Christ be not therein. "O," says he, "it is not a frame only, but Christ that I am seeking; and Christ that I must have! Give me Christ, or else I die!" To be content with any enjoyment, temporal or spiritual, without Christ is selfish, and derogating from the glory of Christ, which is the ultimate end.

6. This gospel purity tends to the honour of Christ, in as much as the students of holiness wrap up all their holy duties in the robe of his perfect righteousness. They see and are persuaded, that their most holy duties cannot justify them before a holy God; and therefore they cast all their tears, prayers, and duties, into the ocean of Christ's infinite merit; and there they dye them red in the precious blood of the Lamb, that they may fly up to heaven with acceptance, in pillars of smoke, perfumed with the sweet odour of his sacrifice unto death.

Many other things might here be added to enforce this motive; such as, the predestined conformity of the subjects of this sanctity to Christ, Rom. viii. 29; the sameness of mind in them that was in Christ, Phil. ii. 5; with other particulars: but we insist not.—Let this motive have weight with you to study purity, that it tends so much to the honour of Christ.

[3.] Consider, by way of motive, that as purity greatly tends to the glory of God, and the honour of Christ; so also to the credit of the gospel. Impurity brings a reproach on religion: and an unholy professor is a discredit to the Christian name. Nothing can bring a greater reproach upon the gospel of Christ, than the immoral lives of its professors. The very end and design of the gospel is to promote holiness and sanctification; and when purity and holiness do not take place, it is an evidence that the gospel is doing little good; and those who profess it are a discredit unto it. The gospel revelation of the grace of God was designed to teach men to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly. And it ought to be the study of all who hear it, to evidence, by their holy deportment, that it hath come to them, not in word only, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and with power. Hereby the professors of the gospel will be a credit thereto.

Further, That purity will tend to the credit of the gospel, will be evident, if it is considered, that this evangelical purity is, 1. The purity of such as are in a gospel state. 2. Purity that flows from gospel principles. 3. Purity that is influenced by gospel motives. 4. Purity that is directed to a gospel end.

1. This holiness and purity is for the credit of the gospel, inasmuch as it is the purity of such only as are in a gospel state. For, as it is only a good tree that brings forth good fruit; so, none but the true believer, that is in a good state, can bring forth the fruits of true holiness. By a gospel state, I understand a spiritual state, a state of union to Christ, a justified state, an adopted state, a

renewed state: without this no right sanctity, no evangelical purity.

2. It is purity that flows from gospel principles. The proud legalist's sanctity flows from legal principles, the principles of his own inherent strength, self sufficiency, and the like: but gospel purity flows from gospel principles. The believer's holy duties are performed in the strength of gospel grace, promised grace; the strength of Christ laid hold on by faith: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit," 2 Cor. vii. 1.

3. This purity is influenced by gospel motives. The greatest gospel motive of the believer's holiness, is the will of God in Christ, and the love of God in Christ.—The will of God in Christ, through whom the will of God is conveyed, he being the channel of divine authority: whereas, the legalist's motive to holiness is the will of an absolute God considered as Creator, out of Christ as Redeemer.—The love of God in Christ, and the believer's love to a God in Christ, is also the great gospel motive to holiness; and not slavish fear of the threatenings, and of hell, nor the mercenary hopes of heaven and happiness, which are the motives that legalists are actuated by.

4. This gospel purity is directed to a gospel end. The believer's end in this purity is not to obtain life, to procure pardon, and merit the enjoyment of God; but to evidence his gratitude to that God who hath provided all these valuable blessings freely to him. The end of this purity is not to satisfy conscience, appease wrath, or the like; but to glorify a God in Christ, and express our thankfulness to him for Christ, his unspeakable gift, and all spiritual blessings in and with him.

From these, and the like considerations, it is evident, that this purity is for the credit of the gospel. Let them, therefore, have their proper weight with you, to excite you to press after holiness, and to be actual students of gospel purity.

[4.] In order to excite to the study of holiness and purity, let it be considered, that it greatly tends both to our own good, and that of others.

1. Consider how much this purity and holiness tends to your own good and advantage, in order to influence you to be students of it. A variety of particulars might here be taken notice of; but we shall study brevity.—Consider, that the more of this evangelical purity you have, the more will God give to you; for "The Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly," Psal. lxxxiv. 11.—The more of

this purity, the more joy and comfort will you have. It will make you walk to heaven comfortably. In the path of holiness you will still see more and more of the love of God; which will make your souls to rejoice, and you to walk in the ways of the Lord with cheerfulness: For, they that walk in the fear of the Lord, walk in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, Acts ix. 31.—The more gospel purity, the more intimate acquaintance with God's secrets; for, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant," Psal. xxv. 14.—The more evangelical purity, the more pleasure and delight will you take in the duties of religion, and the more acceptable will your services be to God: "He shall purify the sons of Levi;" "then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord," Mal. iii. 3, 4.—The more of purity, the more boldness and courage will you have in the work and cause of God; for, the righteous is bold as a lion. It will inflame your zeal against sin, and for God. It will make you trample on temptations to sin; saying, with Joseph, How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God? It will condemn and despise all dangers, rather than stain your purity by sinful compliances; as Ezra, Nehemiah, Daniel, the three children, and many others did.—In a word, the more of this gospel purity you have, the more fellowship with God here, and the more meetness for the enjoyment of him hereafter; for, "Blessed are the pure in heart," and life; "for they shall see God," Matt. v. 8.—Let these particulars have their proper influence upon you, to press you on to further and higher degress of this evangelical purity and holiness.

2. In order to excite you to the study of purity, consider likewise the tendency it hath to the good and advantage of others.—Why, the more gospel purity, the greater stock you have; and the richer of this grace you are, the more will it tend to the benefit of your friends and acquaintances, and to your neighbours around you; as your holy work may induce them to the practice of it.—The more holy you are, and the richer of gospel purity, the greater influence will your holiness have in making the wicked stand in awe to sin, and keeping them back from dishonouring God; nay, exciting them to a profession of religion, and something of the practice of duty. You see what influence this way the sanctity of holiness of godly Joshua, and his cotemporary elders, had upon the children of Israel, Judges ii. 7. And what influence Jehoiadab's sanctity had upon Joash, king of Judah, 2 Chron. xxiv. 2.—Nay, further, consider that eminency of purity is sometimes a

blessed mean to recommend the ways of God and religion to such as are strangers thereto; "For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? Or, how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" 1 Cor. vii. 16. See 1 Pet. iii. 1, 2.—Besides, eminency in gospel purity tends to ward off judgments, or protract them from falling on persons and places where the godly live: accordingly the Lord declares to Abraham, that if there was found in Sodom but ten righteous persons, he would not destroy it for their sake, Gen. xviii. 32. Nay, the amazing conflagration was not kindled upon Sodom so long as righteous Lot lingered in it: "Haste thee," saith the angel to Lot; "haste thee" thither, [namely, to Zoar:] "for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither," Gen. xix. 22. And presently, upon Lot's departure out of it, the flames of hell from heaven began to burn upon the cities of the plain; as you see in the following verses.—Sometimes this gospel purity tends to draw down blessings on persons and places where the godly live: accordingly we find, that "the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house," [viz. Potipher,] and "all that he had in the house, and in the field," for Joseph's sake, Gen. xxxix. 5. Nay, Pharaoh's family, court, and all the land of Egypt, were blessed for Joseph's sake: for, while wasting famine spread devastation among the surrounding nations, there was plenty in the land of Egypt. Were not temporal strokes averted, and blessings, for a time, bestowed on Babylon, while the captives of Zion were in it? And therefore the prophet exhorts them, To "seek the peace of the city," and to "pray unto the Lord for it," Jer. xxix. 7. A candle, you know, enlightens a room; but the sun enlightens a world: so, the more eminent you are in purity and holiness, the brighter doth your lamp burn, and the more extensive does the light therefore shine. John the Baptist was eminent in holiness; and hence we have that testimony of our Lord concerning him, namely, that "he was a burning and a shining light," John v. 35. And that concerning the disciples, "Ye are the light of the world," Matt. v. 14. That is, would our Lord say, not only by your doctrine, as ministers; but by your purity and holiness, as Christians and saints. Nor is it to disciples only, but to all, that our divine Teacher, come from God, and addresses himself in that interesting admonition, ver. 16, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Nay, what if I should say, that by your purity and holiness you may increase the joy of men and angels in heaven; and if so, the greater degree of this purity you attain, the greater ten-

dency it will have this way. Why, the holiness and purity tends to, and, through the blessing of God, is a mean of the conversion of sinners from the error and evil of their ways, James v. 19, 20. And the conversion, or repentance, of one sinner, or one lost sheep, affords joy in heaven to the inhabitants of the celestial mansions, Luke xv. 7, 10.

From all which it is evident, what tendency this evangelical purity hath to the good of others; and that the higher measures thereof you have, the greater tendency it will have this way. Let this motive, therefore, serve to excite you to press after further degrees thereof.

2. We, proposed to conclude this use of exhortation by giving some directions. We might here, 1. Offer you some general directions how to attain this gospel purity. 2. Some more particular directions how to maintain it.

[1.] The general directions we offer for attaining this gospel purity, are these following.

1. If you would attain this gospel purity, O labour to be sensible of your absolute impotency, weakness, and inability for the duties of religion: be convinced of your natural impotency, and moral impotency; be persuaded that you are altogether without strength; and that if God would give you a heaven, a paradise, a Christ for one thought, you could not command it; no: Of ourselves, as ourselves, saith the apostle, even though converted, we cannot think any thing, 2. Cor. iii. 5. I warrant you, Paul was a better philosopher than many now-a-days, pretending to great things: no doubt he knew that the soul was ever thinking; and yet, saith he, one thought I cannot command; I cannot bring it forth, till the almighty grace of God do it. Let people talk of man's power as they will; and lay aside the Bible, which is full of argument to the contrary; I am sure, if they have any experience under heaven, they will find they want power to perform many thousand duties which God hath called them to practise. * * * It is plain, that man, by nature, is without strength; and it is express scripture, "Without me ye can do nothing," John xv. 5. It is said to the disciples, already in a state of grace, that without him ye can do nothing; much more may it be said of all the unconverted. Be sensible of this then, that you cannot believe, you cannot repent, you cannot pray, you cannot mortify sin of yourselves. And this impotency is not only a mere want of power, but a want of will; it is a cursed moral impotency, a wilful impotency.

2. Seek regeneration. If you be not good trees you cannot bring

forth good fruit : if you be not converted, if you be not united to Christ, if you be not born again, if you have not the habit of grace, you cannot bring forth good fruit : you must be united to the Son of God, and derive strength from him. The foundation of gospel purity must be laid in union to Christ, and a new nature ; for, they that are in the flesh cannot please God. It is true, that one that knows himself to be in a state of nature, is not to neglect duty and means ; such as, reading, praying, hearing the word preached, and the like, which God calls all unto : but let none content themselves with these performances, without a new nature ; for, as sure as God lives, this way of doing will never bring you to heaven : " Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," John iii. 3. Therefore cry, " Create in me a clean heart, O God ; and renew a right spirit within me," Psal li. 10.

3. Make and keep friendship with the Holy Ghost, if you would attain this gospel purity : he is not only called holy, because of his essential holiness, for thus the Father is the holy Spirit : but he is called holy also for his office ; because it is his special work to make people holy. Be at friendship with the Holy Ghost ; do not quench him ; do not grieve him ; do not resist him ; do not rebel against him ; do not withstand him in his motions, etc. Beware, lest by these, or any such means, the Holy Ghost and you be set at odds. O Sirs, should you not live near him who can make you holy ?

[2.] The particular directions I would offer, especially with respect to the maintaining of this gospel purity, I shall sum up in these two generals, 1. Rightly to use the rule of gospel purity. 2. Diligently to ply the means thereof.

Direct. 1. In order to the maintaining of gospel purity, rightly use the rule of it. The rule of it is the LAW. If it is asked, How are we to use this rule ? We might reply, You are to use it fairly and evangelically.

(1.) You are to use this rule fairly. If the law do its proper work upon you, Sirs, it will drive you to the gospel as a remedy ; and if the gospel deal savingly with you, it will lead you to the law as a rule : but many misplace this rule and do not use it fairly.

1. Some judge of themselves by the half of the law, and not by the whole : they love one part of the law, but not another ; and they are sure to look to that part of the law, that they think makes for them, and overlook that part that makes against them : but this is not fair dealing ; for people are to judge themselves by the whole of it. It was the false mother that was for dividing the

child: so, the false Christian is for dividing one part of the law from another.

2. Some again judge themselves by the outside of the law, and not the inside thereof; by the letter, and not by the spirit of it. This was the error of the man who said, All these things have I done from my youth up. He did not consider the inside and spirituality of the law, otherwise he would have cried out, with David, I have seen an end of all perfection; but thy commandment is exceeding broad: it reaches the thoughts of the heart, as well as the actions of the life. And therefore, ye do not use it fairly, unless you make use of the inside as well as the outside; both sides of the law.

3. Some again they bring down this rule to their practice, but will not bring up their practice to the rule; and these do not use the rule fairly: thus many make God's law to justify their corrupt practices and sins. They, if we may be allowed the expression, make a nose-wax of the law, and mould it to their own corrupt fancy.

4. Others again, they justify themselves before they apply the rule, but do not apply the rule before they justify themselves. They have a good opinion of themselves; they are determined already about their state, before they are come to the rule: they are settled on their lees, and so cannot believe a word that the law says against them, because they justify themselves before they apply the rule. This is not a fair using of the law: let us use it fairly, and look on it, not as many do, as a fountain of justification, but as the rule of action. And this leads me,

(2.) To the other particular, viz. to use the rule of gospel purity evangelically. It may possibly be asked, How shall we use the rule evangelically? To this we reply, in the following particulars.

1. If you would use the law in a gospel manner, attempt not obedience to it in your own strength. Under the covenant of works, indeed, we were to obey by the strength of inherent grace: But now we are called to lay hold on Christ, as our strength; and to obey by the strength of derived grace assisting us.

2. If you would use the law in a gospel manner, seek not peace by your obedience and sanctity: when you have done all you can, even through grace, you must go out of your own obedience to the obedience of another for peace. Believers themselves are oftentimes tickled with their own performances, even though they profess to abhor justification by works.

3. If you would use the law in a gospel manner, let not the duty the law requires, or the discovery the law makes, hinder you to embrace the offer that the gospel makes. The gospel offers Christ as a husband; the law saith, Thou art a black sinner, an unfit match for such a husband. The gospel offer is, that you buy the eye-salve, white raiment, and tried gold. The law tells thee, thou hast nothing to buy with. Now, you use the law evangelically, when you say, Black as I am, I embrace the offer of such a husband; he can make me beautiful through his comeliness. Poor as I am, I embrace the offer of his eye-salve. There is riches enough in Christ for me; and I see he invites me to buy without money and without price; and to take the water of life freely.

4. If you would use the law evangelically, then look not on the law as the fountain of justification, nor yet as the fountain of strength; but only as the standard of duty: and therefore you will use it in a gospel manner, if you make a constant journey between Christ and the law; looking to him for righteousness and strength, who is the fountain of both; righteousness, for your acceptance; and strength, for your assistance, in every piece of obedience to the law. Here is the short road to glory: the law forces the man to Christ to be sheltered by him; and Christ sends him back again to the law to be ruled by it: and the man, in using this rule, looks to Christ in the gospel, for righteousness and strength. In a word, let the main stress be laid upon the gospel, especially when you are brought to an extremity; when there seems to be a contrariety between the law and the gospel. When the law says, Thy hope is perished from the Lord; and the gospel saith, There is hope in Israel concerning thee; and shews the ground of hope to be in Christ, as the Lord our righteousness and strength: it is safest, in this case, to hearken most to the voice of the gospel; for there is a possibility of salvation this way, but not the other. Though you should have no more, but a may-be ye shall be hid; venture upon the may-be, upon the peradventure which the gospel affords; for, hope is a duty, but despair is a sin; the one honours God, the other dishonours him.

Direct. 2. Our next direction is, diligently to ply the means of this gospel purity. We shall offer a few of many that might be mentioned, and so close.

1. One mean is, to live by faith on the Son of God, by deriving continual supplies of grace and strength from him, saying, with David, "I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make

mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only," Psalm lxxi. 16. Plead, by faith, the promise of sanctification; that having these promises, you may cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.

2. Another mean is, to set the Lord always before you, and set a watch over yourself. This was David's resolution; I said I will take heed to my ways. Security will betray you into the hands of enemies; but, Blessed is the servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching.

3. Another mean is, to take care of discharging the sacred duties that he calls you to. The scripture gives great encouragement to this; They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength. The more that a man minds divine ordinances, in secret, private, and public, in obedience to God's command, and dependence on God's promise, the more strength shall he receive to conquer his spiritual enemies, and discharge his spiritual work. God could preserve your bodies without food; but he will not, when he affords ordinary means: so, God could preserve your souls, without ordinances; but he will not, when he gives opportunity to enjoy them. Let me say to you, as Jacob to the patriarchs, "Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt; get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live and not die:" So, behold you have heard, that there is spiritual food in the gospel; our Joseph has his granary full of corn, go you thither daily, by sacred duties, that you may live and not die: for, "In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." And particularly,

4. Another mean is, give yourselves unto prayer: the praying Christian is readily the holy Christian. Pray, with David, O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes: Thy Spirit is good, lead me to the land of uprightness. By daily prayer in secret, and in your families, you may get daily incomes for helping you to this gospel purity.

5. Another mean is, O set about subduing your predominant sins, through grace; for sin doth greatly mar your sanctity. Cast the Jonah overboard, throw the Jezebel over the window; and stone the Achan to death; and, for this end, call in the aid and assistance of the Spirit of God; for, if ye through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

6. In a word, Labour to live under a constant sense of your own spiritual wants, and of the defects of grace and holiness; and a sense of Christ's fullness: the persuasion hereof will induce you to come and receive out of his fullness, grace for grace.—If these

means of gospel purity are diligently used, it is more than probable you shall be successful therein.

Now, go home; and this evening cry to the Lord, that he would help you to reduce the preaching into practice. Mind the good man's saying, who, coming from sermon, was asked, "If all was done." He fetched a deep sigh, and said, "All was said, but all was not done." Our preaching is not practice; your hearing is not practice: these are only certain means, unto gospel practice. What is your coming to the church, on the Lord's day? It is like servants coming to their master in the first morning of the week, and saying, "Now, tell us what shall be our week's work; what shall we do this day, and the next day, till the next week come?" You should come thus to Christ to get your orders; for if you rest merely in the hearing, you confound the means with the end, and overturn the nature of things.

What do you mean, Sirs? Why stand you here all the day idle? Some of you have done nothing for God, nothing for your souls, for the generation, since you came into the world. Perhaps you have treasured up a cursed conquest for your children, or for your wife; and God may blast it when you are in the grave, and may punish your children for your sin; your children on earth, and you in hell, at the same time, and for the same sin. What have you done for God? what have you done for the church of God? what have you done for advancing holiness in your place? and the interest of Christ in your station? Many of you have done nothing: some have done something; but it is little: some of you will neither do nor let do; you hinder others in the way of religion and holiness.

O see to it man, woman! You are no friends to Christ; nay, you are enemies to him, if you have nothing of this gospel purity that I have been speaking of. O pray, pray that the Lord may bless to you what hath been said on this subject, for directing you to, and promoting you in, true gospel holiness: and may the Lord hear your requests, and fulfil your desires; and to his great name be all the praise.*

* A Sermon on this text is omitted in this selection; for one on "Self Conceit," see Vol. ii. page 447.

SERMON XIV.

Carnal Consultation Unfolded;

OR, THE GREAT EVIL OF BEING ACTUATED BY
CARNAL PRINCIPLES, IN THE MATTERS OF
GOD, EVINCED.

“Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.”

GALATIANS i. 6.

WHEN I considered the great spring of all the motions and actions of the most of people, at this day; and what seems to be the grand counsellors, with whom they generally confer, I thought it was evident, from universal practice, that flesh and blood are the great principle that influence the deportment and behaviour of the generation: And when I considered, that not only the wicked world, but even the most eminent professors of religion, and the truly godly seem to discover, by their walk at this day, and their sinful conformity at this day with the world, and compliance with the course of the times, their being led by motives from flesh and blood: I say, when I considered these things, I thought the contrary practice and example of the great apostle would, at least, be suitable for discovering the great evil of living under the conduct and influence of such carnal principles; “Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.”

The false teachers, who preached up the ceremonial law, were doing all they could to lessen Paul’s reputation, who preached the pure gospel of Christ to the Gentiles; and therefore, he is here setting himself to prove the divinity of his mission and doctrine, which he doth several ways in this chapter; particularly from verses 11, 12. He evidences it by the manner wherein he received the gospel; that it was not by information from men, but by revelation from God, and immediate inspiration of Christ himself. Here he puts them in mind,

1st, Of his education, verses 13, 14; that he had been not only a rejecter of Christianity, but a persecutor of it: this he doth, that they might be assured he was not led to this religion purely by education, since he had been bred up in enmity and opposition to it: and that it behooved to be something extraordinary that had made such a change upon him, and conquered the prejudices of his education: and brought him not only to profess, but to preach that doctrine which he had before so vehemently opposed.

2dly, He puts them in mind of his conversion, verses 15, 16, which is here described four ways.

In the author of it, viz. GOD, the efficient cause; and the pleasure of God, the moving cause: It pleased God. And this God is here described two ways.

He is described by his separating grace; "He separated me from my mother's womb." The change that was wrought in Paul was in pursuance of a divine purpose concerning him, whereby he was appointed to be a believer and an apostle.

God is here described by his calling grace; He "called me by his grace." Paul was called in an immediate way and manner: there was something very peculiar, and extremely singular in his conversion.—See Acts ix. 1—8.

Paul's conversion is described in the manner of it; It pleased God "to reveal his Son in me." Christ was not only revealed externally to him, but also in him.

It is described in the end of it; "That I might preach him among the heathen." Paul was both a Christian and an Apostle by revelation.

His conversion is described in the effect in his carriage; "Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood."

From the words we might lay down and prosecute several doctrinal observations; such as,

That the MERCY of God is preventing mercy, towards all whom it takes hold upon; it prevents them; before ever they are born, they are separate.

That none are CALLED upon the account of any good work, or sanctity, or blamelessness in themselves; no: they are called of grace, and of the good pleasure of God.

That the DOCTRINE of GRACE is the revelation of Christ: God, in the gospel, reveals his Son to us: and, by his Spirit, reveals him in us, when he calls effectually.

That when the GOSPEL is revealed, it is God that doth it; It pleased God to reveal his Son in me.

That to preach the gospel, is to preach CHRIST; it is not a preaching of Moses, but Christ.

That in matters of RELIGION, there ought to be no consulting or conferring with flesh and blood. Here the apostle tells us his own practice, that he did not consult therewith; he did not consult man, nor apply himself to any other for their advice and direction; neither, as in the following verse, did he go, "up to Jerusalem, to them which were apostles before him," as if he needed to be approved by them, or receive any farther instructions or authority from them: so that it could not be pretended, that he was indebted to any other for his knowledge of the gospel, or his authority to preach it; but it appeared, that both his qualifications for, and his call to the apostolic office were extraordinary and divine.

But although these observations are couched in the words, and natively deduced from them, yet I choose to confine myself to the consideration of this text, as it may be taken more generally, and as bearing this proposition, viz.:

DOCT. That in the matters of God, there ought to be no consulting with flesh and blood. IMMEDIATELY I CONFERRED NOT WITH FLESH AND BLOOD.

In prosecuting this subject, through divine assistance, we shall observe the following method and order.

I. We would explain what is to be understood by flesh and blood; and not conferring with it.

II. We would confirm the truth of the doctrine by scripture examples.

III. Give the reasons why we ought not to consult with flesh and blood.

IV. Make application of the whole subject, in several uses.

I. We would explain the doctrine, by enquiring, 1. What are we to understand by flesh and blood. 2. What it is not to confer with flesh and blood.

1. We are to enquire what is understood by flesh and blood. In general, MAN, who is flesh and blood, is here principally intended; men, whether good or bad: the apostle consulted not with men, but gave himself up to God. More particularly, by flesh and blood we may understand carnal ease, carnal reason, carnal friends, and carnal counsels of spiritual friends.

By flesh and blood is meant carnal ease and interest. Master, spare thyself; what need all this toil and trouble? is the language of easy nature. Paul, being now converted, and so in a happy state, having his salvation secured, carnal ease might say, What need

you go and essay these travails, and encounter such hardships, in propagating the gospel of Christ, and spreading the knowledge of his name? Nay, but Paul, having got Christ revealed in him, he would not consult with carnal ease: he would now spend and be spent for Christ.

By flesh and blood is understood carnal reason. Paul was now divinely taught, as Peter was, of whom Christ says, Flesh and blood hath not revealed these things unto thee: So Christ was revealed in Paul, not by flesh and blood: that is, not by carnal reason, or natural understanding: and therefore he would not confer with flesh and blood. We ought not to consult with carnal reason in the matters of religion.

By flesh and blood is meant carnal friends: and by these I understand not only natural relations, as father, mother, brother, and sister, who, when loved and followed more than Christ, it is a consulting with flesh and blood; and graceless relations, with whom our conference and consultation cannot but be a conferring with flesh and blood; but also all ungodly neighbours and acquaintances, whether blood relations or not: to consult with them, or to put any confidence in them is to consult with flesh and blood.

By flesh and blood is meant even the carnal counsels, and carnal arguments of spiritual friends: for godly and pious friends may offer ungodly and impious counsels; such as Peter to his master, when he would dissuade him from going up to Jerusalem to suffer: and Job's wife to her husband, when she said to him, Curse God and die; or, if it may be rendered, Bless God and die, it was an impious intention wherewith it was given. They that would not consult with blood, must not rest in the counsel of godly flesh and friends, or trust thereunto.

In a word, by flesh and blood we may understand all carnal confidence whatsoever, whether from without or from within: in others, or in ourselves: for, while we have any confidence in the flesh, in our own or others natural wisdom, righteousness, or strength, we so far consult with flesh and blood. But this leads me to consider,

2. What is to be understood by not conferring with flesh and blood. We shall lay down what we take to be the import thereof in the following particulars.

Not conferring with flesh and blood, imports a shunning their company, in a manner. When we would not confer with a man, then we shun his company; we refuse to converse with him; so,

when we confer not with flesh and blood, we refuse, in a manner, the company of such ill guests. The man that confers not with flesh and blood, in the matters of God, he lets in to his company the wonderful Counsellor for his guest, to converse withal; and shuts all carnal counsellors to the door. The man that will not confer with flesh and blood, he avoids the salutations thereof, and shuns conversation therewith.

Not conferring with flesh and blood, imports a not giving ear thereunto. When a person will not confer with any one, if he cannot get his company altogether avoided, yet he will stop his ear, that he may not hear what he says: so, if flesh and blood will be in to our company, not to confer therewith is to give a deaf ear to the suggestions of carnal reason, in the matters of God, and religion, and conscience. Shut the door against all carnal counsel.

Not conferring with flesh and blood, imports, not taking their advice, nor regarding their solicitations, but rejecting their motions. If flesh and blood will be in with a word, and that we cannot get our ear stopt so fast but that we must hear what it says; then, if it will be heard, yet it must not be regarded. It is vastly dangerous to hear, and much more to join with carnal counsellors, as Jacob of Simeon and Levi; "O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united," Gen. xlix. 6.

Not conferring with flesh and blood, imports, a not following the dictates thereof. It may be, that, through the prevalence of corruption, even in the godly, flesh and blood, and carnal counsellors, are let into their company; and, when once admitted, they are heard; and, when heard, they are too much regarded: but here, at least, they are to stop; in regard they have gone too far; for, there wants nothing, in that case, but a putting the carnal counsel into execution: and therefore, they are to go back all the steps, by which they have gone forward, in this course; and to beware of walking in the counsel of flesh and blood, or practising according to the advice thereof. If we walk in the counsel of the ungodly, we are in danger of standing in the way of sinners: if we stand in the way of sinners, we are next in danger of sitting in the seat of the scornful, as you have it, Psal. i. 1. If flesh and blood will be in with its word, yet it must not be heard; if heard, it must not be regarded; if regarded, its advice must not be followed, otherwise we confer with flesh and blood.

In a word, not to confer with flesh and blood, is not only to re-

ject conference and consultation therewith, but to receive other counsellors, and embrace better counsel than flesh and blood can give; and particularly, to consult with the oracles of the living God, and follow the conduct of his word and Spirit.

II. We are next to confirm the truth of the doctrine, by a few scripture examples, that we are not to consult with flesh and blood, in the matters of God and conscience. You may observe these four excellent examples in this matter.

To begin with the example of CHRIST, the great pattern of our imitation, in all his imitable perfections. When Peter came in with his carnal counsel, after Christ had been foretelling his death and sufferings, Peter began, forsooth, to rebuke him, saying, "Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee," Matthew xvi. 22. What! wilt thou suffer such indignity? There was the language of flesh and blood. But, how doth Christ entertain it? He turneth himself to Peter, saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."—So, when flesh and blood comes in with its solicitations, we ought to banish the same, with a "Get thee behind me, Satan."

We have the example of Abraham, when he went out of his own country, at the commandment of God, "not knowing whither he went," Heb. xi. 8, and so not consulting with flesh and blood: yea, when God called him to offer up his son, his only son Isaac, flesh and blood might have objected a thousand things: that he was the child of the promise: nay, that his offering Isaac would contradict the command of God; "Thou shalt not kill:" And contradict the promise of God; That in Isaac should his seed be called: that it would contradict the rule of natural affection. Yea, but Abraham consulted not with flesh and blood; but by faith "offered up Isaac," as it is said, Heb. xi. 17. As little did he consult with flesh and blood, when he took God's word, and trusted in him, with relation to his having Isaac, when both his body and Sarah's was dead.

We have the example of Moses, of whom it is said, Heb. xi. 24,—27, By faith Moses "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season," etc. If he had conferred with flesh and blood, he had rather chosen to dwell at ease in Pharaoh's court, and enjoy all the pleasures and treasures thereof: but he had learned not to confer with flesh and blood.

We have the example of Daniel, chap. iii. 15, 16, 17, when commanded to worship Nebuchadnezzar's gold image: if Daniel had consulted with flesh and blood, he would easily have complied with the courses of the times, and rather have worshipped the golden image, than have been cast into the fiery furnace: for, flesh and blood would have told him, that it was better to be wise than too precise. Yea, but he and his companions could not be persuaded to a little outward obedience; for, they consulted not with flesh and blood, but consulted with God, saying, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee, in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us." Yea, so far from consulting with flesh and blood was he and they, that they would not defile themselves with a portion of the king's meat, Dan. i. 8; nor with the wine which he drank. Flesh and blood would have told him, that there was no harm in meat; that it was a thing indifferent: but they were under another influence and conduct, than that of flesh and blood. Yea, so obstinate was Daniel from consulting with flesh and blood, that notwithstanding the conspiracy of the nobles against him, because of his devotion towards his God, and their obtaining a decree of casting all into the lion's den, that should, for thirty days, worship any other, or ask any petition of another, except of Darius, Daniel went more openly and worshipped his God than ever, in the view of his very enemies.—Flesh and blood would have told him, that he might have dispensed with a little ceremony of opening windows, and exposing him to danger that way; nay, but he consulted not with flesh and blood.

III. We now proceed to assign the reasons, why we must not consult with flesh and blood. We shall only condescend on the four following.

Because flesh and blood are utterly unable to give advice, in the matters of God. Flesh and blood could not so much as tell how a man might be born again; or regenerated, unless he should go into his mother's womb again; as you see in the instance of Nicodemus, a learned man, a ruler of the Jews, and a master in Israel, John, iii. 1,—4. Yea, when it was explained in part to him, it was impossible for flesh and blood to understand it, as he himself confessed; "How can these things be?" John iii. 9. Flesh and blood are altogether unable to give advice in the matters of God.

Because flesh and blood are unwilling to give advice in the matters of religion; for, they are in a constant rebellion against God and godliness; "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit

against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other:" Gal. v. 17. Yea, flesh and blood are enmity against God:—"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God," Rom. viii. 7, 8. Hence,

Because flesh and blood are unfit for giving advice in the matters of God, and conscience, and religion; if they be unable and unwilling surely they are unfit to be consulted with. It is a folly to consult with them; for, their counsel is like that of Ahithophel, that will be turned to foolishness. Flesh and blood will be sure to give us wrong advice, and bad counsel in the matters of God. Is it fit, in the matters of God, to consult the enemies of God? No; for, "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial?" "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15, 16.—Again,

Because it is dangerous to consult with flesh and blood. It is very dangerous, in several respects; particularly in the four following ones.

It is dangerous, because flesh and blood will hinder us from duty, if we confer with them. What hindered those that were bidden to the gospel-feast? Why, one consulted with his farm, another with his merchandise; and so they made light of the invitation, by consulting with flesh and blood, and advising with carnal reason, and carnal ease. Matt. xxii. 5. What hindered the rulers that believed in Christ from confessing him? John xii. 42, 43; Even fear "lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for, they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." They consulted with flesh and blood.

It is dangerous, because if we consult with flesh and blood, it will not only hinder us from entering upon a profession of Christ, and so lead us to the omission of duty, but it also will make us venture upon those things, which God hath expressly discharged, and commanded we should not do: so Saul, when he went to destroy the Amalekites, had an express command to spare nothing, 1 Sam. xv. 3. But Saul consulted with flesh and blood; he spared Agag, and some of the best of the cattle. Why might flesh and blood say to Saul, O! I may be in the like case; and he that shews no mercy, shall have no mercy shewn him; so he spared him. And he also consulted with flesh and blood concerning the cattle, and sheep, and oxen: carnal reason told him, they would serve for burnt offerings, verse 15. But Samuel told Saul afterwards, that

“To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken, than the fat of rams,” verse 22. It was consulting with flesh and blood that caused Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit: she saw it was fair to the eye, and meat to be desired, Gen. iii. 6.

It is dangerous, because if we consult with flesh and blood, it will hinder us from suffering, in the cause of God. The apostles rejoiced in this, that “they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name,” Acts v. 41; they counted it a great honour: it is a gift of God when it is given, not only to believe, but to suffer for his name. Had Paul consulted with flesh and blood, he would never have been willing to die for Christ’s sake, as Acts xxi. 11, 13; “What mean ye to weep, and to break mine heart? for I am ready, not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.” Flesh and blood, instead of suffering for Christ, will tell a man to persecute the cause of Christ, and the followers of Christ, against knowledge and conscience, if he consult his own carnal ease, interest, credit, and honour in the world.

It is dangerous, because if we consult with flesh and blood, it sends a man at last to consult with the devil, and to take advice of hell, as you see in the case of Saul, 1 Sam. xxviii. 7: “Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and enquire of her.” Thus he consulted with the witch of Endor. Having so long consulted with flesh and blood, he at last sought to the devil himself to consult with. If we still consult with flesh and blood, who are the devil’s friends and favourites, we are in danger of consulting next with the devil himself.

IV. We come now to the application of the subject, which we shall essay in an use of information, caution, reprehension, dehortation, and direction.

1. Let us then improve the doctrine, in an use of information. Hence we may see,

What advice it is that the wicked of the world do follow, and what is the counsel that doth destroy them, and mislead them: why, they are wholly under the conduct and counsel of flesh and blood; they have a daily conference stated with carnal ease, carnal reason: and the conference is held in the heart; and at this council Satan presides; he works in the children of disobedience. And what can be expected as the result of such a black and hellish consultation? For, at this council, iniquity is established by a law; and no acts passed, but acts of rebellion and hostility against heaven. Indeed, the wicked world listen to no solicitations, no

arguments, but what are drawn from flesh and blood: and hence, in a suitableness to the dictates of the carnal inclination, some are hotly pursuing their pleasures, some their profits, some their honour: the voluptuous man his pleasure; * * * the covetous man, his profit, his worldly gains; the ambitious man, his honour, his credit and grandeur.—Whence is it that all manner of wickedness, profanity, and carnality abound! Why, the world are all busy conferring with flesh and blood: this is the principle that sways them; hence so wearied, in duty, secret, private, and public.

See wherein it is, that the immortal soul, and its everlasting concerns, are so much slighted and neglected by the world, while the body, and outward things, draw away all the concern after them, why, it is because men consult with flesh and blood; they consult their carnal ease and outward conveniency; but do not consult their soul's everlasting welfare. Flesh and blood goes no higher than itself, and takes no notice of the soul; or, if it doth, it provides no better for the soul than for the body, like the fool in the gospel, who thought his soul might be happy with full barns;—Soul, take thy rest, thou hast goods laid up for many years. Alas! short-lived happiness for an immortal soul: Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee.

Hence see the root of superstition and will-worship, it flows from conferring with flesh and blood; which hating the spirituality of worship, is most taken up with carnal ordinances and human inventions, and uninstituted ceremonies: In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. It is too remarkable, that the more carnal that the generation is growing, the more is abjured ceremonies creeping in among us, and the less testifying against the same; though yet it be a burden which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear, as the apostle says Acts xv. 10; “Why tempt ye God, to put a yoke?” The apostle there speaks of a yoke of ceremonies, once enjoined of God himself, that now being abolished, it was a tempting of God; much more is the yoke of ceremonies that never were enjoined. But while we consult with flesh and blood, we tamely submit to the yoke of carnal ordinances, as they are called, Heb. ix. 10; and while the spirituality of worship is neglected and detested, and the internal glory of ordinances is out of sight.

See what is the spring of all corruption in the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the house of God: it will be found that consulting with flesh and blood, in the matters of religion, is at the bottom thereof.

Whence is it that the doctrines of the gospel have been so much corrupted? It is just from carnal reason, and consulting with that rather than with the word; We err, not knowing the scriptures, not conferring with the scriptures: or, if men confer with the scriptures, and consult the word, it is not with the word and the Spirit together; but it is with the word and their own spirit, their own carnal sentiments:—hence so many carnal interpretations of the scripture, and carnal glosses upon the word, suiting the natural apprehensions of men concerning the law, as it was still standing in force, as a covenant against believers as well as unbelievers; or, as if personal obedience thereto were the way to eternal life, while yet the scripture testifies of Christ, as the only way to life; and our obedience now, when evangelical, as being only the necessary fruit and evidence of union to him. Pride of reason, sounds Socinianism; pride of the will, Arminianism; pride of self-righteousness, Neonomianism.—How is the doctrine of justification and sanctification confounded,* by men's conferring with flesh and blood? Carnal reason suggesting, that God will not justify us, but upon some worthy consideration, or valuable performance of ours, which intimates gross ignorance of the gospel, concerning free justification by the blood of Christ.—It is from this root, even the conferring with flesh and blood, that many also do abuse the doctrine of the gospel to licentiousness, as if it encouraged wickedness, which is blasphemy against Christ, as if he was the minister of sin: nay, those that reproachfully charge the doctrine of grace as a covert to sin; and the preachers of it, as if they were enemies to holiness, do but grossly betray their ignorance of the gospel, and their consulting with flesh and blood, in all their carnal arguments; for, if they consult with the gospel itself duly, in opposition to legal doctrine, they would find, that the more evangelical the doctrine is, the more holy and pure it is and influential upon holiness; for, the more a man is dead to the law, the more he lives unto God: but this will remain a mystery to many in the world forever, because of their carnal thoughts and reasonings in favour of the law, as a covenant; for flesh and blood cannot endure gospel-doctrine; nature and carnal reason cannot make the law a rule of obedience, without making it a rule of acceptance. †

* The difference between Justification and Sanctification, is clearly stated by our Author in the Sermon on Preventing Love.

† The Reader will find these topics handled to excellent purpose by our Author, in the Sermon entitled, Law-Death, and Gospel-Life.

Whence is it that the worship which God hath appointed in his house, is so much abused; What is the rise of all that detestable neutrality in the worship of God, and weariness and lukewarmness in the duties thereof? Why, it is just men's conferring with flesh and blood. Spiritual worship, and a carnal heart, cannot comport, suit, or agree together: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." And flesh and blood cannot endure spiritual work and worship: hence men draw near to God with the mouth, while the heart is removed far from him. Hence men are careless what way they worship, or what way others worship God; whether it be an idolatrous, superstitious, or instituted way, like Gallio, they care for none of those things. Hence sabbaths and sermons, are a weariness; praying and praising, are a burden: flesh and blood cannot endure these things, "Take a carnal man," says one, "tie him to a post, and you may kill him with praying and preaching."

Whence is it that partiality in the exercise of church discipline, doth proceed? When men do not confer with flesh and blood, then discipline is powerful and impartial: but when, by consulting with flesh and blood, they connive at sin, over-look it in some, and dare not reprove it in others.—Flesh and blood says, Such a person is a friend: we must favour him: such a person is a great man, a rich man; we must wink at a fault; we must not meddle with him, lest he make us and the church uneasy.—By these carnal reasonings, the power of discipline is broken. Alas! how far are we, at this day, from the spirit of Ambrose, who excommunicated the emperor Theodosius, for some rash orders of his; while the emperor humbly submitted to the discipline of the church; and, upon his repentance was received? But now, alas! we must not offend this and that great man, otherwise all will go wrong. Oh! where is powerful and impartial discipline! It is sunk in the mire of sinful conference with flesh and blood.

Whence again proceeds that disorder and confusion that takes place in the government of the church? While men consult not with flesh and blood, the government is beautiful and orderly: but by carnal reasoning, and carnal policy, and carnal wisdom, it is turned out of course: tyranny in church government over the souls and consciences of people; such as, in thrusting pastors upon a Christian flock, without their free consent and election, is rooted in conferring with flesh and blood: Why, says carnal wisdom and policy, such a patron must be gratified; such a great man must be pleased; the church cannot stand without the support of such pillars. What is all this, but a conferring with flesh and blood.—

In a word, all the degeneracy of our day, is owing to this origin.

Hence see what is the root of all the divisions of our day, it flows from this consultation with flesh and blood. See James iv. 1. 1 Cor. iii. 3. "Whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal?" Division among ministers and people flows from this carnal bias; proud flesh and blood cannot be controlled, scorns to be corrected: "Who shall be greatest?" is still the question of flesh and blood. Who shall be highest? Proud flesh and blood will put a fair face upon the foulest act, rather than take with a fault, or confess a wrong, or forgive an injury.

Hence see what it is, that the people of God hath to wrestle against, while here, even all the counsels of flesh and blood. Paul rejects the consultation: there he plainly supposes that flesh and blood was ready to suggest, and solicit, and give their advice; but Paul rejects the same; "Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." This is a council where Satan presides, and is always at the head of the table. And hence, while they have flesh and blood to wrestle against, they have principalities and powers also, Eph. vi. 12. Much need have they of the whole armour of God, that they may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

2dly, This doctrine may be improv'd for caution to prevent mistakes. There are several things that this duty, of not consulting with flesh and blood, doth not prohibit: such as,

It does not exclude the duty of necessary conversation, traffic, and merchandise with the carnal men of this world, providing we do not mingle with their vice, and contract no intimate friendship with them; for, The friendship of this world is enmity against God: but otherwise, conversation, company, trade, and traffic with such may be necessary and allowable. This caution the apostle gives us; 1 Cor. v. 9, 10. "I wrote unto you in an epistle, not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world."

It doth not exclude, impeach, or debar the duty of charity toward the poor, and honouring the Lord with our worldly substance, providing it be not done out of ostentation, to be seen of men, and to gratify flesh and blood. And as it doth not exclude charitable deeds, toward the souls and bodies of all men, doing them all the good services we can; so neither doth it exclude charitable

thoughts of them: Charity thinketh no evil, but puts the best construction upon all the actions of others, that the nature of the thing will bear, 1 Cor. xiii. 5.

It doth not exclude or debar the duty of spiritual prudence. We are to be wise as serpents, and not to run upon seen hazard, without a call; nor to neglect the duty of consulting our necessary safety and security in times of danger and persecution; providing we do not fly when God bids us stand; or when the cause of Christ, or glory of God, obliges us to bear witness for him, and for his truth: but abstract from these, or the like cases, Christian prudence is requisite in shunning whatever hazard we may, through imprudence, cast ourselves into: hence saith Solomon, The prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself.

It doth not exclude or impeach the duty of courtesy and civility towards all men; no: religion doth not allow men to be ill-bred or any way uncivil, more than it allows them to be ill-natured toward any: so, to be courteous, as the apostle exhorts, 1 Pet. iii. 8, is not to be reckoned a conferring with flesh and blood. There is a way of becoming all things to all men, by the duty of courtesy, civility, and hospitality, which may be gaining to all.

It doth not exclude the duty of frugality and industry about our worldly concerns. One is not reckoned a consulter with flesh and blood, because he provides for his family; for, he that doth not so, saith the apostle, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. One may be a Mary for piety, and a Martha for industry too; providing it be managed with moderation, so as not to exclude the better part.

It doth not exclude the duty of mercy, pity and compassion towards the body, whether our own, or that of others. It were an abuse of this doctrine, if any, out of a pretence of not consulting with flesh and blood, should show no mercy to the outward man, no regard to their own health: but should punish the body with immoderate fasting, or penance, or unmercifully macerate their flesh, as many in the popish church, through their superstitious devotion, do. But, in some cases, mercy is better than sacrifice.

It doth not exclude or debar the duty of forbearance and tenderness towards those, that are overtaken in a fault. It were an abuse of this doctrine, of not consulting with flesh and blood, to be thereupon untender of weaklings, who are ready to stumble and fall: for, though this doctrine obligeth us not to bear with sin, wherever it is, yet it doth not allow us to insult over the infirmities of any; but we are to take the apostle's rule, Gal. vi. 1, 3;

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”

It doth not exclude the duty of respect to every one, in their several stations and relations; particularly, due regard to parents, magistrates, and ministers; and subjection to judicatories of God’s appointment, providing it be in the Lord, and in all things lawful, is not inconsistent with this duty, of not conferring with flesh and blood: nay, it is highly consistent therewith; yea, and necessary thereunto: for a man may consult with flesh and blood, by refusing to give due subjection; as many obstinate offenders do, that despise all discipline. Though, indeed, unlawful subjection or obedience, not in the Lord, is but a consulting with flesh and blood; while we follow the dictates of courts or councils, in a way disagreeable to the word of God.

It doth not exclude the duty of advising with neighbours and Christians, whether about civil or religious matters, wherein any difficulty doth present itself. The doctrine, indeed, excludes the taking of ill counsel; but doth not exclude the taking of good counsel from man, in an agreeableness to the word of God: nay, many times in the multitude of counsellors there is safety, as Solomon saith; who also teacheth us to take advice in matters of weight, saying, With good advice make war.

If we view this doctrine, of not consulting with flesh and blood, as it stands in opposition to self-righteousness; or seeking to establish our own credit before men, or our own righteousness before God; yet it doth not exclude the duty of desiring and seeking, in a regular way, to have and maintain a good name: studying to have a righteousness of profession before men; and a righteousness of sanctification, both of heart and life, before God. Though we are to deny the righteousness of works, and to seek justification and acceptance elsewhere, otherwise we are of those that put confidence in the flesh, and are not the true circumcision: yet we are not to forsake the works of righteousness, but to maintain good works: This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works: these things are good and profitable unto men. They are to be maintained before men, in all the duties of righteousness, respecting them; and sobriety, respecting ourselves, and our deportment before them: they are to be maintained before God, in all the parts of holiness; and that both inter-

nal, in the exercise of holy graces; and external, in the performance of holy duties. Though we must deny this righteousness, in point of dependence; yet not in point of performance: though we need another righteousness to trust to, yet we need this to be possessed of; otherwise we would expose the faith of Christ to be evil spoken of. By our light shining before men, we must endeavour to make others confess, that we are illuminate with the beams of the Sun of righteousness.—A righteousness without us we need, to give us a title to heaven; and a righteousness within us, for sanctification of heart and way, we need, to give us a meetness for heaven. A right of merit we have in justification, by Christ's righteousness; a right of meetness we have in sanctification, by Christ's Spirit: which latter right may be the meaning of that word, Rev. xxii. 14; "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Or, it may be understood thus, that they may have evidence of their right, according to that word, John xv. 14; "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."

The third use of reprehension. This doctrine reproves many sorts of people, that may be said to confer with flesh and blood: and here, by the bye, you may examine whether or not you be chargeable with this sin, of conferring with flesh and blood: and if we search narrowly, I know few or none will be in case to exculpate themselves, or plead, Not guilty. There are those seven or eight sorts of people, that consult with flesh and blood.

The first sort of persons, that confer with flesh and blood, are those, who, not choosing the word of God for their rule, nor his Spirit for their guide, consult with tradition; yielding themselves to be ruled and conducted with human tradition, and ancient customs of their forefathers: This Paul acknowledges was his sin, before Christ was here revealed in him, ver. 14; "Being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers."—This is the sin of the Papists, who reject the scriptures, as sufficient to uphold their religion; no wonder, for it cannot stand upon that foundation; and therefore they build upon corrupt traditions, and study to uphold the same with fire and fagot.—Yea, this is the sin of ignorant Protestants, that shape their religion only in a conformity to their ancestors; they will be of their forefather's religion, and maintain the principles of their education, like those, Jer. xliv. 17. What is all this but a consulting with flesh and blood?

The second sort of persons, that confer with flesh and blood, are

those that consult with man in the matters of God; and that either in point of trust or fear.—Some consult with man in point of trust, while they put their trust in man, contrary to the command of God, Psal. cxlvi. 3; “Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help.” It is dangerous to repose our trust in man: “Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord,” Jer. xvii. 5. If we trust in armies or allies, parliaments or potentates, friends or favourites, we trust in lying words: “It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in princes,” Psal. cxviii. 9. “Trust ye not in a friend, put ye no confidence in a guide,” Micah vii. 5. And Jer. ix. 4; “Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother: for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with slanders.”—That time is come to pass: there is the ordinary character of the men that are the object of our false confidence, when we trust in men like ourselves: yea, “The best of them is as a brier,” saith the prophet Micah; and “the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge,” which will pierce all that lean to it. If we depend upon human powers, for the preservation of our church or state; or depend upon human policy, for the reformation of religion, we will find ourselves sadly disappointed: “It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in princes.” If we depend upon human laws, even for the security of our fortune; or upon our compliance with whatever human authority enjoins, for our freedom from outward troubles and trials, we trust but in man, and so confer with flesh and blood.—Again, some consult with man in point of fear: If either we trust in them, or be afraid of man that shall die, we consult with flesh and blood. It is an awful word to this purpose, Isa. li. 12, 13; “Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die; and of the son of man which shall be made as grass? And forgettest the LORD thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth?” Thus many dare not do their duty for fear of man: they dare not worship God in their families; they dare not abstain from swearing, drinking, tippling, or betake themselves to serious religion, for fear of being scoffed, and scorned, and persecuted; like the Jews, John xii. 42: that durst not profess Christ, for fear of being cast out of the synagogue. Thus some even of the godly, perhaps, dare not make public appearances for the cause and truths of the Lord Jesus, for fear of being exposed to the censures of the church, in a time when they are called to appear: but see what the Lord saith, in

such a case, to those that fear the reproaches, and revilings of men: "Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings. For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool." It is but the grass of the field that opposeth us; "All flesh is grass."—Let us not consult with flesh and blood.

The third sort of persons, that confer with flesh and blood, are these who consult with passion and resentment, so as to seek revenge upon every injury, real or conceived. Why, ask a man why he is so hot in the pursuit of revenge, against those that have wronged him: he will answer, How can flesh and blood bear this? If I put up with this wrong, they will wrong me again; therefore, nothing will serve me but their blood, or some suitable retaliation, for the injury done me; while yet we are commanded to pray for them that persecute us, and to love them that hate us. If we consult with flesh and blood, we will devour one another, Gal. v. 15. How often hath it happened, that those who have sought revenge have been the destruction of themselves and others, while both parties have been killed in the field; and while others, meditating revenge, they and their whole families have been undone by lawpleas: yea, many times consulting with flesh and blood, in matters of revenge, causeth men to be their own destruction. Saul killed himself, after he had long hunted David. And Judas, who was so cruel to his Master, sold himself to a halter, hanged himself, and his bowels gushed out. Proud flesh and blood is the cause of revenge; "Only by pride cometh contention," Proverbs xiii. 10, whereas humility would keep peace. Pliny writes of two ill-natured goats, that met both together, upon a narrow bridge, over a great stream: the bridge was so narrow, that the one could not pass by the other; and if they had striven, and fought it out, it had been present danger of drowning to them both: but at last one of them lying down, and becoming a bridge to the other, both were saved. Indeed, the example of that brute beast may tell us, it is better, to let persons trample upon us sometimes, than by squabbling and discord, to endanger the drowning and destroying of both ourselves and others. A man, meditating revenge, cannot go to God and say, as Christ hath taught him, Forgive us our sins, as we forgive them that trespass against us. If you say this petition with a heart full of revenge, you do nothing but imprecate a curse upon yourselves; and that God would deal with you, as you deal with your brother: if you pray not, then God's vengeance is

ready to be poured out, Jer. x. 25; if you do pray, then your prayer is a cart-rope, to pull down vengeance upon you. Why, say you, but should my neighbour abuse me at this rate? No, indeed: but because he hath broken one command, in wronging you, will you break another, in malicious revenge against him?—Why put this last question? That is doctrine for them that have no blood in their nails: I tell you minister, flesh and blood cannot endure the wrong I sustain. I tell you man, flesh and blood cannot enter into the kingdom of God: wherefore, if you come there, flesh and blood must be mortified, and not consulted with. Why, I would be just reckoned a fool, a sot, an idiot, if I should put up with such an affront; it would be a discredit. Why, the wisdom of God, by the mouth of Solomon, saith, It is the glory of a man to pass by an injury. And what saith your carnal wisdom, poor fool that you are, in opposition to God's wisdom? Let the world judge as they please, it is a greater credit for a man to overcome himself, and his revengeful affections, than to overcome his enemies, either at the bar or in the field. Well, say you, I shall forgive, but I cannot forget. Indeed, it is a wonder what one remarks in Cyprian, that though he had an excellent memory for all things else, yet he could never remember an injury; so ill was his memory on that score, which was his excellency. But we may observe as great a wonder, on the contrary, that men have such ill memories, that they forget all things else almost; yet they have such good memories that they will remember injuries never so long: yea, they will never forget them, but mind to resent and revenge them, after many years. Ask many a person concerning a sermon: Alas! I have the worst memory in the world, I am so forgetful; I would give any thing for a good memory: and yet, perhaps, they will mind an injury twenty years. Oh! if God so forgive our sins, as yet not to forget them, what would become of us!

The fourth sort, who confer with flesh and blood, are those that consult with numbers and multitudes, in the matters of God: they will be the religion that the most are of; they will follow such a principle and opinion, because the greatest multitude and number of great men, or good men do so: thus, like Roman votaries, they bind their faith to the belt of the church; to believe as the church believes. It is not, Thus saith the Lord, that binds them; that were to build upon a divine testimony: but, Thus saith the church, or thus saith an assembly of divines, or thus saith such and such a great number of men: the greatest multitude of the learned and eminent

say so and so; therefore we follow these. Thus they take the gospel upon trust, and have the faith of Christ with respect of persons. Can such a great number be all wrong, and such a small number only be right? No; wisdom must dwell with the greatest multitude, saith flesh and blood, without ever proving all things, and holding fast that which is good: or, like the noble Bereans, searching the scriptures, to see whether these things be so. Perhaps this is as prevailing an evil, as any in the present time, with respect to matters controverted in the Lord's house. It is a carnal argument for one to say, Lord help us, if all others be in the wrong but you; yet, why must we be singular? Yea, but when vice becomes general, singularity becomes a virtue: when error in judgment, or principle, becomes universal, singularity becomes a necessary duty. What though we be called nice, and proud, and singular, affecting a name above others? We must follow Christ, bearing his reproach. Though a man should happen to be on the right side of the question, by following the principles of those whom he takes to be the greatest multitude of learned and eminent men; yet his faith is but an human faith, while it is built but upon an human testimony: and a man's embracing only what he thinks the Rabbies of the day maintain, is too like that of the Pharisees, John vii. 48, 49; "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed." Even so will flesh and blood argue: The greatest body and number of the great and learned world, if not the whole tribe of those that are reckoned wise and learned, believe so and so: and it is to be supposed that it is but a pack of ignorant fools, that differ from them; and therefore we will believe as the greatest multitude of our church guides direct us; they know things of that nature better than we; and therefore we must trust that they are in the right: thus many times the blind lead the blind, and both fall into the ditch: for it may happen, that even those may be blind, whom neither themselves, nor others think to be so: so it was with the opinionative Pharisees, who said, "Are we blind also?" John ix. 40.

The fifth sort that confer with flesh and blood, are those who consult with human wisdom, in the matters of God, and whose fear towards God is taught by the wisdom of men: on which account the Lord threatens, Isa. xxix. 14; "The wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid." Many are taken not with the truth, as it is in Jesus, but with the wisdom of fine words, or the wisdom of human literature,

and carnal reasonings; both which the apostle cautions against, in the matters of religion; "And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words," Col. ii. 4. And the apostle's practice was the very reverse of this, 1 Cor. ii. 1, 2; "And I, brethren, when I come to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." Enticing words is the bait wherewith the credulous and simple sort of people are taken, as the apostle observes, Rom. xvi. 17, 18. The simple are they who are caught with the bait of the enticing words of men, who, like merchants, set off slight and corrupt wares with the finest words. Another caution is, Col. ii. 8; "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." The former is a bait for the simple, but here is a bait for the learned world, when human philosophy and natural reasonings, are set in opposition to the truth as it is in Jesus Christ.—People confer with flesh and blood when they are offended at the simplicity of Christ's doctrine, which is a stranger to the ornament of human wisdom, clothed only with the simple attire of a vulgar style, free from the flourish of lofty eloquence: thus Augustine, before his conversion, owns his contempt of the word, when he began to read it, because he looked upon the style of the scriptures as very mean, compared with the eloquence of Cicero, to which he had accustomed himself: hence it is said, "The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom;" i. e. The Jews who were accustomed to live under extraordinary dispensations, they would have nothing but miracles and prodigies from heaven; but the Greeks, the Gentiles, they sought for the depth of philosophy in the gospel; and when they missed that, they laughed it to scorn; as you may see in Paul's rencounter with the Epicurean philosophers and Stoics, Acts xvii. 18. Great reason then had the apostle to say as he doth, 1 Cor. ii. 4, 6, 7; "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power:" "Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory." Therefore, though the preaching of the gospel be, "to them that perish foolishness;" yet to them that "are saved it is the power of God;" For God hath "made foolish the wisdom of this world;" and "by the foolishness

of preaching to save them that believe." "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men;" so you see the apostle speaking at large, 1 Cor. i. 17,— 29. These that are only taken then, with a fine style of language, and turns of wit, and the flowers of rhetoric, without searching into the mysteries of the gospel, and seeking to have the gospel coming, not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, 1 Thess. i. 5. are carnal and conferring with flesh and blood.—But carnal wisdom, and carnal reason runs sometimes in another channel, while it not only, upon the one hand, represents the doctrine of the gospel as too mean, and therefore despises it; but, on the other hand, represents the mysteries of the gospel, as too high, and therefore discredits it. Thus the devil plays his game at both hands: sometimes suggesting that the doctrine of the gospel is too coarse and plain; at other times that it is too sublime and mysterious; such as, the mystery of the Trinity, the mystery of the incarnation of Christ, the mystery of the spiritual union between Christ and the believer, the mystery of free justification, without works, by the righteousness of another.—Hence a generation of athiests, not only call in question, but impudently deny the mysteries of religion, as incomprehensible and impossible, because consistent with their carnal reason, however agreeable to right reason.—But flesh and blood are ready to say of gospel-mysteries, as Nicodemus of the wonders of regeneration, How can these things be?—We might shew how many errors of the day, whether Arian, Socinian, Arminian, or Pelagian, derive their origin from hence; but I proceed.

The sixth sort of persons, who confer with flesh and blood, are those that consult with the world in the matters of religion.—Of this sort are these that follow the ill example, and study the carnal politics of the world, and join in therewith, especially when it tendeth to advance or secure their worldly interests. Thus many, in point of worldly example, rule their actions according to the will and example of their superiors; so Israel followed Jeroboam. And some, to please a great man, will make bold with light and conscience, directing them another way: or, if they suppose him to be a good man, that takes such and such a course, then the example of such will blind the eye of their conscience, and foster the argument of flesh and blood; for, why, saith flesh and blood, may

not I do as such a great man, or such a good man doth, that is wiser than I can pretend to be? Yea, but we are to be followers of none, but as they are followers of Christ; otherwise we consult only with flesh and blood.—Of this sort also are those, that give up themselves to the conduct of worldly policy, and study the carnal politics of the world, even in the matters of God, and conscience; and hence, will yield a blind obedience to the commandments of men, as Israel did to the statutes of Omri, Micah vi. 16. And Ephriam, who willingly walked after the commandment, Hos. v. 11. And perhaps all this, not for conscience sake, but for interest sake; why, saith flesh and blood, it is better to be wise than fool hardy, and expose ourselves to the fury of the government, civil or ecclesiastic: should we not take that course that will most contribute to obtain some worldly advantage, to secure our worldly interest, or to prevent worldly losses, crosses, and inconveniences; and why should we not obey the higher powers? Well, if it be duty you are enjoined; why not obey? We ought to obey them in the Lord, and for conscience sake: but though a man may be doing what is duty in this case; yet, if he be swayed thereto not from conscience, but from such carnal worldly motives, in matters that concern God and religion, then he but consults with flesh and blood; and his fear toward God is taught by the precepts of men. But, on the other hand, if you truly doubt of its being duty, before God, that you are called to, then, whatsoever is not faith is sin; and if thus it be sin, then, whether ye ought to obey God or man, judge ye? We consult with flesh and blood, if we yield obedience either to civil or ecclesiastical authority, any other way but in the Lord: or, if conscience be merely swayed with interest.—In a word, all sinful shifts to shun the cross, and carnal compliances to secure the world, is a consulting with flesh and blood: yea, when human authority is more regarded, for the sake of the world, than the authority of God and Christ.

The seventh sort of persons, that conferreth with flesh and blood are those that consult outward peace and tranquillity, in the matters of God, even though they have little regard to gospel-truth and piety: they love to be easy, and to live in peace, though it should be at the rate and expense of making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable,” James iii. 17.—First purity and truth, and then tranquillity and peace, is the due order of heavenly wisdom: and hence we are commanded to love the truth and peace; first the truth, and then the peace. Peace without truth is but a conspiracy

against the God of truth: therefore, in studying to follow peace with all men, we are to observe this rule, otherwise it cannot be an holy peace, according to what follows, And holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. The peace of a church can never be maintained with a blessing on it, if truth be not the foundation of that peace; for, it is a cursed peace that stands not upon that foundation.—But of this sort of people, that confer with flesh and blood, are those also that study their own outward peace and ease, at any rate; and hence will rather sin than suffer: therefore, when persecution comes, they fall away; flesh and blood cannot endure the cross of Christ. They are content to follow Christ in a fair day; but when foul weather, and a heavy cross comes, bye and bye, they are offended, Matt. xiii. 21. Our Lord hath fairly warned all his disciples what a tempest of trouble and trial, reproach and persecution will blow in their face, saying, If any man will be my disciple, let him take up his cross, and follow me; and therefore they are not to promise themselves peace in the world, and a constant flourishing state of outward prosperity; for he hath said, In the world ye shall have tribulation; and yet when tribulation comes, hereupon Christ is to many, a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence.—Thus they consult with flesh and blood, who project nothing but peace and ease in the way of duty and religion.

The eighth sort of persons, who confer with flesh and blood, are those that consult with sense and self in the matters of God, and of faith, and religion: that is, those who in religion put sense, as it were, in the room of faith, and self in the room of God.

Some put sense in the room of faith; and hence their faith is governed by sense and feeling: they do not believe the threatening, because they have the sense and feeling of smiling providences: they do not believe the promise, because they have the sense and feeling of adverse and frowning providences: outward providences is made the rule of their faith, not the word of God. Hence, saith flesh and blood, that measures the threatening by sense, “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:” not knowing, “That one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day:” and that “the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men,” 1 Pet. iii. 4,—8. But because sentence against these is not

speedily executed; "therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil," Eccl. viii. 11: Despising the riches of the goodness and forbearance of God, and his long-suffering; "not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance," Rom. ii. 4. And, on the other hand, hence, saith flesh and blood, that measures the promise by sense, Except I see signs and wonders I will not believe: and like Thomas, Except I see in his hand the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. Of this sort are those that distrust all present means of faith, and imagining that extraordinary discoveries, sticking upon outward sense, would make such impressions as would do the business, saying, as Luke xvi. 30; "If one went unto them from the dead, they will repent;" if they had oracles and miracles: if God did speak to them from heaven, they would believe. But Moses and the prophets are a sufficient ground of faith; If we do not believe them, neither would we believe, though one should rise from the dead. If we cannot believe the threatening till we feel the execution of it, it is like saying, We will not believe, till we be in hell; or, till it be in part executed on earth upon us; why, then our belief of it would not be founded on God's word, but our own sense and feeling; and so it would not be faith properly, but sense. If we will not believe the promise till we feel the accomplishment of it, this is like putting the plow before the oxen: a backward way of going to work: yea, it is impossible to believe this way; for sense is not faith: believing and feeling are different things. We may believe without feeling; but we cannot feel, without first believing.

Some, again, put self in the room of God, and the righteousness of God; and so evidently consult with flesh and blood, while we consult with our self, and here take a view both of natural or carnal self, and of spiritual and religious self.

When we gratify natural or carnal self, we do but consult with flesh and blood: when we cannot endure the mortification and self-denial, which Christ calls his disciples to, and by which they evidence themselves to be his disciples. We are called to mortify our members that are upon the earth; to renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh; to be denied to all the sinful pleasures of time, and carnal company in the world: this grates hard upon flesh and blood, which is ready to cry out with the Jews, This is a hard saying, who can bear it? Flesh and blood think it strange that God should plant desires in them, which he will not allow them to satisfy: but as these carnal desires of men, are of themselves, so it is

the natural craving of flesh and blood, that makes people desire to live as they list, and not as they ought: hence arises a secret dislike at the purity of the gospel. But beside this gross consultation with flesh and blood, in gratifying natural or carnal self.

When we gratify spiritual and religious self, we do but consult with flesh and blood. And there are two special ways wherein men gratify their religious self, namely, when they seek to establish their own credit before men, and when they seek to establish their own righteousness before God, in all their religious performances.

When they seek to establish their own credit before men, and to have a name, reputation, and applause, without having a single eye to the glory of God: these carnal ends and designs, in men's spiritual-like performances and religious duties, are a consulting with flesh and blood, while they love "the praise of men more than the praise of God," John xii. 43. This is a piece of self and carnal consultation, which, as it reigns over hypocrites, who yield themselves to the power and government of it; so it may prevail over true believers, who, many times, may find themselves under the tyranny and bondage of it. This is a thief that will steal into the minister's study and pulpit, to rob God of his glory there, that self may get what belongs to God. This is a robber that follows people from the chamber to the church, and spoils all their duties of hearing, praying, and praising; that, instead of giving praise to God, they may get praise to themselves:—Hence flesh and blood makes the man have no pleasure in duty, which hath brought in no applause to the man; and makes him take pleasure in that performance, that brings in most reputation and renown to the performer.—From this principle a minister will preach Christ out of envy, that he may be thought as evangelical as the best: and from this principle also, some people will be as throng about religious duties, as any can be; that they may be thought as religious as the best. Thus, for a pretence, the Pharisees made long prayers, and did many things to be seen of men. This is an attempt, as it were, to swear by the Lord, and swear by Malcham; to serve Christ and Belial, God and self both. See how our Lord speaks of this, Luke xvi. 15; "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God."—Thus, I say, men consult with flesh and blood, when, in the matters of God, their great design is to establish their own credit before men.

When they seek "to establish their own righteousness" before God, as the Jews did, Rom. x. 3. These two parts of self do effectually oppose all true religion: for, as in the former respect, those that establish their own credit put self in the room of God and his glory, which is the ultimate end; so, in the latter respect, those that establish their own righteousness, they put self in the room of Christ, and his righteousness, which is the mean to that end. And now, while we seek a righteousness in ourselves, and in our own duties, for justification and acceptance with God, we do, in effect, bring down Christ, and set up flesh and blood in his room, and consult therewith. Men naturally seek after a righteousness in themselves, or salvation by their own personal obedience, according to the tenor of the covenant of works. Man's righteousness was once in himself, when he remained in his primitive integrity: but, since the fall, the Lord has removed our righteousness from ourselves to Christ, who has become the Lord our righteousness; yet how few are prevailed upon to relinquish self and self-righteousness! Many seek to establish their own righteousness that will not take with the charge.

These do seek to establish their own righteousness who can hardly be brought, either doctrinally or practically, to own, That believers are wholly, and altogether, delivered from the law, as a covenant of works; but still are for seeking righteousness, as it were, by the works of the law, Rom. ix. 32.—This was the stumbling stone over which the Jewish nation stumbled and fell headlong into ruin.

Of this sort are those that only cover their legal sentiments with a gospel varnish, while they bring in faith and repentance, and the like, as proper conditions of the covenant of grace, in room of the perfect obedience required in the covenant of works; which is a razing of the foundation of the gospel, and an establishing of a righteousness in our own person, for justification before God.

Of this sort are these also that bring in gospel repentance, and the like, as necessary conditions and qualifications, in order to our justification before and acceptance with God. Again,

Of this sort are those who, in principle or practice, contend that it is the believer's duty to be influenced, in his obedience, either by the slavish fears of hell, or the legal hopes of heaven. To obey from a legal hope of heaven, as if we were to obtain heaven by our obedience, as it is contrary to the apostle's doctrine, 1 Thess. v. 9; where he says, That God hath appointed us "to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us," that, we should

live with him; so it affronts the obedience of Christ, whereby alone our title to heaven is secured. To obey from a slavish fear of hell, as if our obedience and duty would secure us therefrom, is like opposition to, and denial of the virtue of Christ's death, whereby alone our freedom from hell is secured.

Of this sort are those who bring the believer, upon every new sin, under a liability to everlasting death and damnation, which is the penalty of the covenant of works, and which, though his sins deserved, yet the righteousness of Christ imputed to him, not only secures him from it, but from ever being liable to it. Those who thus will make the believer liable to that law-sentence, because of his sin, must of consequence suppose him not liable because of his obedience; and so they make him to be justified by his obedience, and condemned by his disobedience to the law. * * * The believer is neither justified by his obedience to the law, nor condemned for his disobedience: but if he disobeys, his God and Father hath other ways of chastising him in a fatherly manner, according to Psal. lxxxix. 30,—33. In all these ways men do but establish their own righteousness, and so consult with flesh and blood.

In a word, Of this sort are all these that suspect the doctrine of the gospel as if it were an enemy to the law and holiness. Such is the propensity of nature towards the law, as a covenant of works, whenever awakened to any thoughtfulness about religion, that when the gospel declares that there is no justification by the deeds of the law; and that we are justified by faith, without the works of the law; and that righteousness is accounted to, or justification conferred upon them that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, Rom. iv. 4, 5: Why, when this evangelical doctrine is opened, presently the legal disposition of men suspect this gospel doctrine, and say of the publishers of it, as the Jews did of Paul, Acts xviii. 13; "This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law." Yea, not only contrary to the ceremonial law, but even to the moral law: for, must not men do as well as they can, in obedience to God's law; and then expect to be justified and accepted. Thus gospel doctrine comes to be challenged for Antinomianism; as if it allowed men a carnal liberty for sin, and freedom to break the law, or discouraged the practice of holiness; which is one of the greatest calumnies that can be raised against the gospel of Christ; and betrays dreadful ignorance of the gospel of grace: which shews plainly, that a man never lives unto God, in point of holiness, till he is dead to the law in

point of righteousness, Galatians ii. 9: nor ever bring forth fruit unto God, till he be dead to the law, and married to Christ, Rom. vii. 4. * But we need not think strange of this suspicion, nor the calumnies that issue from thence; for Christ Jesus, our glorious Lord himself, was obliged to defend himself against such calumnies as these; and therefore saith, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law:" I see, might he say, that is your thought, that is your suspicion; you suspect my doctrine as if it was an enemy to the law and to holiness; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. And the apostles had themselves to defend from this charge, Do we make void the law through faith? God forbid; we establish the law.—Thus you see in how many respects people may be said TO CONFER WITH FLESH AND BLOOD.

SERMON XIV.

Carnal Consultation Unfolded;

OR, THE GREAT EVIL OF BEING ACTUATED BY
CARNAL PRINCIPLES, IN THE MATTERS OF
GOD, EVINCED.

"Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood."

GALATIANS i. 6.

[SECOND SERMON ON THIS TEXT.]

HAVING finished what we intended upon the doctrinal part of the subject, by explaining what is to be understood by flesh and blood; confirmed the truth of the doctrine, by shewing that we are not to confer therewith in the matters of God; assigned the reasons therefore; entered upon the application of the subject, and have applied it in an use of information, caution, and reprehension: this doctrine may next be applied for dehortation and direction. And,

The dehortation is, O Sirs, consult not with flesh and blood.—

* This point of doctrine is very copiously handled, by our Author, in the Sermon entitled "Law-Death, Gospel-Life."

And for motives, consider the reasons of the doctrine, formerly assigned. Flesh and blood are unable to give advice in the matters of God; and as unable, so they are unwilling, and consequently unfit to consult with: yea, to consult with flesh and blood is dangerous; for, if we consult therewith, flesh and blood will hinder us from duty; flesh and blood will lead us to sin; flesh and blood will impede our suffering for Christ and his cause: yea, if we consult with flesh and blood, we will consult with the devil, as Saul did; and so to consult with flesh and blood, is to consult with our own ruin: yea, the dishonour of God, and the discredit of the gospel. But these I pass, having formerly insisted upon them.

But for direction in this matter, it may be asked, 1. What are we to consult with, if we may not consult with flesh and blood. 2. What are the most proper means, for preventing our conferring with flesh and blood.

I. Whom or what are we to consult with, if we may not consult with flesh and blood? How are we to consult? To this we reply; in the general, we ought to consult with God: with God, in Christ, by the Spirit; or, with the Father, in the Son, by the Holy Ghost: I mean, we ought under the conduct of the Spirit, to consult with God, as he is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that in all the duties of religion, and ordinances of his appointment, whether public or private; especially in prayer, saying, with David, Psalm cxliii. 10; "Thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness."—We ought to seek, that he would guide by his counsel, till he bring unto glory; and give his Spirit for our guide: for he hath given us the greatest encouragement so to do; "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Luke xi. 13. Every good gift cometh from him; and therefore, to whom should we go, for counsel and direction, but to the Father of lights, and to Christ, the wonderful counsellor: and to the Spirit of truth, who is promised to lead his people into all truth? If we do not acknowledge the Lord in all our ways, and consult with him, we will certainly consult with flesh and blood.

But more particularly, because God hath given us counsellors under him, we are to consult such things, or persons, as he allows us to consult with, in a subordination to himself. If we would know then, more particularly, how we are to consult with God, we may do it by consulting, 1. The oracles of God. 2. The children of God. 3. The messengers of God. 4. The glory of God.

5. The analogy of faith. 6. The conscience, God's deputy in our breast.

We are to consult the oracles of God; I mean, the scriptures of truth, in the matters of faith, in the matters of God and conscience; "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me," John v. 39. The scripture is the judge of controversy.—General assemblies and councils may err; so cannot the scripture: for, it is "a more sure word of prophecy," to which we do well to "take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place," etc., 2 Peter i. 19, 20, 21. We are therefore exhorted to let the word of God dwell in us rightly, in all wisdom; and to "receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save" our souls; being "doers of the word, and not hearers only," deceiving our own selves, James i. 21, 22. See how Timothy is commended for his consulting with the scripture, from his youth, 2 Timothy iii. 15, 16, 17. Thus we are to consult with God in the scripture.

We are to consult the children of God, the saints of God; especially such of them as are most tender, and live nearest unto God, and have most of the mind of God; and especially at such times when they and their God are in good terms together. Though we are not to consult with carnal friends, in the matters of God; nor yet to follow the carnal counsel of godly friends; yet, we do not consult with flesh and blood, when we follow the godly counsel of godly friends, and the spiritual advice of spiritual friends: the word encourages us to confer with such, Mal. iii. 16; "Then 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 feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name." And again, He that walketh with the wise shall be wise. It is good consulting with those, whom God is communicating his secrets unto; and now, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him," Psalm xxv. 14.

We are to consult the messengers of God; for so we are warranted to do, Mal. ii. 7; "The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts," 2 Chron. xx. 20; "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper." But what if the prophets be deceived? what if the minister be mistaken? Or, the priest's lips do not keep knowledge, or hold by the truth? Why, we are to receive nothing indeed from men, by an implicit faith without laying it to

the rule, Isaiah viii. 20 ; "To the law and to the testimony : if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." We must prove all things, and hold fast that which is good : and like the noble Bereans, search the scriptures daily whether these things be so, Acts xvii. 11. And if they were commended for not crediting the apostles themselves, that were immediately inspired from heaven, without comparing their doctrine with the scripture : how much more commendable is it for people to compare the doctrine of ordinary teachers with the word, and the analogy of faith ; Neglect in this particular makes many grossly ignorant ; and hence to be carried about with every wind of doctrine, not knowing whom to trust, or what to believe : They err, not knowing the scriptures.—Well, but those that know the scriptures better than we do, explain it so and so, in a different manner from others. It may be so ; but the scripture is the best explainer of itself : if we searched it dependently upon the Lord, light would arise out of darkness ; light that would darken and confound all such false glosses as the devil put upon it in his debating with Christ ; but our Lord Jesus did, with other scripture, refute the devil's corrupt glosses which he put upon the scriptures that he cited. However, I say, the priest's lips should preserve knowledge, and we should seek the law from his mouth : he ought to be a good counsellor, a faithful guide ; and we ought to consult and confer with him, in the matters of God ; and we ought to take the counsel that is agreeable to the word of God, and to be followers of such, as far as they are followers of Christ and no further.

We are to consult the glory of God in all. If we consult our own ends, it is but flesh and blood : but if, in all things, we consult the glory of God, as our ultimate end, then we consult not with flesh and blood. Whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we ought to do all to the glory of God : and in all the matters of God and conscience, it is always safest to consult what is most for advancing this great end, the glory of God in Christ ; the glory of his sovereign grace ; the glory of his infinite holiness and other perfections. Whatever tendeth to the dishonour of God, and of his name, comes of flesh and blood ; and of devilish carnal consultation. The world are set upon pleasing of flesh and blood, though it should be never so displeasing to God : they are set upon the exalting of self and the debasing of Christ ; the enthroning of self, and the dethroning of God. But, O Sirs, if the glory of God was consulted, how remote would people be from

consulting with flesh and blood? God's glory would lead people up to the hill of God: but flesh and blood takes them down the stream of the world. Why are so many carried down with the stream of the times? Why, they do not consult God's glory.

We are to consult the analogy of faith, and purest antiquities: "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls," Jer. vi. 16. And, indeed, in order to the right use of the oracles of God, or the unerring rule of the scripture, that rule is to be used in an agreeableness to the analogy of faith, i. e. There are some fundamental truths that are as first principles, founded upon the clearest testimony of the word; and whatever is not agreeable in principle or practice to that analogy of faith, we may be sure is not agreeable to the word of God, and consequently savours not of God, but of flesh and blood. If you ask, what these fundamental truths or first principles are? Why, they are such, with respect whereunto all, that know any thing experimentally about religion, are beyond doubt: such as, that there is a God: that he is an eternal, immutable, and independent Being; hath ordained all things, executing his decrees in the works of creation and providence: that he created man after his own image: that man fell from his happiness, and brought himself into a state of sin and misery: that God sent his Son to take on our nature, that therein he might suffer and satisfy divine justice, pay the price of redemption; and that there is no remedy for us but in him and by him; that to all the elect he applies this redemption, enlightening their minds in the knowledge of himself, subduing their wills; and that whom he thus regenerates and converts, he justifies, adopts, and sanctifies, giving them his Spirit to quicken them, and guide them from step to step, till he land them in glory, and they be eternally blessed in and with himself: and that all others, being left in their sins, shall be eternally damned, and destroyed with everlasting destruction, from the presence of God. These, and the like, are fundamental truths, founded upon the clearest and strongest grounds of scripture, and linked together inseparably: and whatever doctrine or principle runs in a direct opposition to any of these, savours not of God, but of flesh and blood. And therefore, we ought, I say, carefully to consult the analogy of faith.

We are to consult with the deputy of God in our breast; I mean, conscience, when it is under the government and regulation of the word and Spirit of God: for, if it be not thus regulate and

governed, I dare not say it is fit to be consulted with; nay, I am not for conscience being consulted with, and regarded in this matter, unless it be guided by the word and Spirit of God: for many may pretend they act according to the light of their conscience, while yet they are but under the conduct of a blind and misled conscience; and if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the ditch. Paul pretended conscience when a Pharisee; yea, when he was persecuting the church of Christ; He verily thought with himself, that he "ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth," Acts xxvi. 9. Yea, Christ hath told us, that many persecutors of his members will think, that they do God good service: and so, following a blind conscience, they may be but consulting with flesh and blood. But conscience, guided by the word and Spirit of God, is to be consulted with; and then is the man's walk a conscientious walk, living in all good conscience before God: and studying to have a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man: and herein should we exercise ourselves: for, conscience reaches all relative duties between magistrate and subject, minister and people, parent and child, master and servant: yea, all religious duties toward God and man; and so far as we cross the light of conscience, and go over the belly thereof, we do but consult with flesh and blood, and cast an affront upon God's deputy.

II. What are the most proper means for preventing our conferring with flesh and blood? I shall observe two things in the text, which were the notable means for preventing Paul's conferring with flesh and blood.—The first was his getting a saving revelation of Christ in him; He revealed his Son in me. The next was his speedy rejecting the counsel of flesh and blood; "Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood."

The first was, his getting a saving revelation of Christ in him; It pleased God "to reveal his Son in me." Here is the best antidote in the world against carnal consultation. It is true, some that have Christ savingly revealed in them, may yet consult too much with flesh and blood; for true believers may miscarry far, through unbelief: but surely, the more that Christ is revealed in a man, the less will he consult with flesh and blood, in the various ways condescended upon in the doctrinal part of the subject. Here two things may be enquired into, 1. What is the nature of this revelation of Christ; 2. What influence it hath to prevent and hinder our consulting with flesh and blood?

What is this revelation of Christ? For understanding this, you

would know, that the revelation of Christ is twofold, viz. : external and internal.

The external revelation of Christ by the word. The light of nature and reason cannot reveal Christ : that light hath its own use to guide us in the things of nature, but not in the things of God ; "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God," 1 Cor. ii. 14. It is by the word that Christ is revealed, and the gospel notified and made known to us ; and yet, where there is no more but this external revelation, there is no saving change. Therefore,

There is the eternal revelation of Christ, by the Spirit ; when Christ is not only revealed to us, but in us : He revealed his Son in me. Now, the question is, What is this internal, saving revelation of Christ ? I think the best way to understand it, is, under the conduct of the Spirit of God, to consider every word of this emphatic description of the matter ; He revealed his Son in me. And every word will afford a thought for opening up the nature of this saving work of divine illumination, in the knowledge of Christ : and, by the nature of this light wherein Paul was here enlightened, we may try, whether the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath ever shined into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of his glory, in the face of Jesus Christ : for,

It is a clear and manifest light : this is imported in the very word REVELATION ; He REVEALED his Son in me. Revelation speaks out clearness and evidence. As God, in creation, and making the world, began with light, saying, Let there be light, and there was light ; so in conversion, he begins with illumination : They that know thy name will put their trust in thee. None will believe till they clearly and plainly take up the object, though they cannot know it fully and perfectly : He that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, hath everlasting life, John vi. 40. The revelation of Christ doth effectually dispel the massy clouds of spiritual darkness and ignorance, that sits hard and heavy upon the eyes of the understanding : for by nature we are as ignorant and brutish, in the things of God, as the beasts that perish, till the Spirit be sent, as a Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of Christ, and then the man sees clearly ; not like the man that saw with his eyes, half open, men like trees walking ; but, in God's light, he sees light clearly, and gets some suitable uptakings of God's testimony concerning his Son, testifying, that he is a well-qualified Saviour, able to save to the uttermost : testi-

fyng that salvation is to be had no other way; That there is no other name given under heaven, whereby we can be saved; testifying that he is ready to save all comers; and that whoever will is welcome: yea, testifying that every one who hears of him, hath a warrant to come to him, and accept of him; and that it is not presumption in poor sinners to come. This revelation, I say, imports a clear light opening up the object of faith, and giving the soul some distant uptaking of God's testimony concerning Christ; for, whatsoever maketh manifest is light. Again,

It is a supernatural light; He revealed his SON in me: It pleased GOD to do it, saith Paul: this light was from above, from the Father of Lights: flesh and blood revealed not this to Paul; but his Father which is in heaven: this is given from heaven; To you it is given "to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven," to others it is not given, Matt. xiii. 11. Human parts and literature could not give Paul this insight and discerning; he wanted not his share of all the learning of that age: but the natural man, let him be never so learned, and have never such a stock of natural parts, and acquired literature, yet he receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned: the man must be θεοδιδακτου, taught of God. True saving light is, spiritual and supernatural: He that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh to the Son: and the Father revealeth the Son in a sovereign way and manner; not from any regard to some good qualifications in the sinner, but from his own sovereign good-will and pleasure: It pleased God to reveal his Son in me.

It is an evangelical light; He revealed his SON in me. HIS SON: it is not an absolute God, a God out of Christ, as he is revealed to the sinner by the law, as a covenant of works; but God, in his Son Jesus Christ, according to the gospel, which discovers him as a God in Christ reconciling the world to himself. He revealed his Son; the Son of his love, in whom he is well-pleased. His Son, who is the Sent and Sealed of the Father: his Son, who is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person: his Son, in whom it pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell; and in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead: and so it is a revelation of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; He revealed his Son in me. The law, as a covenant of life and works, doth not reveal Christ: when God reveals himself, according to that dispensation, he is a consuming fire out of Christ to the sinner; and at best is revealed as a commanding God, and a

wrathful threatening God: but when God reveals himself in his Son, then he is known as a promising God, a gracious God, a reconciled God. And this gospel revelation, this evangelical light, brings in peace and quiet to the whole soul: hence Christ says to his disciples, when it seems their views of God were more dark and legal, apprehending God in the law, without apprehending Christ in the gospel, John, xiv. 1; "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." And there he shews them, verse 6, that he is the way to the Father; and that no man cometh unto the Father but by him. Hence, lest any should imagine, that a view of the Son would lead them off from a view of the Father, he adds, verse 9, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father: and so, when the Father reveals his Son, he reveals himself in him. How sweet is it then to consider, that first the Father reveals the Son, according to John vi. 45; and then the Son reveals the Father, according to John i. 17, 18. Where, after it is said, that "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," it follows, "No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." And thus he revealed his Son in me; i. e. he shewed me his own glory, in the face of his Son. Here is the saving gospel-revelation.

It is an internal light; this is evident from the particle *IN*, He revealed his Son *IN* me: not only *to* me, by an external objective revelation; but *in* me, by an internal subjective revelation. It is not light without, presented to the bodily eye, shining outwardly, like that wherewith some poor ignorant creatures are deceived, who speak of their having seen about them, or in such a part of the room, or of the bed, a strange light, or a pleasant representation; while yet they may be brutishly ignorant of Christ: for, though I shall not disprove all external manifestation, as if God, in extraordinary cases, might not, by the ministry of angels, make some outward glorious appearance to his own; yet as Christ himself is not now to be seen any other way, than by the eye of faith, in the light of internal saving manifestation, by the Spirit, so these external manifestations are evidently delusive, especially where there is nothing but gross darkness and ignorance in the mind. It is not light without, I say, but light within; and that not enthusiastical, * * * but spiritual and scriptural, suitable to the objective revelation of Christ in the word and in the gospel; nor is it notional internal light, making impression upon the fancy, like a strong imagination: but it is light irradiating the whole

soul; "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. iv. 6. In our hearts; and hence cometh that heart melting, when this Sun of righteousness ariseth, with his warm beams. And hence also cometh heart-persuasion; a full persuasion of the truth of God's testimony concerning Christ; the man believes, and is sure; knoweth, and is persuaded upon the testimony of God. Hence also heart-approbation of Christ, and the device of salvation, in him and through him. O! says the soul, this way of salvation is worthy of all acceptation. Hence also heart-satisfaction: it is sweeter than honey or the honey-comb.—There is a savour in the name of Christ; it is as ointment poured forth: the heart and soul acquiesces in Christ, as fully answering all its necessities, and all its desires. Hence heart-purification: the more the man sees him, the more he is like him; for it is a begun heaven; and in heaven the saints are like him, for they see him as he is; so here in proportion to the sight.—And, in a word, hence heart-experience: there is a feeling of power and virtue in the revelation of Christ; a taste of his sweetness and excellency. Other knowledge and learning is merely speculative; and hence the pavement of hell is laid with the skulls of many great scholars, who have had their heads freighted with notions of God and Christ, but never their hearts irradiated with the light of life, so as to have experience of the soul-quickening and sin-killing efficacy of divine light. Thus it makes much heart-work, being internal light.

It is a close appropriating light; this I draw from the *me*, in the words; He revealed his Son in ME. The saving knowledge of Christ is appropriating; therefore Paul calls it, the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, Phillip. iii. 8. The devils have some knowledge of Christ; but cannot say he is their Saviour; Nebuchadnezzar could say, There is a God of power; but he is the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego: Darius calls him the God of Daniel. But this saving revelation comes close home to the man himself; and natively tends to the man's participation of the good that he seeth; if Christ be revealed savingly as a Prophet, it is for teaching me; if as a Priest, it is for atoning for me; if as a King, it is for conquering me to himself, and subduing my foes under him; if as a Saviour, it is for saving me. There is a particular application of Christ for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption to the man's self. It is not a general speculation, saying, Here is a full, suitable, glorious Saviour for sinners: but it is

like a marriage-application and appropriation, saying, Here is a match for me; I apprehend him and take him as given to me; He revealed his Son in me. According to the measure of illumination and faith, accordingly it comes to this particular me; He loved me, and gave himself for me.

It is a glorious and manifest light, as may be gathered from the whole context of this verse; which shews, at least four things that contribute to make it very glorious.

It is glorious in the spring and origin of it, viz. the good-will and pleasure of God; It pleased God to reveal his Son in me: even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. Proud flesh and blood may dispute the sovereignty of grace: but it is beyond dispute with all the children of grace, when in their right wits, that all saving blessings are owing to, and resolve in this origin, the good pleasure of God.

It is glorious in the method and manner of it; He revealed his Son in me: here is a glorious Trinity all at work; He, namely, the Father, did reveal his Son, by the Holy Ghost, in me. For this is the work of the Spirit, as a "Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:" Ephes. i. 17; given of the Father for this end, as that verse doth shew us: and promised of the Son for this end, John xv. 26; "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you, from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And again, John xvi. 14; "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." This is what is here made out in Paul: so it is also made out in all that are savingly illuminated in the knowledge of Christ; the Father reveals the Son by the Holy Ghost. This is the glory of saving light and knowledge: it is God the Father that enlightens the mind, in the knowledge of Christ, by the powerful irradiation and operation of the Spirit.

It is glorious in the end and design of it; "That I might PREACH him" among the Gentiles. It is true, indeed, every real Christian is not enlightened for this end, to preach Christ among the Gentiles, as Paul was: but all that have Christ revealed in them, are enlightened for some such glorious end, namely, that they may commend Christ unto the world, both by their words and by their walk: that they may serve and honour him on earth; and that they may praise and glorify him for ever in heaven; yea, that they may preach him forth unto others, according to their call and station: if not in a ministerial and authoritative way; yet in a practical and charitative way. And hence, all that are savingly enlightened,

according to the measure of illumination, in the knowledge of Christ, will find a sweet disposition to proclaim him in the world, and to do all that they can to recommend him to others, like the psalmist, Psalm li. 12, 13; "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free Spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee."

It is glorious in the immediate effect of it, as the words of the text declare; "IMMEDIATELY I conferred not with flesh and blood:" instantly a change is wrought upon the man, so soon as Christ is revealed in him; for, beholding the glory of the Lord, we are changed. It is fair owning and confession, that before this time he had been all along consulting with flesh and blood; and under the conduct of carnal reason, self, and self-righteousness: but now he is made to rejoice in Christ Jesus, and hath no confidence in the flesh. The conference with flesh and blood is so far broken up, as Christ is revealed: "Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood."—Thus much of the nature of this revelation of Christ. And now I am led to the other question, namely,

What influence this revelation of Christ hath upon preventing our consulting with flesh and blood? This question is of great moment, as being the hinge of the doctrine, stating the connection between the revelation of Christ, and not consulting with flesh and blood in the matters of God. For the doctrine may be thus framed.

That as there ought to be no consulting with flesh and blood, in divine matters; so the best preservative against this evil is, a saving internal revelation of Christ: Or thus, That freedom from carnal consultation, is a fruit of saving illumination.

Now, to give answer to this question, you would know, that the influence which the revelation of Christ hath, to prevent our consulting with flesh and blood, is twofold,

1. Moral and argumentative.
2. Physical and operative.

The saving revelation of Christ influenceth this not consulting with flesh and blood, in a moral and argumentative way, while it affords the most powerful arguments and strong persuasions, not to consult with flesh and blood. For the revelation of Christ natively leads the soul to reason, and argues thus: "O! hath God revealed his Son to me? Is it God himself that hath revealed Christ savingly to and in me? And shall I fight against this God, with these carnal weapons of flesh and blood? Did it please him to do so to me? Was it his good pleasure to reveal Christ? And shall I follow my

carnal pleasure, to the displeasure of this God? Hath he revealed such an one as his Son in me? And shall I hug self in me?—Flesh and blood hath not revealed Christ in me: and shall I follow the carnal conduct of flesh and blood?”

But more particularly, this moral influence it hath to prevent consulting with flesh and blood will further appear, if we consider, that when Christ is revealed, there is such a display made of the glory of God in him, as tendeth mightily to reason the man out of all his carnal reason. For instance,

The revelation of Christ displayeth the wisdom of God; for, In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge: yea, herein the man sees the manifold wisdom of God; and the wisdom of God in a mystery: and when this is discovered, surely it spoils all carnal politics; yea, and makes carnal wisdom to hide its face with blushing: yea, God makes foolish the wisdom of this world.

The revelation of Christ displays the power of God: for, he is “Christ the power of God,” as well as “the wisdom of God,” 1 Cor. i. 24. And now, says the enlightened soul, when Christ the wisdom of God, and the power of God is displayed, “O! what need I trust to the policy of men? Or, what need I fear the power of men, that are against me? Or trust in the power and policy of men, even when they seem to be for me? Here is almighty power that I am called to confide in; even the power of a God in Christ: Trust ye in the Lord forever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength: he is able to save to the uttermost.”

The revelation of Christ displays the holiness of God: and so this makes the unholiness and sinfulness of all carnal consultation to appear so: it shames the man, out of his carnal counsels. “O! is he such an infinitely holy God, that he hated sin as much as he loved his eternal Son? And shall I take any unholy course? Is this conferring with flesh and blood agreeable to the infinite holiness of God, in the face of Christ, which I have seen.”

The revelation of Christ displays the justice of God; both his vindictive justice, in punishing sin to the utmost, upon the Surety, when it was imputed to him; and retributive justice, in giving all good things to Christ and his seed, as a reward of his obedience to the death: and in all this God hath given the most noble indication; that, as he will not let sin go unpunished, wherever it is, whether it be in his own, by fatherly chastisement; or in others, by wrathful resentment: so he will not let gospel-obedience and

holiness, wherever it is, want its reward of grace in Christ; and therefore saith the enlightened soul, "Oh! this consulting with flesh and blood, is altogether disagreeable to that revelation of divine justice in Christ, whether vindictive or remunerative, that I have got. Shall I run upon the thick bosses of this buckler, and provoke him to anger? Or, shall I take a course, that hath nothing of that promise of the sweet reward of grace in Jesus? Alas! this I must not do."

The revelation of Christ displays the faithfulness and truth of God: for so he is the truth, as he hath sealed the truth of all the words of God, and all the promises of the covenant. "Now," saith the enlightened soul, "is God so true to me, and shall I be so false to him? Is his veracity engaged in the promise, and his promise sealed with the blood of Christ? And shall I not take his word for my support? And take his word, as a sufficient security for my protection, provision, and direction? And what need I take any sinful shift, by consulting with flesh and blood? Faithful is he that hath promised, saying 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,'" Heb. xiii. 5.

The revelation of Christ displays the mercy, grace, and love of God: for, when Christ is seen, then the soul sees God in Christ, reconciling the world to himself; and he is seen to be well-pleased in Christ: when he appears, then the "kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man, appeared," Titus iii. 4. And now, this kindness and love of God, is a most powerful argument, against the consulting with flesh and blood, "What!" saith the soul, under the discovery of this love, "Shall I thus requite the Lord? Is this my kindness to my friend? Shall I fight against infinite love? And spurn against the bowels of divine pity and compassion, yearning toward me? Shall he consult my welfare, and I consult his dishonour? O? tell it not in Gath. Shall I harbour his enemies within me, when in loving-kindness he hath revealed his Son in me? Shall I wear arms of flesh and blood to fight against him? And entertain such a devil of enmity against such a God of love?" These are the reasonings of faith: and this is the moral argumentative influence, that the revelation of Christ hath, for preventing carnal consultation.

The saving revelation of Christ hath a physical operative influence upon the prevention of this consultation with flesh and blood: for the revelation of Christ doth not only strenuously urge and press, but powerfully conquer and overcome the soul, so as to deliver it from consulting with flesh and blood: according to the

measure of the saving revelation of Christ, accordingly is the soul transformed; "Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image," 2 Cor. iii. 18. And surely, the more of God's image any hath, the less consulting with God's enemies.

Now, that this physical operative influence may the more evidently appear, consider a little, in some particulars, what it is that this internal revelation of Christ doth powerfully work and effectuate; for, the Spirit of power reveals Christ in the soul, and you will see how it cannot but natively work out all carnal consultation.

This revelation of Christ works faith; for they that know his name, cannot but put their trust in him: they that see the Son, they believe in him: He manifested forth his glory, and the disciples believed in him. And this faith purifies the heart; and consequently, according to the measure thereof, cleanseth from carnality: and now the man walks by faith, and so cannot walk by carnal reason, which is faith's greatest opposite and antipode. The revelation of Christ dashes unbelief quite out of countenance. Now, this unbelief is the main root of carnal consultation, the main cause of consulting with flesh and blood. This revelation of Christ then strikes at the root of the disease: for the man's eyes are opened to see the King in his beauty; and so the power of this fatal plague is checked.—While unbelief prevails, flesh and blood prevails, saying, Except I see the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I cannot believe: but whenever Christ appears, unbelief is put to the blush; and faith cries out, My Lord, and my God.

This revelation of Christ works love: they that see him cannot but love him, though they see him not with the bodily eye; Whom having not seen we love.—Yea, this revelation of Christ fills the soul with ardent love to Christ, and such as many waters cannot quench: and this love is strong as death; it is stronger than flesh and blood. The revelation of Christ breaks the power of natural enmity; The carnal mind is enmity against God. Paul goes to Damascus, full freighted with prejudice and enmity against Christ: but getting a sight of Christ, a revelation of Christ in him, the arms of rebellion dropped out of his hand; and he is made to cry out, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Yea, it will raise the affections to such a pitch, as will make Christ preferable to all the glory of heaven and earth; Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none in all the earth that I desire besides thee. A

saving sight of Christ doth lay him open to our view, as one in whom is all the fullness of the Godhead; and out of whose fullness we may receive grace for grace: and this breaks up the conference with flesh and blood; for true love will admit no rival, no competitor.

This revelation of Christ works humility: when the soul sees him, then, with Job, the man abhors himself, and repents in dust and in ashes. A sight of Christ doth sink the soul into the lowest pit of self-annihilation, self-abhorrence, and self-detestation: and when once the power of self-confidence is broken, inasmuch as the man hath no confidence in the flesh, in his own self-sufficiency, self-righteousness, self-wisdom, self-will, then one of the strongest holds of flesh and blood is broken down. The day of the revelation of Christ, is the day wherein self is sentenced to death, that Christ may live and reign by faith in the soul; like that, 2 Cor. i. 9; "We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God, which raiseth the dead:" intimating, that when, by whatever mean, self confidence is broken, then the man is brought to confidence in the Lord. Now, when by the revelation of Christ, self is abased, then consulting with flesh and blood, is turned to confidence in the Lord alone.

This revelation of Christ works zeal; true zeal for God and his glory, for Christ and his honour; and true zeal against every false way. Many have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge: but this revelation of Christ, bringing in the saving knowledge of him, makes zeal regular and right, being according to knowledge: and this zeal will lead the soul to do and suffer for Christ, notwithstanding all the arguments of flesh and blood to the contrary. Where there is no revelation of Christ, there is no true zeal for him: where faint revelation, faint zeal; where clear and full revelation, great zeal: and where great zeal takes place, flesh and blood are burnt in the flame thereof; for then the man takes joyfully the spoiling of his goods. None of these things move him; neither counts he his life dear unto himself, so that he may finish his course with joy. Hence,

This revelation of Christ works joy in the heart; In whom believing we rejoice, with joy unspeakable and full of glory. The revelation of Christ brings gladness into the soul; Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. O but a sight of Christ is a gladdening joyful sight; Abraham rejoiced to see my day afar off, and he saw it, and was glad. "I will see you again," saith Christ, John xvi. 22; "and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy

no man taketh from you." Now, this "joy of the Lord is your strength," Neh. viii. 10. And surely the more strong in the Lord that they are, the less confidence in flesh and blood will take place.—A sight of Christ is a heart-strengthening, grace-strengthening thing: and the stronger that the new man is, the weaker is the old man. The Dagon of flesh and blood falls before the Ark of God.

This revelation of Christ creates contempt of the world, and of all that is in the world; The lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life; and this prevents all consultation with flesh and blood. The internal revelation of Christ, will eclipse and darken the beauty and glory of the world, and all things therein. Love of the world makes men to consult with flesh and blood; and Demas-like to forsake Christ, even after a considerable time's profession of him openly: but now, when Christ appeareth, the glory of the world disappears; and the man is content to forsake all, and follow the Lamb; counting all but loss and dung for him; yea, selling his all to buy the pearl. The internal revelation of Christ doth effectually loose the heart from all lusts and idols: see Isaiah xlix. 20, and xlii. 1, compared.—It makes the man cry out with Ephraim, What have I any more to do with idols: As the stars vanish upon the appearance of the sun: so doth the world, and the lusts thereof, upon the rising of the Sun of righteousness, and our beholding thereof: and as it disengages from idols, so it effectually engages the heart to himself; yea, the man is content to engage ten thousand hearts, if he had them, to the Lord.—And thus he is delivered from consulting with flesh and blood.

In a word, The revelation of Christ doth effectually dispel the massy clouds of spiritual darkness and ignorance, that sit hard and heavy upon the eyes of our understanding, whereby a man is buried under the mud of flesh and blood, and prejudices against Christ are fomented. It is said of the Jews, If they had known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory: even so, if we knew Christ, we would not consult with his enemies, or confer with flesh and blood. When Christ is revealed, then the man is in the light, and sees about him: the revelation of Christ discovers the subtilty of Satan, the deceitfulness of the heart, and the sophistry of carnal reason; and dashes down Satan's strong holds; For Christ is manifested to destroy the works of the devil.—Thus you see what influence, both moral and physical, both argumentative and operative, this revelation of Christ hath, for preventing this sin of conferring with flesh and blood; and how necessary a saving sight of Christ is, for attaining this end.

The second mean was, his speedy rejecting the counsel of flesh and blood; "Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." And this immediately seems to import these four things.

That before this time the set and disposition of his heart was carnal: why, That which is born of the flesh is flesh. While he was in a state of unregeneracy, he was wholly under the conduct of flesh and blood: even when he was touching the righteousness of the law, blameless: and profiting in the Jew's religion above many his equals, in his own nation; yet for all that time, he now sees that he was but a proud Pharisee: yea, he put himself among the number of these that were "foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another," Titus iii. 3. When converting grace took hold of him, then he understood what a fool he had been before conversion; and how much he had been under the conduct of carnal sense and reason: but now when Christ was revealed in him, immediately he conferred not with flesh and blood, as he had always done before.

It imports, that, upon the revelation of Christ, a change was instantly wrought, from a carnal to a spiritual disposition; Beholding the glory of the Lord, he was changed immediately.—No sooner doth the sun shine upon a man, than light and heat is conveyed with the beams thereof: and thus, no sooner is Christ savingly revealed, than the soul is enlightened, warmed, transformed, and spiritualized: the new light and saving sight brings in a new quality and disposition, at the same time.—In order of nature, the revelation of Christ is first; but in order of time, no sooner is the revelation given, but the spiritual disposition is wrought; for, the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, doth enter into the man, and brings grace with him.

It imports, that this spiritual disposition was instantly put in exercise: "Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." He got not a new disposition to lie dormant, like a sleeping habit, without any vigour and activity: but whenever he got grace implanted, he stirred up the same to a holy exercise. True holiness is not only passive, in the principle and habit, but active; and that both internally, in the exercise of grace; and externally, in the performance of duty. The apostle was in haste, like David; in that holy haste, mentioned Psalm cxix. 60; "I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments;" thus did the apostle, upon his first illumination: "Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood."

It imports, that now he was in the straight way of duty; whereas formerly he was in a crooked way.—For the word here in the original *εὐθιέως*, rendered immediately, comes from another that signifies straight; and is so rendered, Matt. iii. 3; “Make his paths straight.” And the adverb of the same nature, is rendered straightway, Matt. iii. 16; He “went up straightway out of the water:” and now, compare the noun, which signifies straight, and the adverb, which signifies immediately or straightway; comparing them, I say, together, we may turn the adverb into the sense of the noun, and see this lesson in it, namely, that to do what is right straightway, is to take the straight way of doing it; whereas, to delay what is right, and what ought to be done instantly, and not to do it straightway, is so far a going out of the straight way. He that delays to do good, and to do what the Lord calls him to, and doth it not straightway, he is not walking in the straight way of duty: but Paul delayed not at this rate; “Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood;” he instantly and speedily rejected the counsel of flesh and blood. They that would not consult with flesh and blood, had need to take care that they do not stand to parley with the temptation: for, when a man enters upon speaking terms with carnal reason, and doth not immediately reject its solicitations, he is in danger to be drawn aside therewith. Eve parlied with the temptation; and so was overcome: so did Samson; and was conquered; so did David; and he was vanquished. Peter’s fall also discovered the danger of parlying with the temptation; he entered upon the consultation with flesh and blood, when he expressed his confidence in himself, saying, Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I: next he entered into the judgment-hall; and upon his being first attacked, flesh and blood suggested fears of death, from one step he goes on to another, in conferring with flesh and blood: and then he is overcome so far, as to sway with the time, in cursing and swearing, and denying his Master. The suggestions of carnal reason, of flesh and blood, are to be rejected at their first appearance: the cockatrice must be crushed in the shell; and the first motions of flesh and blood must be abhorred, otherwise danger is at hand: thus did Paul here; “Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.”—Thus much for the import of this, immediately.

Now I would offer some corollaries from the doctrine, in this complex view, That the revelation of Christ is the best preservative, against consulting with flesh and blood. Hence see,

Whence it is, that a world of mankind are living wholly under

the conduct of flesh and blood, and corrupt carnal reason; even because they are strangers to Christ: Christ was never revealed in them. Ignorance of Christ is at the root of all that profanity and ungodliness, that bears such a sway in the world: why doth the drunkard continue in his drunkenness? the whoremonger in his whoredom? the hypocrite in his hypocrisy? and every wicked man in his wickedness? And what is the reason of all the laxness, looseness, and lasciviousness of our day? Why, it is ignorance of Christ: Christ, in his person, and offices, hath never been revealed in them; they are destroyed for lack of knowledge; the god of this world hath blinded their eyes. As Christ said to the Sadducees, Ye err, not knowing the scriptures: so say I of such, they err in principle and practice, not knowing Christ, nor the glory of God in him; for, if they beheld his glory they would be changed.

See whence it is that people, who enjoy a clear gospel-revelation, may yet be under the conduct of flesh and blood; why, Christ is revealed to them, but not in them: while people have only the external objective revelation of Christ to them, without the internal subjective revelation of Christ in them, all their knowledge and common illumination, hath not so much power and virtue, as to deliver them from their carnal bias: the gospel comes to them in word only, not in power, and in the Holy Ghost. Hence many live under the gospel, and have attained a measure of the knowledge of Christ; and perhaps have, through the knowledge of Christ, escaped many pollutions of the world's lusts; and yet are never delivered from the power and dominion of this evil, of consulting with flesh and blood; carnal ease, carnal reason, carnal interest, carnal pleasure reigns over them, and leads all the faculties of their soul into subjection: why, Christ, who is revealed to them by the word, was never revealed in them by the Spirit: they rest satisfied without the saving knowledge of Christ.

See whence it is, that so many of the truly godly, do so much consult with flesh and blood, at this day; and give so much way to carnal reason, in the matters of God; it flows from this, even on the one hand, partial ignorance of Christ, or the small measure of the knowledge of him: though Christ be revealed in them, yet it is but very darkly; and perhaps the impression that the first revelation of Christ made upon them, much obliterated by their defection, in leaving their first love, and little growth in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: whereas growth therein, and clearer views of his glory, would advance

their mortification of flesh and blood. It flows also from this, on the other hand, their not taking Paul's course, in rejecting speedily the suggestions of flesh and blood; upon the back of the manifestation of Christ, immediately he rejects the conference with them. Whereas, if this course be not followed, though a man should get a saving manifestation of Christ, if upon the back of it, he stand parlying with the tempter, and dallying with the temptation, he is in danger, as in the case of Peter, who instantly after a manifestation, ran into the camp of flesh and blood; yea, the camp of Satan, Matt. xvi. 17, compared with verses 22, 23. Though manifestations are of a transforming nature; yet if a child of God give up his watch, and turn secure, after Christ is revealed to him and in him flesh and blood may trip up his heels very quickly.

Hence see, what is God's method of sanctifying an elect soul, and carrying on the work of sanctification in the believing soul: his method is first to reveal Christ, and so, by discovering his glory, to change and transform the soul: having convinced the man of his sin and misery, he then enlightens his mind in the knowledge of Christ: and this saving illumination carries the will and affections toward the Lord; and the man, being renewed after the image of God, is enabled, by the means of more and more illumination, in the knowledge of Christ, to die unto sin, to mortify the deeds of the body, and to live unto God; consulting with him, and not with flesh and blood.—Many, at this day, discover their ignorance of God's method of converting souls, and sanctifying of sinners, by magnifying the maxims of morality; and supposing, as if the mere preaching of moral duty was enough to make men holy: but to reveal Christ for that end, and harp upon this theme, they cannot think this is adapted for such a purpose. But my text and doctrine shews, that it is the revelation of Christ that works true sanctification: He revealed his Son in me: and then, "immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." The knowledge of the law will not do it; the knowledge of all moral systems will not do it: but the internal knowledge of Christ will effectuate it.

Hence see, the excellency and necessity of the knowledge of Christ, and of the gospel: when once Paul came to this knowledge, he counted all but loss and dung, in comparison of the excellency of it. And how necessary it is, is evident in this, that there is no sanctification without it; no freedom from carnal courses and consultations without it. The gospel is the revelation of Christ and

his righteousness; and, as such, it is the power of God to salvation; and the power of God to sanctification, Rom. i. 16, 17. It is the organical power of God unto salvation from sin; because therein is revealed the righteousness of God, even Christ, who is the Lord our righteousness, from faith to faith. No wonder that flesh and blood, or men that are in the flesh, think the gospel needless, and cannot endure that Christ should be the minister's habitual theme: for the revelation of Christ is the greatest enemy to, and the strongest battering-ram, to bring down the walls of it; "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ," 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. Flesh and blood opposes the gospel and the revelation of Christ, because when Christ is once revealed, immediately the man conferreth not with flesh and blood.

Hence see, how ignorantly men suspect the gospel of God's grace, as a nurse of licentiousness, and an enemy to the holiness required in the law: for quite the contrary is the truth. That ignorance of Christ, and his gospel, is the root of all carnality: and the knowledge of Christ, and the gospel, in a saving way, is the root upon which true holiness and piety doth grow. The preaching of Christ was Paul's work, as you see in the bosom of this text; He revealed "his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen:" he was revealed to me, that I might reveal him unto others; and might be the instrument of their conversion and sanctification thereby: as I myself was sanctified by this mean.—To preach duty, without Christ, is the way to make moralists: to preach duty, before Christ, and more than Christ, or in order to Christ, and to make men Christians, is the way to make them legalists; and to make the world think they can be religious without Christ, and that a good moral life will bring them to heaven: but true gospel preaching lies in preaching Christ in order to duty; it is to preach Christ in order to holiness, and so to preach duty in preaching Christ: for, till Christ be revealed in us, there is no true holiness, no freedom from consulting with flesh and blood.

Hence see what it is, that contributes to make a corrupt ministry in a church: why, Christ is not revealed in all that profess to preach him among the Gentiles; and therefore they never stand to consult with flesh and blood. What is it that qualifies a man for the ministerial work? Here is the best qualification, when Christ is revealed in him, for this end, that he "might preach him

among the heathen:" whom God sends, he thus qualifies, according to the measure of the gift of Christ. But many run without being sent; and, as the Athenians worshipped an unknown God, so they preach an unknown Christ; which is very melancholy work, and can have little success; yea, the want of the saving knowledge of Christ in such, lays a foundation for doctrinal error and practical error both, while they want the main preservative, against the consulting with flesh and blood. Some are wholly corrupt, because wholly destitute of the saving knowledge of Christ: and so the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of Christ's house cannot be long safe and free from corruption among their hands; especially if they, by reason of their gifts, parts, and authority in the church, bear a considerable sway therein. Others are tainted with corruption, though truly gracious, and carried down with the stream of carnal consultation, while any saving knowledge of Christ that they have is so small, that flesh and blood hath the ascendant; or, if their knowledge of Christ be great in one respect, yet it is defective in other respects. So Peter, for example, he was greatly enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, as the Son of the living God; a most glorious fundamental article of faith, Matt. xvi. 16; but yet his knowledge of Christ was defective, and exceeding dark concerning Christ as a sacrifice, a ransom: and hence he takes upon him, forsooth, to reprove Christ, when he spoke of his suffering at Jerusalem, verse 22, saying, "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee:" for which Christ calls him a devil, saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." Though he was extraordinarily enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, in one respect; yet he was extremely ignorant of Christ, in another respect: and hence in that matter savoured of flesh and blood, and consulted with carnal ease, and carnal reason, under color of zeal for his Master's safety and honour. Hence we will find such corruptions creeping into the church of Christ, both among good and bad: so that we may see personal credit, acting under the color of zeal for God. Men will pretend zeal for God's honour, the credit of the ministry, the honour of ordinances; and vent themselves hotly and tenaciously, under this view, while yet it is personal credit, reputation, and applause that is acting under that covert, and hiding under that mask.—Thus the disciples sought to be avenged on the place, that would not receive Christ, by fire from heaven: why, it seemed to be zeal for their Master's

honour that swayed them; but personal credit was their motive; and they were not under the conduct of God's Spirit, but of their own flesh and blood: therefore saith Christ, "Ye know not what manner of Spirit ye are of," Luke ix. 55. See also verse 59.

Hence see, what is the best antidote against corruption, both in ministers and people; and the best antidote against the power of corruption, in any particular person: it is even a transforming revelation of Christ. A day of power is necessary for this end, making a display of God's power and glory in the sanctuary.—When God builds up Zion, he will appear in his glory: and there is no hopes of getting evil amended, till the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of Christ, be poured out. And therefore we should be at no rest; yea, should give God no rest till he send the Spirit, Isaiah lxii. 6, 7. O cry with the psalmist, saying, O send forth thy light and thy truth.—And with Moses, I beseech thee shew me thy glory: that so, beholding the glory of the Lord, we may be changed into the same image: and that each of us, for our own part, may have it to say with Paul here, It pleased God "to reveal his Son in me;" and "IMMEDIATELY I CONFERRED NOT WITH FLESH AND BLOOD."

SERMON XVI.

Witnesses cited for God;

AND ALL THEIR WITNESSING WORK SUMMED UP
IN THIS ONE POINT, VIZ. THEIR ATTESTING
THAT HE IS GOD.*

“Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, that I am God.”

ISAIAH xliii. 12.

WE are professing to be a witnessing congregation. It would be our mercy if we all knew what we are called to bear witness unto. A communion-time is a special witnessing time, wherein the Lord calls his people to bear witness to his Being, and his being a God in Christ; to bear witness that he is a God of grace and mercy in Christ; to bear witness to his goodness in the doing and suffering of Christ for us: and wherein God is calling us forth to, and setting us upon this work to be his witnesses, saying, “Ye are my witnesses,” “that I am God.”

When the people of Israel were led aside into idolatry, and when strange gods, idols of the nations, were brought among them, assuming the throne of God, and claiming equal honour and homage with him, the great God condescends to call forth a number of his people to bear witness to his omnipotency, and to his being the only true God; to bear witness that he, and he only, is God; God the Saviour, in the 11th verse, “I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no Saviour.” Ver. 12, “I have declared, and have saved, and I have shewed, when there was no strange god among you.” Are you not, might the Lord say, eye and ear witnesses how I have declared myself, how I have saved you, how I have shewed my glory amongst you, even when there was no strange god among you? Therefore, “Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God.”

* This Sermon was preached immediately before the administration of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, at Dunfermline, July 17th, 1743. An address delivered at the conclusion of the solemnity is added.—We are told in the first edition of the sermon, that the Author’s notes were lost; and that it was gathered from the short-hand characters of some who wrote it down as it was delivered. On this account, probably, it is neither so complete, nor appears with such advantage as it would have done, had it been copied from the original.

In which words we have these three things observable, 1. The most honourable work that any can be called unto, viz. to be God's witnesses. 2. Here is the most honourable and glorious truth that any can be called to witness unto, namely, the truth of all truths, that GOD is GOD; that I am God. 3. Here is the most notable call and authority by which any can be called forth unto this honourable office. It is the great God that says it, and by his saying it he makes them his witnesses; Ye are my witnesses, that I am God.

Without taking up time further, the subject I proceed to speak upon, is the following doctrine, namely,

That the whole witnessing work of the Lord's people is summed up and comprehended in this one point, their being witnesses that he is God; or, their attesting that he is God. "YE ARE MY WITNESSES, SAITH THE LORD, THAT I AM GOD."

We have here God, the great God, who needs no testimony from any of his creatures, appealing to his people, and appealing to them three times in this and the following chapter, xliii. 10; "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen;" not only you that are my people, and you my servant the prophet, but also my righteous Servant, Jesus Christ, whom I have chosen; Jesus Christ, the chief of God's servants, is called here to bear witness to this truth, "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord; and my servant whom I have chosen."—Another time you have it mentioned in chap. xliv. 8; "Fear ye not, neither be afraid: have not I told thee from that time, and have declared it? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me?"—And here it is again said in the text a third time, "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God."

In the prosecuting of this subject, as the Lord shall be pleased to assist, we propose to do the following things.

I. To premise some things for clearing this doctrine.

II. To shew how it is, or by what means we are to be God's witnesses; and how his people are his witnesses.

III. We would speak a little of the import of these words, Ye are my witnesses, that I am God.

IV. We would demonstrate and prove that the whole witnessing work of the Lord's people is summed up and comprehended in this one, their witnessing that he is God.

V. Deduce some inferences for the application.

As to the first of these general heads. There are some things I would shortly premise for clearing of the doctrine. And,

We premise, That the great God has seen fit to call a court, to which he cites and summons all his people to bear testimony for him and his truth, and to witness particularly to this, "That he is God." God may be said to have called a court for this purpose, when he brings a people to be his professing people; when he forms them into a visible church, professing his name, and calls them his people, that were not his people, Rom. ix. 25.

We premise, That God is both Judge and Witness present in this court, to see who is there, to mark down all that appear to witness for him. He marks down who are his witnesses; and who refuse to witness for him that he is God: for, he is not a God afar off; he searcheth Jerusalem as with lighted candles.

I premise, That there are competitors with the great God, who do pretend unto that headship and sovereignty which belongs only to God. Not only the idols of the nations, that are nothing but dumb and dead idols, but also every thing that is set up in the room of God. Ever since the human race did depart from the living and true God, they have been setting up other Gods. The world is become their God; and the God of this world has always been assuming the throne of God; yea, every man is setting up himself for his God, ever since that original temptation prevailed, "Ye shall be as gods," Gen. iii. 5. And therefore I remark,

That the great question that is to be discussed at this witnessing court, is just this, Who is God? And whether God be God, or any other thing ought to be acknowledged as God? It comes, I say, to that question of Elijah, 1 Kings xviii. 21; "How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him." And if the Lord alone, if JEHOVAH only, be God, then it is he only that you are to be witnesses for: "Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God." Again,

I premise, That there are many, yea, the most part of the children of men, that refuse to be witnesses unto this matter, that he is God. They will not receive his testimony concerning himself that he only is God; and therefore they will not give their testimony unto him that he is God. Such is the degenerate state of mankind, so far are they departed from God, that they will not so much as acknowledge that he is God: they say, upon the matter, that the devil is God, for his works they do; that the world is their God, for they give it the throne of their hearts; or themselves their God, self having the throne. Whatever they do in shew, or in profession, or with their mouths, yet they practically

refuse to acknowledge that God is God, or to witness for him: they profess to know God, but in works to deny him.

I premise, That God is pleased to recover some of the race of Adam from this universal idolatry, from this natural atheism, and to shew his glory to them, so as that he can commit unto them the deciding of this question, Whether the Lord is God? He can entrust them with it, and employ them, and boast of them as his witnesses, saying, Ye are my witnesses, that I am God. It is true, there are some that are believers in Christ by profession, to whom Christ cannot commit the deciding of this question, and to whom he will not commit himself.—We read of some that believed in him, to whom he did not commit himself, because he knew all men; and needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man, John ii. 23, 24. Indeed, many profess to be believers in Christ, unto whom Christ will not commit the deciding of this question, Whether he is God or no? * * *
Again,

Another thing I premise, is this, That although the great God stands in no need of man's testimony, yet he is pleased for his own declarative glory, to adduce many witnesses to prove that he is God; and particularly some are select and special ones. There are two sorts of witnesses for God. There are passive and active witnesses. On the one hand, the passive witnesses are many; yea, they are innumerable. All the inanimate creatures, sun, moon, and stars, are witnesses that he is God: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handy-work," Psalm xix. 1. Sensitive and vegetative creatures they are witnesses to the being of God. Even heathens have observed, that God was to be seen in every herb of the field,

Præsentemque refert quælibet herba Deum.

God is to be seen in all the works of his hands. In the rational world some are passive witnesses for God, that yet are active witnesses against him. The devil and the wicked world are witnesses against God actively; and yet, whether they will or not, they are passive witnesses for him that he is God; for God gets glory upon them. The Lord is many times known by the judgment he executes on them, known in his power and justice, as it is said of Pharaoh; "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh: Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth," Rom. ix. 17. Their wickedness, and God's vengeance fol-

lowing it, witness that he is a true God in his threatenings. In this respect God has many, yea, innumerable passive witnesses in the rational world, that are yet active witnesses against him, and will not directly witness that he is God.—But there are some whom God creates for his glory, and forms for himself, whom he makes his willing subjects and his active witnesses, to bear witness directly in open court, as it were, that he is God: and of these he speaks here; Ye are my witnesses, that I am God. And therefore,

I premise, That God claims a special relation to those whom he thus calls forth to be his faithful and honest witnesses: Ye are MY witnesses, that I am God. This imports both his relation to them as their God; and their relation to him as his-witnesses: ye bear witness that I am the Lord your God. And, indeed, his calling them to be his witnesses makes them so. He makes them his witnesses, just by saying, Ye are so: Ye are my witnesses. As he calls them his people that were not his people; so he calls them to be his witnesses that were not his witnesses; for, he calls things that are not as though they were. He manifests forth his glory to them, and then says, Ye are my witnesses, that I am God.

I further premise, That the special work of God's people, after they are effectually called, is witnessing-work; and the matter of their testimony is God's being and attributes. All the duties they are called to, are but branches of this one duty of witnessing for God, and of knowing and acknowledging that he is God, and their God; for this leads them to worship and glorify him accordingly.

I premise, That there are special times wherein God calls forth his witnesses to attest that he is God; and particularly times wherein strange gods appear on the field: "I have declared and have saved, and I have shewed, when there was no strange god among you: therefore ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God." He calls them forth to it, when there are strangers to compete with him, and when he is denied in his Godhead; when he is denied in any of his truths, any of his names, any of his attributes and perfections, for then he is denied to be God. So his witnesses are called forth to attest, at such a time, that he is God.

The second thing I proposed was, To shew how and by what means they are his witnesses. How are they to witness for him? His people are called to do so,

By believing with the heart; for, "With the heart man believ-

eth unto righteousness," Rom. x. 10. Faith in God, as he is a God in Christ, is a notable way of witnessing, and it is the root of all right witnessing; namely, by setting to our seal that God is true. If we receive his testimony concerning himself, and concerning his Christ, then we witness that he is God, that he is the true God.—By unbelief we bear false witness against God, and make him a liar, and so deny him to be God; but by faith we set to our seal that God is true.

They are to witness also by confessing him with the mouth; "With the mouth confession is made unto salvation," Rom. x. 10. We believe with the heart, and then confess with the mouth. And thus here we are called to confess God to God himself, and then to the world; to acknowledge God first to himself, as the Psalmist, when he said, O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my God. We are to acknowledge God even unto God, and then to acknowledge him before the world; to confess and not to be ashamed of him: "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven: But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven," Matt. x. 32, 33.

We are to witness that he is God, by a holy practice, a holy life and conversation; by religious duties and attendance on God in ordinances: holiness in our family-religion; I will walk before my house, says the Psalmist, with a perfect heart: holiness in social religion, in keeping society with other of God's witnesses in Christian converse and communication: "Then 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 feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name," Mal. iii. 16. And holiness in the whole of our walk and conversation. We are to witness for God by a gospel-conversation, and such as shall adorn, before the world, the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

We are called to witness for God, sometimes even with our hand-writing; giving up our names, as it were, to the Lord, is sometimes called for, as a notable way of witnessing for God, and against the enemies of his glory. I remember a word you have in Isaiah xxx. 8; "Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come forever and ever." This is a way of witnessing that God sometimes calls to, Isaiah xlv. 4; after that promise, verse 3, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground;" etc., it

follows, verse 5, "One shall say, I am the Lord's: and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel."

We are called to be his witnesses sometimes by suffering for him and his truth; If any man will be my disciple, let him take up his cross and follow me. We are to follow Christ who endured the cross, and despised the shame; we are to follow him without the camp, bearing his reproach; and thus to witness for him by suffering: For, if we suffer with him, we shall be glorified together with him. When truth falls in the street, it is an honour to fall in with it; for they that will fall with it, shall rise with it. We are not to be ashamed, but to account it all joy, when we are brought to tribulation for the cause of Christ.

We are to witness by dying, as well as suffering; even by dying in the faith, and dying in the Lord; "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord," Rev. xiv. 13. "These all died in faith," Heb. xi. 13. This is one of the noblest ways of witnessing, especially if it be not only a dying in the faith, but dying *for* the faith, in a way of witnessing thereunto as the proto-martyr Stephen, the first witness for Christ in this manner. But,

We go on to the third thing, viz. To enquire into the import of this expression, Ye are my witnesses, that I am God.

As to this character, Ye are my witnesses, it takes in and imports these two things.

As if the Lord should say, Ye, in a particular manner, are these whom I have created for my glory, as it is, verse 7, "I have created him for my glory." So it is in verse 21, "This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise." Ye are my witnesses; I have separated you from the rest of the world. Observe the phraseology; he says, Ye are, in the present time; it is spoken of in the present tense; the present time, a fit time for witnessing. The interest of truth, and of my glory calls for it; and it is dangerous to neglect the opportunity of witnessing for God.

Ye are my witnesses; that is, Ye are upon my side, upon the side of truth, and for me. When others are against me, ye are my witnesses. Ye are my acquaintances; I know you, and you know me. Ye are my advocates on earth, as I am yours in heaven; ye plead my cause. Ye are my lovers, while the rest of the world are haters of me, and of all my people. Ye are my remembrancers, as it is said in the close of the chapter, Put me in remembrance. Ye

that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence; the words are, Ye that are his remembrancers. Ye that are my witnesses. Ye are my followers, when others forsake me. Ye are my confidants and trusty friends, whom I may credit to bear my testimony, and whom I can entrust with this question to be decided in open court by you, that I am God. But again,

As to their testimony, that I am God. O what a great matter is here, that they are called to attest! Ye are my witnesses, that I am God. O what is that! Who can tell what it is! They witness.—That he is God, that he is what he is. Ye are my witnesses, that I am what I am; my witnesses that I am a Spirit, infinite, eternal, unchangeable, in being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.—Ye are my witnesses, that I am Being itself; that I am wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and faithfulness itself.—O! ye are my witnesses, that I am God all-sufficient; that I am all in all. It is a bearing witness to all things relating to the Deity; that the Father is God, that the Son is God, that the Holy Ghost is God; and that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one God: O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.—Ye are my witnesses, that I am God; that I am a God in Christ, God the Saviour that is here spoken of; Besides me there is no Saviour.—Ye are my witnesses that I am God in Christ: that God is in Christ federally, for he has made a covenant with his Chosen; that he is in Christ fully; for in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead: that God is in Christ graciously, reconciling the world to himself: that God is in Christ gloriously, shewing forth all his glory, the glory of all his perfections: that God is in Christ immutably; for he says, I am the Lord, and change not: and that God is in Christ perpetually; because he declares, This is my rest, here will I stay. God dwells in Christ, and he is in Christ delightful and merciful; This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell: it pleased the Lord to bruise him. It pleased the Lord to raise him; it pleased the Lord to glorify him; 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.

Men and angels will never be able to tell what is imported in this, Ye are my witnesses, that I am God; that I am God, in the revelation that I have made of myself in the word. I need go no further than his name.—In this chapter, verse 1, “Now, thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob; and that formed thee, O Israel; Fear not:” for “I have called thee by thy name, thou art

mine.”—Ye are my witnesses, that I am God, in that sweet word that follows, “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 burned; neither shalt the flame kindle upon thee.” What think you of God in such a word as this?—Ye are my witnesses, that I am God, according to that word, verse 3, “For I am the Lord thy God, the holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.”—Again, that he is God, according to the revelation he makes of himself, (not to read all the chapter) verse 15, “I am the LORD, your holy One; the Creator of Israel, your King. Verse 16, “Thus saith the LORD, which maketh a way in the sea, and a path in the mighty waters;” verse 17, “Which bringeth forth the chariot and horse, the army and the power; they shall lie down together, they shall not rise: they are extinct, they are quenched as tow.” Verse 18, “Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old.” A God that says, verse 19, “Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.” Verse 20, “The beast of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls: because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen.” Verse 21, “This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise.” Is there not much of God to be seen here, Sirs?—Again, what think you of this account of God, as a promising and pardoning God in Christ, that you have, verse 15, after it is said, “Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities;” yet it follows, to the wonder of men and angels, “I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.” Verse 26, “Put me in remembrance:” put me in mind of this name of this word.—Ye are my witnesses, that I am God, in all the revelations that I have made of my name in the word. Ye are my witnesses, that I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar, and vowedst the vow: that I am the God that brought you to the foot of Mount Sinai, and discovered my awful terrible majesty to you: that I am a consuming fire out of Christ: that I am the God that brought you to Mount Zion, and shewed you the glory of my grace: that I am the God, that brought you out of the horrible pit and miry clay, and set your feet upon a rock. Many times ye are my witnesses, that I am the God that brought you to the wilderness, and there spake

comfortably to you. Witnesses, that I am JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU, the Lord your righteousness, that I am JEHOVAH-NISSI, the Lord your banner; that I am JEHOVAH-ROPHI, the Lord that healeth you; that I am JEHOVAH-JIREH, in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen, the Lord will provide.—Ye are my witnesses, that I am the Lord that heareth prayer; and that I am your God: that I am not only what I am, but that I am the Lord your God, according to my covenant, thy God, and the God of thy seed, if thou art a parent.—You are to be witnesses, that I am God, even thy God, and the God of thy seed; and to witness it by believing, and laying hold on my covenant, and the entail of it.—Ye are my witnesses, that I am God in all the providences that are past and do pass over your head, that I have fed you all your life long, and led and clothed you.—Ye are my witnesses that I am God, that I am Scotland's covenanted God, hitherto maintaining a banner for the truth, and a testimony for my name.—Ye are my witnesses, that I am the God of ordinances, that sometimes have met with you there; ye sat down under my shadow, and my fruit was sweet unto your taste. That I am God, a promising God, and a God that calls you to witness for me.—When at a communion-table, the sacramental feast, ye are to be witnesses, that I am an incarnate God: that I in Christ am become meat and drink for you; My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed: that I have finished the work of redemption, paid the price of it, and satisfied justice to the full; and that I am your Saviour, your Redeemer: that I am God in Christ, and so a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, and open to you. Ye are my witnesses, that I am God.—But, as I said, it is impossible to speak of all that is imported here, Ye are my witnesses, that I am God. I shall speak a word,

To the fourth thing I proposed, namely, To prove that the whole of the witnessing work of the Lord's people, is comprehended in this, their attesting and witnessing that he is God. This is plain, if you consider these four things:

That the sum of all duties lies in this witnessing that he is God. No duty whatsoever can be rightly performed, without carrying in it an acknowledgment of, or a witnessing to this, that he is God. This is the sum of all duties, when we own and acknowledge that God hath commanded so and so, and have a respect to all God's commandments; and do whatsoever he calls us to do upon the account of the authority of God. Then we are practically witnessing that he is God.

The sum of all sin lies in refusing to witness, that he is God. All sin is summarily comprehended in this refusal. It is a practical denying that he is God the Lawgiver, and a bearing false witness against God. Every transgression of the law of God, is a trampling upon God and his authority; a denying our obligation to God as our God: and is either an implicit or express denying that he is God. All sin is comprehended therein.

The sum of all truth we are called to witness for, is imported in this truth, that he is God. This is the radical and comprehensive truth, that hath all truths in the bosom of it. We will find every truth of God comprehended in this, that he is God. For example, The truth relating to the election of some from eternity is summed up in this, that God is the sovereign Elector. The truth relating to redemption is summed up in this, that he is the God Redeemer. The truth relating to our reconciliation with God, is summed up in this, That he is God in Christ, reconciling the world to himself. The whole truth relating to justification is comprehended in this, that he is the Lord our righteousness, God the justifier, that set forth Christ to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness in the remission of sin, that he may be just, and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus. The truth relating to sanctification is summed up in this, that he is God, the holy God, the sanctifier.—All truths, every truth points at this truth, that he is God; and all the truths of the Bible. and of the glorious gospel centre in this. This is the substance and sum, and the all of them; that he is God: Ye are my witnesses, that I am God.

The sum of all the errors that we are called to witness against, lies in this, not witnessing that he is God. I say, they are all summed up in this, the denying that he is God. Every error is a denying of God; and the refusing to witness against any error, is a refusing to witness that he is God: for every error in principle or practice is so far a denying of God; therefore it is said of some, They profess to know God, but in works do deny him, while they live an ungodly life. Evil works are just a denying of God; or, a denying that he is God. And all errors in principle are also summed up in this, a denying of God, or saying, with the fool in his heart, There is no God. And to embrace any error is just to deny God, or some attribute of God, and some part of his name. To deny the truth of God, is to deny the God of truth. The root and spring of every error, is the same with that of the error of the Sadducees, to whom Christ said, Ye err, not knowing the scrip-

tures, nor the power of God. Every error flows from ignorance of God and the word of God. As the first command requires us to know God, so it forbids to deny God; intimating, that a not knowing God, is a denying him. * * * Legalists deny and darken the gospel of God. Corruption in doctrine is a denying and destroying the truth and veracity of God; corruption in worship is a denying the purity and spirituality of God; corruption in discipline is a denying and discrediting the power and authority of God as a just correcter of the disorders of his family; corruption in government is a denying the dominion and sovereignty of God in Zion, as the great Ruler in Jacob, to the ends of the earth. Christ's name and his government are put together, Isa. ix. 6; "The government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." To pretend to give him his name, and yet to rob him of his government in the visible church, is to separate what God hath joined, and hath made inseparable, without sacrilege. It is true, some now-a-days make discipline and government small things, as being neither essential nor fundamental; but, if they be not so in themselves, yet they are so much so, by virtue of the authority of God stamped upon them, that contempt thereof, when once made known and attained, is as damnable as is ignorance of, and error in fundamentals. In a word, every error, every corruption in the church of God, is a denying of some letter of God's name; denying of some word of God, and of some thing whereby he makes himself known: and not to witness against the errors and corruptions of the time wherein we live, it is just a refusing to witness for God, or to be witnesses that he is God.—The witnessing work then of God's people, is summed up and comprehended in this, their being witnesses that he is God.

We proceed now to make some application. Is it so, That this is the sum of our witnessing-work, to witness that he is God, to what he is, and what he hath revealed himself to be in his word? Then, by way of information,

Hence, see what an honourable work it is to be called forth to witness for God. It is a great honour and dignity. And whatever truth of God we are called to witness for, it can be no trifle you are employed about, for it is summed up in this, and carries in it a testimony, that he is: and God reckons himself concerned; his very being is concerned in any faithful testimony that is lifted up for his truth and name. And they that are his witnesses have

this testimony; he intimates it to themselves: therefore he says, Ye are my witnesses, that I am God.

Hence see the nature of sin, it is a saying, upon the matter, There is no God. Every sin and error strikes at God, and denies that he is God. The malignity of sinners is such, they witness against God. They are so far atheists, that will not join in, but rather oppose any faithful witnessing work; they will not bear witness that he is God. The devil hath so far blinded the world, as to make them practically assert, there is no God, or none but the god of this world who hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, so as they will not set to their seal, that God is true, or that God is God. Oh! how degenerate is the human race from the happy state in which they were first created, that there is none to bear witness for their Creator among them! None saying in earnest, Where is God my Maker? till by a new creation, he form a number of witnesses for himself, to shew forth his praise, and create them for his glory, Isa. xliii. 7.

Hence see the nature of faith: it is a giving God a testimonial, as it were; a bearing witness that he is what he is: it is a witnessing that he is what he hath said in the word he is; it is a witnessing what he is in himself, what he is in Christ, what he is in the Spirit, what he is to Zion, what he is to them in the promise. Your faith of the law, is a believing that he is a terrible God out of Christ; that in the law, he is a God dishonoured by our sin, a God threatening wrath and damnation against all sinners, and against you in particular. Your faith of the gospel, is a believing what he is in Christ, a God reconciled in Christ, a God calling you to be reconciled to him, because he is pacified in Christ toward you for all that you have done; a God calling you to return to him, and come in to his bosom, and to be his witnesses, first before God and conscience, that he is a God of peace: and then before the world, by confessing him with your mouth, and making your light shine before men, that they seeing your good works may glorify God: therefore,

Hence see the duty of the day. Why, what are we called to? Sirs, when the enemies are saying; Where is your God? When there comes to be, as it were, competitors with our God, the God of glory, when there are, as it were, different-like Gods upon the field; when their God leads them one way, and our God leads us another way: Why, Sirs, how shall it be known whether the God whom we worship is God? Why, it seems to be brought to a question, as it was once, 1 Kings xviii. 21, "How long halt ye

between two opinions? If the LORD be God, follow him: But if Baal, then follow him." * * *

But I would apply the subject next in a word by way of examination. Try and examine yourselves whether or not you be fit for witnessing openly at a communion-table that he is God: whether you be of those who are true, faithful, honest witnesses for him, of whom he says, Ye are my witnesses, that I am God.—How shall we know it? Why, if you be true witnesses for him, then,

Ye are witnesses against yourselves. You are surely witnesses against your own sins; witnesses before God, and content to be witnesses before the world, with reference to your sinfulness. O you are witnesses that your heart and nature are corrupt; "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," Jer. xvii. 9: that your hearts are hearts full of wickedness; that your hearts are a hell full of devils, full of all abominations; that you are sinners, the chief of sinners. If you are witnesses for God, you are witnesses against yourselves, and all your sins and abominations; and are loathing yourselves.

If ye are true witnesses for God, then you will be ready to witness for every truth of God, and against every error, and every thing that tends to dishonour the name of God, that tends to the denying that he is God, in whatever revelation he makes of his name; "Thou holdest fast my name," Rev. ii. 13.

If ye are witnesses that he is God, your faith and hope will rest and depend on this leading truth, this truth of all truths, this centre of all truths, That he is God: I say, your faith will terminate and rest upon God the object of faith. He is not the object of fancy or imagination. The object of faith is God, the eternal, invisible God in Christ. It is but a delusive faith, if your faith does not terminate on God. The object of faith is not Christ: but as he is the Christ of God; and it looks to God in Christ. It is not the word; but as it is the word of God. It is not the promise; but as it is the promise of God: Yea and Amen in Christ, to the glory of God. The object of faith is not the blood of Christ; but as it is the blood of God. It is not the righteousness of Christ; but as it is the righteousness of God.—Faith looks to God and rests upon a God. The faith and hope of a true believer terminates and rests itself upon this, That he is God; hope for eternal life in him, and from him, because he is God, 1 John v. 11. And if God be giving you his testimony this day, saying, Ye are my witnesses, then you will be giving him your testimonial, saying, He is God; he is EMMANUEL, God with us; JEHOVAH our righteousness.

Your witnessing for God will be a practical witnessing; endeavouring in your conversation, by your profession, by your walk, to glorify God before the world; "Let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ;" "stand fast in one Spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel," Phil. i. 27.

In a word, if you be witnesses for God, you will have the witness in you: for, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself," 1 John v. 10.—You have the Spirit of Christ in you; and, indeed, when the Spirit of Christ is in a man, it leads him to a dependence on Christ without him; on Christ in a word, and upon a God in Christ, and to witness that he is God.

I shall now close with a word of exhortation. O Sirs, let these that never were witnesses to this great truth, that God is God, that the Lord is God, O let them bear witness that he is God, by coming to Christ, and believing in him; this is to witness, and the leading way of witnessing, that he is God; 1 John iii. 23, "This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ." John vi. 40, "This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life." And God gives testimony for Christ that he is God, the true God and eternal life, 1 John v. 11; "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." As we are called this day to believe in the Son of God, so to believe in God and to attest that God is true; for, he that hath received God's testimony concerning Christ, hath set to his seal that God is true.

Why, Sirs, if you believe in Jesus, that is the great thing that you are called to, in order to witness for God. If you believe in him, then you witness that God is a God of infinite wisdom, providing well for his glory and your good; that he is a God of infinite power, that supported Christ under the load of infinite wrath, enabling him to satisfy infinite justice, and enabling him to destroy principalities and powers, and conquer death: you will witness that God is a God of infinite holiness, and see the glory thereof in Christ's obedience unto death: by believing you will see that he is a God of infinite justice; that he is the infinitely just God. This is to be seen most clearly in the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus offered up of himself to the satisfaction of justice. O how justice shone in the man Christ Jesus, when upon the cross, between heaven and earth, deserted of God, the heavens darkened above him, and the earth trembling below him, and he bearing the whole load of wrath, that would have pressed us down for ever and ever! O you will be witnesses that he is an infinitely just

God. And also, by believing you will witness he is the true and faithful God: you will set your seal to his truth, believing that he is truth, and that his truth is sealed by the blood of Christ; and that he, in and by death, satisfied all the threatenings of the law, and sealed all the promises of the gospel at once, and so cleared the truth of God in both. In a word, you will witness that God is a merciful God, by believing in Christ. You will be a witness to the grace of God, as it reigns through the righteousness of Christ unto eternal life.

Well, by believing in Christ, you come to bear witness to this truth, that he is God; that he is a God of all glorious attributes and perfections: By rejecting Christ, not coming to him, not believing in him, you deny God; you make God a liar, instead of being a God of truth; you make God an impotent Deity, instead of being a God of power; you make him a cruel tyrant instead of being a God of mercy: you deny all the attributes of God by refusing to come to our Lord Jesus Christ. You deny God, and you make yourself God. O Sirs, by unbelief you make God no God, you make him nothing at all; and you make yourselves God and yourselves all: but by faith in Jesus you will make yourselves nothing, and God to be what he is, All and in all; and unto you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

Tell me O sinner, can you receive the record of God concerning his name? What is his name? He hath a name bearing relation to you; his name is the Lord thy God. He not only says in the covenant of promise, what he will be, I will be thy God; but he tells what he is to you, I am the Lord thy God. O Sirs, are you able to receive this? May the Lord make you able this day to receive it on the bare word of God, and to drink in his name, that he is God, and that he is the Lord THY God? Why does he say, I am the Lord THY God? Why yours? Even because he is EMMANUEL, God with us, God with you, God with me; your God, and my God. How may we give God such a name, or define him after this manner, by his relation thus to us? Because we may define him, as he defines himself. Here we are called to witness what he calls himself. He calls himself, the Lord our God; I am the Lord thy God. Here the whole of his name, bearing a relation both to himself and us; what he is in himself, and what he is to us, I am the Lord thy God. The Lord JEHOVAH has mixed our name and his together. This is the good news of the glorious gospel, that comes to us, I am the Lord thy God. We dare not give him another name, because, as he thus defines himself, so the SON of his

bosom defines him this way; when he ascended to heaven, he said, I ascend to my Father, and your Father; to my God and your God. He left his Father's name behind him: he is my Father and your Father; he is my God and your God: I am the Lord thy God. It is true, it is a general name, that belongs indefinitely to all the visible church; but if it be received by the hearing of faith, then it infers a peculiar privilege, and your special interest in him as your God forever and ever. Can you therefore receive this name of God, when he says, I am the Lord thy God? God knows best how to define himself. It is the worse for us, that he mixes our name in with his; that he puts us in his name, as he is a God in Christ, saying, I am the Lord thy God? His name is, I AM THAT I AM; and as sure as I am, so sure I am thy God. I am that I am, says it; I am thy God, and thy assurance of faith; and of my being thy God, is to be founded on the faith of my being what I am. As sure as I am God, thou may depend upon it, I am the Lord thy God.

O Sirs, can you take this name? Can you take it to you upon his bare word? Whatever you are, whatever wicked nature you have, and however greatly you have offended this God, yet when he comes to you this day, with this name and proclamation, I am the Lord thy God; I am JEHOVAH thy God, because I am EMMANUEL: he is EMMANUEL, God with us; a God for us, and God to us; a God to save us, a God to bless us, a God to be a heaven and happiness to us through all eternity. O! what think you of this name of God? Tell me, O sinner, can you gladly receive this name? Know you the Lord, that he is God? Not we, but he us made: not we, but he us saves; not we, but he is God. Ye shall be as gods, was the first temptation: the power of it is never broken till you can say, Not we, but he is God.—It is he that is God: and he is the Lord our God.

O poor soul, are you gladly welcoming this name of God? Are you receiving and embracing it? Are you glad that God comes to you with such a name as this? Do you receive and believe, and take it on God's word, that he is God; and being God he is the Lord, thy God? Why, then he is taking you for his witnesses this day; and he is glad to have your testimonial, in the midst of this atheistical age, when so many are denying God, making themselves and other things to be gods. He is calling you to witness for his name: and if you answer his call, he is marking your name in Zion; for, when God writes the people, and counts that this man and that man was born there, he records their names as witnesses for him, saying, YE ARE MY WITNESSES—THAT I AM GOD.

ADDRESS,

AT THE

CONCLUSION OF THE SOLEMNITY.

SEEING, on this occasion, you have been hearing what God says to you in these words, Ye are my witnesses, that I am God; it may, perhaps, be enquired, 1. Why, and upon what considerations are you to witness? 2. In what cases? 3. How, and by what means, and in what manner may you do so?

Why, and upon what considerations are we to witness?

The command of God should sway us. We are commanded to "hold fast the form of sound words," 1 Tim. i. 13; to "hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering," Heb. iv. 14, and x. 23. "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord," 2 Tim. i. 8.

You are called to this duty, because it is for the honour of God that we be witnesses for him that he is God; and for the honour of the Lord Jesus, that we be witnesses that he is God. God has sworn that to him every knee shall bow. By honest and faithful witnessing for him, we bow and pay homage to him.

You are called to this, because it is commendable. God not only commands, but commends this duty.—We find the church of Pergamos commended for this; "Thou holdest fast my name," Rev. ii. 13. It was commendable in Paul the apostle, that he had fought the good fight of faith. It was commendable in John, that he confessed the Lord Jesus, and denied not, but confessed that he was the Christ. It was commendable in the church, that they overcame "by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony," Rev. xii. 11.

You are called to it by the example of our Lord Jesus, who witnessed a good confession before Pontius Pilate: when he asked, Art thou a King? "Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a King. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth," John xviii. 37. Again,

You are called to it from the consideration of the great advantage of being his witnesses. O Sirs, what great advantage is it? Why, I shall inform you of several advantages thereof.

They who are true witnesses for God and his truth, they are

honoured of God. As they are not ashamed of him, so he is not ashamed of them. The witnesses spoken of, Heb. xi. it is said of them, "God is not ashamed to be called their God," verse 16. He owns them; and is not this an advantage?

He strengthens them. This he did to Paul, 2 Tim. iv. 16, "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me:" verse 17, "Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me." And is it not a great advantage likewise to his witnesses,

That he puts honour on them, even before the world? Indeed, they are the most hated persons in the world; Ye shall be hated of all men, for my name's sake. Yet the Lord orders matters so, that they are honoured, not only by God, but sometimes by men also: "Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed," 1 Sam. ii. 30. Again,

The advantage of it lies in this, that they came to be preserved in a day of temptation; "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation," Rev. iii. 10. How comes it that many have fallen in the hour of temptation at this day? They have been careless about, and have not made conscience to keep the word of Christ's patience. Again,

It is an advantage to these that are his witnesses, that they are admitted to communion with him. The more they witness and declare with the apostle, 1 John i. 1, that which they have seen and heard, and handled of the word of life, the more communion they have with God; for, after this witnessing for the Lord, it immediately follows, verse 3, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." Again,

Honest witnessing for Christ gives evidence that they are of God. We read, 1 John iv. 3, Whosoever confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, [together with all the truths that relate to, depend upon, and are necessarily connected with it, he gives evidence that he] is of God.

It is a great advantage to ourselves, and I may add, to others also; for, honest witnessing may excite others to embrace the truth, and confirm other witnesses therein: whereas, not confessing the truth may be stumbling to the godly, as Peter's dissimulation was, Gal. i. 13.

Another reason or motive for encouraging to witness for God, is the great disadvantages of not witnessing. I will tell you three disadvantages of not witnessing for the Lord.

It tends to bring on temporal judgments. We read, Jer. ix. 9,

after it was said, verse 3, "They are not valiant for the truth upon the earth;" it is added, "Shall I not visit them for these things? saith the Lord: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?" * * *

Another disadvantage is, that as it brings on temporal, so it likewise procures spiritual judgments. When people receive not the truth in love, God justly gives them up to strong delusions to believe a lie. 2 Thess. ii. 11.—And these who do not witness, they expose themselves to apostasy. God may justly leave them to partial apostasy, as Peter, who denied his master; or total apostasy, as the Jews, who were rejected from being the people of God.—Another spiritual judgment is, that it brings sore anguish and terror to the consciences of those who refuse to witness for God in their day. There is a word, 1 Tim. vi. 10, "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." In the margin it is, They have been SEDUCED from the faith. People who have voluntarily erred from the faith, or been seduced by the snares of the times from it, they have pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

Refusing to witness God brings eternal wrath, the wrath of God upon them who continue to reject the testimony of God, and to neglect to witness that he is God, in the several relations he makes of himself to them in his word: "If any man draw back," says God, "my soul shall have no pleasure in him," Heb. x. 38. "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways," Prov. xiv. 14. "If we deny him, he also will deny us," 2 Tim. ii. 12. "As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity," Psal. cxxv. 5. For "whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels," Mark viii. 38. "No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God," Luke ix. 62. "Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven," Matt. x. 33.

Another motive may be drawn from Christ's appearing for us in heaven; therefore we should be his witnesses on earth. Thus the apostle argues, Heb. iv. 14; "Seeing then that we have a great High-priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." See Heb. x. 23, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering."

Another motive is, the preciousness of the truths of God we are called to witness for. What is the great thing you are called to witness? Even to witness that he is God; to be witnesses for the truth of God, and the God of truth. Every truth is a part of God's name, and of his word; and though there are many precious truths, yet they are all one thing in God. Our God cannot be divided; therefore, by your refusing to witness for God, in any of the precious truths which he has held out to us in his word, you refuse to witness that he is God, in this revelation of his name. Every truth is a precious pearl of the Mediator's crown.

2dly, In what cases are we to witness? I shall only say a few words upon it. We are sometimes called to witness publicly, if God should call us before courts, as in the case of the apostles: and sometimes more privately, perhaps to particular persons, to give every one a reason of the hope that is in you: sometimes called in company to defend the truths of God, and his name, when blasphemed by others; and to do what we can to witness for God. We should endeavour every one to have that for our motto, the apostle speaks of himself, I am set for the defence of the gospel. This should be our motto also, I am set for the defence of the name of my God, because we are his witnesses that he is God.

There are two or three cases especially wherein we are called to witness for him; namely,

In times of defection. The neglect of this was complained of, Jer. ix. 3; "They were not valiant for the truth upon the earth." When many of Christ's disciples "went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?" John vi. 66, 67. When their defections from the truth, or any strange errors or strange apostasies, or strange principles taking place, then we are called to cleave to, and witness for the truth.

In times of doubting. John bore witness to the truth, when the Jews were not come the length of denying, but in a suspense about the coming of Christ, John iii. 33. When some of the Lord's children may be in a doubt about such and such a truth, then we are called to witness. Our Lord Jesus says, John v. 33, that John did bear witness of him; and it was in a time wherein many were doubting about the truth. We ought to witness for the truth, in order to the fortifying of the faith of those who are ready to waver.

We are called to witness, particularly in a day of temptations. When there are many snares and temptations to lead us away from

the Lord and from the truth, then it is a time of testifying and witnessing. Our Lord gives us an example of this: whenever Peter began to tempt him to that which was contrary to his name and truth, and glorious design, he says, "Get thee behind me, Satan." Why, can a saint be a Satan? Yes, When he tempts to any strange principles, and to desert the cause of God; then we may say to a saint, "Get thee behind me, Satan." In times of temptation we are called to witness for him.

In times of persecution; when the cause of Christ is a persecuted cause. You see Peter and John, Acts iv. 8,—12, when they were imprisoned and persecuted, how readily did they witness at such a time before their judges? They told them, The stone which the builders rejected, the same "is become the head of the corner," verse 11. When prohibited to preach in Christ's name, they undauntedly reply, Whether we should obey God or man, judge ye, verses 19, 20.

In a word, a time when there is few to witness, is a time we are called particularly to witness for God. I remember the apostle Paul, 2 Tim. i. 15, after he had said, verse 8, "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord;" then he adds, "All they which are in Asia be turned away from me:" therefore do not ye turn away; Be not ashamed of the testimony of our Lord.

3dly, The next question was to enquire, How or by what means, and in what manner are we to be his witnesses?

By what means. Would you be honest witnesses for God, and witnesses that he is God? I would advise you,

To seek the lively faith, the rooted faith of all the truths ye are called to witness for; "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, Rom. x. 10. And as David said, Psalm cxvi. 10, "I believed, therefore have I spoken:" so let this be your way, I believe therefore I speak; I believe, and therefore witness. I close by faith with such a truth, and therefore witness. Seek to be established in the faith of the truth.

Call in the help of the Spirit of God, and make use of the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, for the defence of the truth; for, it is your safety to cleave to the cause of Christ, whatever be the consequence: let no event be your rule, but let the word of God be your rule. Remember the warning Christ hath given you, John xvi. 1, and 33, verses compared, "These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended." Christ warns them of what they might expect, that so they might not be

discouraged when trials for the truth come on. Well, These things have I spoken to you: "They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." And verse 33, "These things have I spoken to you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation."

Again, call in the help of the Spirit of God for furniture in order to witnessing-work. What furniture? Even that which is treasured up in the glorious Head. In Christ, the Head, it is to be forthcoming for the members. Christ is anointed with the Spirit above measure; "I have put my Spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles," Isa. xlii. 1. It is that Spirit that is promised to all his members, Isa. lix. 21, "My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD from henceforth and for ever."—Therefore, O Sirs, call in the help of the Spirit. And,

As to the manner of witnessing. O Sirs, seek of the Lord to help you to witness in the following manner; namely, to witness for the truth fully; for all truth, without minching any of the truths of God: and to witness freely; without constraint or compulsion; to witness openly, without shame; and to witness boldly, without fear; and with holy courage: also to witness meekly, without pride. It is said, 1 Peter iii. 15, that we are to give "a reason of the hope" within us "with meekness and fear;" in the margin it is, with meekness and REVERENCE. O Sirs, have a regard and reverence to all these truths ye are called to witness for. Remember, God is in every truth; and when you witness for any truth you witness for God.—Therefore, see that your witnessing be done with reverence and godly fear. Reverence every truth of God. See that your witnessing be a humble witnessing. O! how humbly did John the Baptist witness for Christ, when he witnessed for him, and said, He that cometh after me is preferred before me, the lachet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose! We ought to witness uprightly, without hypocrisy; and out of love to Christ, and zeal for the glory of God, the credit of his cause, and the honour of his truth. Again, O! endeavour to witness joyfully; be not disheartened whatever trials you come under: witness, I say, joyfully. It is said, Acts v. 41, They rejoiced "that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name." We ought also to witness innocently, without giving offence, or

any just occasion to any to speak evil of us. Again, you should witness constantly, without fainting or giving over, till we have finished our testimony; He that endureth to the end, shall be saved. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life. Lastly, O endeavour to witness dependently, without confidence in the flesh; depending on the grace of Christ. Though you had as much grace as the apostle Peter, yet, if you depend not on the Lord Jesus, you will, with Peter, deny him; Before the cock crow twice thou shalt deny me thrice. Endeavour to witness dependently on the grace that is in Jesus Christ; otherwise, who knows how soon you may, as it were, be thrown on your back with the temptations of the times, that have carried so many down the stream. Think what a trial the poor apostles were brought unto when Jesus was crucified and laid in the grave; there was no appearance of him as yet, and they began to say, "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel," Luke xxiv. 21.—They began thus to doubt of the great truth they seemed to be established in; this fundamental truth. * * *

SERMON XVII.

The Comer's Conflict;

OR, THE BEGINNER'S BATTLE WITH THE DEVIL,
WHEN ESSAYING TO COME TO CHRIST BY
FAITH.*

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

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," verse 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,

1. An excellent duty; that is, "coming" to Christ.
2. An eminent trial and heavy dispensation that befel the comer, "The devil threw him down and tare him."
3. The time and juncture when this heavy trial and great affliction befel him, namely, "As he was yet a coming."

Hence we may observe the following particulars.

The best course that any can take for relief from whatever afflicts them, is to come to Jesus the Saviour.

* 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. The second was preached on the Monday, after the administration of that ordinance.—

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.

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, and came out of him: and 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.

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, 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, verse 35. And now they looked upon the matter as hopeless, though yet Christ was on his way to save her.

The method we would lay down, for the further prosecuting this subject, through divine 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 distress grow before their deliverance come.

IV. Make some application of the whole.

1. We are to speak a little of coming to Christ.—There are only two things I would observe here.

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 besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not," verse 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.

This coming to Christ imports a putting the work in his hand; "Master, I beseech thee to 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 shall 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."

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.

They may not only be thrown down, but torn by the way; "The devil threw him down and TAKE 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.

God's design in it is to shew his wisdom and power.

It is to manifest his wisdom: how can he 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.

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.

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 word to his people is, "Come unto me," Matt. 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 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.

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."

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 distress growing on their hand, before the deliverance come, which yet will certainly come? Hence we may see,

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.

Hence see the reason of all the melancholy 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.

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,

The convictions of the Spirit are BEFORE a man comes to Christ, and tend as a severe "school-master to bring us unto 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.

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 of hope by the law ; but the devil would shut the door of hope by the gospel.

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.

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 sight 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 flesh and blood, but against principalities, against 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 ye 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, To these who never yet came to Christ for help and salvation, and to these who are coming in obedience to his call.

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 by the name of Jesus. Put the work in his hand; put your soul in his hand. Bring him here to me, says 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 disease 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.

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, "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage to 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.

SERMON XVIII.

The Comer's Conflict;

OR, THE BEGINNER'S BATTLE WITH THE DEVIL,
WHEN ESSAYING TO COME TO CHRIST BY
FAITH. *

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

[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.

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.

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 anything 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 scarcely, 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 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 suggests 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.

Do not give over your duties for these blasphemous thoughts and suggestions; for, though 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 seldomer, or shorter.

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 would as leave Satan should inject such thoughts as to hear you name them.

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," verses 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 Psalm ciii., cv., cxvi., cxlv., ect.: 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 the 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, 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 was 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,” Matt. 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.

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,

Future business will distract us before it come. 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.

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.

Lay up your treasure in heaven ; “ For, where your treasure is, there will your heart be also,” Matt. 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.

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.

Make prayer your delight, not your talk. Children are subject to look off their books, because they delight not in them; but when they are playing, they 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, "unto God my exceeding joy," Psalm 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,

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, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord," 1 Cor. xv. 58. 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.

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," etc. "They that wait upon 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, though you were at a hundred times more. There is always some thing savoury and sweet in religion that accompanies the sedulous exercise thereof. Though the soul had 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 lie in a droll, an idle word, etc. Can such a little sin endanger the soul? Now, to guard you against this temptation, consider,

That the first sin that 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. Uzzah's putting his hand to the ark, and touching it when it tottered, 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.

Consider the nature of every sin; though some are comparatively small, and others greater; that is, by reason of several aggravations, more heinous 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 misshapen 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.

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,” says 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 he 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 ecstasy. Nay, we must conceive of God as above all words, above all knowledge, and above all admiration; above all love, and above all ecstasy. But let us go to scripture, God knows best how to speak of himself, and we may safely acquiesce in scripture expressions, Neh. ix. 5, “Thy glorious name which is exalted above all blessings and 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.

We are to conceive of God in Christ; Christ must be eyed in our addresses 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, first,

As a King. God hath exalted Christ far above all heavens; and hath commanded us to do all in his name; “And whatsoever ye 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; Amphilochius took this course for prevailing with the emperor to recall 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 Amphilochius, bishop of Iconium, who, after he had done obeisance 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 Amphilochius, saying, "Know you not that I have made Arcadius, my son, emperor with me?" Upon which Amphilochius 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,

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 has 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 rendition 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 muddy 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 noxious vapours of an hollow cavern, or the smoke of some sulphurous volcano; 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.

God will have him get the honour also of his prophetic 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 teach 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, insomuch, 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 everything 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, 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.

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.

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, Ahithophel, and Judas; and sure you would not desire to be like them.

Consider the contrary practice of the saints in scripture, both in the 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 a way 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.

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 shorten it. Therefore,

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.

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.

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."

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, 17, 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, in 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 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 ty-

rants, yea, wolves and tigers 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 rhubarb 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 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 tare 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 this blessed name I pray you, go not by him. I beg it is 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 bowels 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 anything 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.

SERMON XIX.

Faith's Plea upon God's Covenant.

"Have respect unto the covenant."—

PSALM lxxiv. 20.

THE Psalmist, in pleading for the church and people of God, and that he would appear for them against their enemies, uses several arguments; particularly, in the close of the preceding verse, there is something he pleads God may not FORGET, "Forget not the congregation of thy poor forever;" and the rather he uses this argument, because he had said, Psalm ix. 18, "The needy shall not alway be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish forever." There is in this verse, something he pleads, that God may REMEMBER and have regard unto, "Have respect unto the covenant." Thou hast brought us into covenant with thee, might he say, and though we are unworthy to be respected, yet "Have respect unto the covenant" of promise. When God delivers his people it is in remembrance of his covenant, Lev. xxiv. 42, Then will I remember my covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will remember the land. We cannot expect he will remember us, till he remember his covenant: hence, therefore, we propose to illustrate the following truth.

That one of faith's strong pleas with God is, that he would have respect to the covenant.

If we would deal with God for mercy, or plead with him for favor, or look to him for any good at this occasion, let us expect it only upon this ground, the respect he hath to the covenant, and plead upon this argument.

The method we would observe, as the Lord shall assist, for briefly handling this subject shall be the following.

- I. Shew what covenant it is he will have a respect to.
- II. What it is for God to have a respect to the covenant.
- III. What it is in the covenant he hath a respect to.
- IV. What kind of a respect he hath to it.

V. Why he hath respect to it, and so why it is a suitable plea and argument in suing for mercy.

VI. Make some application of the whole.

I. We are then first to shew what covenant it is he will have a respect to. The covenant here spoken of is the covenant of grace and promise, made in Christ Jesus before the world began, and published in the gospel to sinners. Jer. xxxii. 39, 40, "And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. Ezek. xxxvi. 26, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh," etc. Jer. xxxi. 33, "But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inwards parts, and write it in their hearts, and I will be their God; and they shall be my people." See also Psalm lxxxix. throughout. It is called a covenant of grace; because grace is the beginning and the end, the foundation and the top-stone of it: even grace reigning through righteousness—It is called a covenant of mercy; because therein mercy to the miserable is proclaimed through justice-satisfying blood; for there mercy and truth meet together; and all the sure mercies of David are conveyed thereby.—It is called a covenant of peace and reconciliation; because it both treats of peace with God, and makes it good.—It is called a covenant of promise: because it lies in promises with reference to us; and these to be accomplished upon the condition already fulfilled in Christ's obedience and satisfaction; and because therein the faithfulness of God is pledged, for making out all the promises to believers, the children of promise.—It is called a covenant of salt; because it is an incorruptible word, An everlasting covenant, well-ordered in all things and sure.—In a word, it is a covenant of help to poor, helpless sinners, saying, I have laid help upon One that is mighty. O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help.—It is a covenant of pardon to the guilty, saying, I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and I will not remember thy sins.—It is a covenant of supply to the needy, saying, When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I, the Lord, will hear them, I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them.—It is

a covenant of gifts, wherein grace and glory are freely given; and, in the dispensation thereof, God says, Come, and take all freely; Himself, his Christ, his Spirit, and all, Rev. xxii. 17. Isa. lv. 1.

II. We are to shew what it is for God to have respect to the covenant.

God hath respect to the covenant when he remembers it, and so remembers us, as in that forecited, Lev. xxvi. 42, "I will remember my covenant," and then "I will remember the land." Thus Psalm cxi. 6, "He hath given meat unto them that fear him." Why, he will ever be mindful of his covenant. If he come to give us meat to feed our souls at this occasion, the ground will be, he will be mindful of his covenant, mindful of his promise.

God may be said to have respect to his covenant, when he regards it. He hath no reason to have respect or regard to us, but he sees reason to have regard to his covenant; he puts honour upon it, for reasons that I shall afterwards shew, only I will say here, his honour is engaged therein, therefore he says, "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips," Psalm lxxxix. 34. He hath more regard to it than he hath to heaven and earth; for he says, Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. He hath such a regard to it, that he will never break it, but ever keep it.

He hath respect to his covenant, when he establishes it. And when we pray, that he would have respect to the covenant, we not only pray he would remember the covenant, and regard the covenant, but establish the covenant betwixt him and us, as he said to Abraham, Gen. xvii. 7, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee." He shews respect to the covenant, when he makes the covenant take hold of us, and makes us take hold of the covenant; for then he makes us put respect upon him, and upon his covenant.

He hath respect to the covenant, when he performs the covenant promises, according to Mic. vii. 20, "Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old:" and he does this, when he acts according to the covenant, or according to the mercy that made the promise, and the truth that is engaged to make out the promise.

In short, the sum of this prayer, as it concerns the import of the word RESPECT, "Have respect unto the covenant," is, "Lord, remember the covenant, and so remember me; Lord, have regard

to the covenant, and let me be remembered on this ground, when there is no other reason why I should be regarded; Lord, establish thy covenant with me, and so put honour upon thy name manifested in that covenant, and do to me according to the promise of the covenant. Cause me to hope in thy word, and then remember the word on which thou hast caused me to hope; and deal with me, not according to my sin and desert, but according to thy covenant and mercy in Christ Jesus."

III. We are next to shew what it is in the covenant he hath a respect to, or that we should plead upon.

Have respect to the covenant; that is, to the Mediator of the covenant. Though thou owest no respect to me, yet doest thou not owe respect, and hast thou not a great respect to the Mediator of the covenant, to Christ, whom thou hast given to be a covenant of the people? For his sake let me be pitied; have respect to the relation he bears to the covenant, even to him who is the Mediator, Testator, Witness, Messenger, Surety, and All of the covenant. Have respect to his offices, and let him get the glory of his saving offices. It is a strong plea to plead with God upon the respect he bears to Christ, God will not win over such a plea as that. He will own his regard and respect to Christ, who paid such respect to him, and finished the work he gave him to do.

Have respect to the covenant, by having respect to the blood of the covenant. The blood of Christ, that is represented in the sacrament of the supper, it is the blood of the covenant, called, The new testament in his blood: because all the promises are sealed therewith, and so Yea and Amen in Christ: this is the condition of the new covenant. The covenant of works had only the active obedience of the first Adam for its condition; but the condition of the covenant of grace properly, is both the active and passive obedience of the second Adam, his doing and dying. Now, Lord, have respect to that blood that sealed the covenant: since the condition is fulfilled to thy infinite satisfaction, let the promised good be conferred upon me.

Have respect to the covenant, by having respect to the oath of the covenant, Heb. vi. 17, The promise is confirmed with the oath of God; "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation," etc. Now, Lord, wilt thou not have respect to thine own oath? Hast thou not sworn by thy holiness, thou wilt not lie unto David?

Have respect to the covenant, by having a respect to the properties of the covenant. This would be a large field; I sum it up

in a few words. Have respect to the covenant; that is, Lord, have respect to the fullness of the covenant, and let me be supplied, for there is enough there; it contains all my salvation, and all my desire.—Have respect to the freedom of the covenant, and let me, however unworthy, share of the grace that runs freely thence.—Have respect to the stability of the covenant, and let me be pitied, though unstable as water, and infirm, yet the covenant stands fast; remember thy word that endures for ever.—Have respect to the order of the covenant, that is well ordered in all things, as well as sure. Though my house be not so with God, says David, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, well ordered in all things, and sure. Though my house be out of order, and heart out of order, and my frame out of order, and all be in confusion with me, yet see, according to thy covenant, to order all well.

IV. We proceed to shew what kind of a respect he hath to the covenant, that we may be the more engaged to plead upon it.

He hath a great and high respect to the covenant. It is the covenant of the great God, with his great and eternal Son, for the honour and glory of his great name; and therefore, he cannot but have a great and high respect unto it. His great name is manifested in it; and therefore, when we plead his respect to the covenant, we plead, in effect, saying, What wilt thou do for thy great name?

He hath a dear and lovely respect to the covenant; for, it is the covenant of his grace and love, wherein he shews his infinite love to Christ, and through him to a company of wretched sinners. It is a covenant of kindness, Isa. liv. 10, "My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD, that hath mercy on thee;" intimating, his covenant of peace, is a covenant of kindness, wherein he manifests his dearest love; therefore, he hath a dear respect to it.

He hath a full respect to the covenant, a respect to every promise of it; They are all Yea and Amen, unto the glory of God, 2 Cor. i. 20. He hath a respect to all of them, because they are all Yea and Amen, and because they are all ratified in Christ, to the glory of God. He hath a respect to every article of the covenant, Not a jot shall fall to the ground.

He hath an everlasting respect to the covenant; therefore, it is called an everlasting covenant; it is secured by an everlasting righteousness; it is made between everlasting parties; it is replenished with everlasting blessings; it is rooted in his everlasting

love: therefore he is ever mindful of his covenant, and will never cease to have a respect to it.

Well then, say you, what need we pray and plead, that he would have respect to his covenant? Why, if it be sure that he hath, and will for ever have, a respect to the covenant, then we may pray with the more assurance and confidence; so that there is here strong footing for our prayer: but besides, when we pray, and say, Have respect unto the covenant, we seek, that he would shew the respect that he hath unto it, that he would shew and make it manifest unto us, that we may have the faith of it, and enjoy the fruits of it, and the blessed effects of that respect to it, in our participations of the blessings thereof.

V. The next thing was, To shew why he will have respect to his covenant; and consequently, whence it is such a suitable plea and argument for us. Why,

When he hath a respect to the covenant, he hath respect to himself; the framer of it he owns himself to be, Psal. lxxxix. 3, "I have made a covenant with my chosen." Why then, the strength of the plea is, "Have respect unto the covenant," and so have respect to thyself, and thy own glorious name and attributes, and let them be glorified, in shewing regard to the covenant.—Have respect to thy wisdom that shines in the contrivance of the covenant, The manifold wisdom of God; yea, the wisdom of God in a mystery that here appears.—Have respect to thy power that shines in the efficacy of the covenant, not only for overpowering principalities and powers, but overcoming thyself, and the power of thine own wrath, by the power of thy love.—Have respect to thy holiness, that shines in the holy oath of Jehovah, by which it is confirmed, and the holy obedience of Jesus, by which it is fulfilled; so that, as by the SINFUL disobedience of one, many were made sinners, by the HOLY obedience of another GLORIOUS ONE, many are made righteous.—Have respect to thy justice, that shines in the blood of the covenant, the sacrifice by which justice hath got condign and infinite satisfaction.—Have respect to thy mercy and grace, that reigns through this righteousness to eternal life.—Have respect to thy truth and faithfulness, that shines in accomplishing all the promises of the covenant, upon the ground of Christ's having fulfilled the condition.—Have respect unto thy eternity and immutability, in the unchangeableness of the covenant; shew that thou art God, and changest not.—Thus have respect to thyself.

When he hath respect to the covenant, he hath respect to his

SON CHRIST, the centre of it, and in whom it stands fast, as he owns, Psal. lxxxix. 28, "My covenant shall stand fast with him." Why then, the strength of the plea is, Have respect unto the covenant, and so shew respect to thy Son; have respect to him in his person, as he is thy Son and our Saviour; Emmanuel, God-man; in his divinity, wherein he is equal with God; in his humanity, wherein he is the master-piece of God's work.—Have respect to him in his purchase, which is the substance of the covenant bought with his blood.—Have respect to his death and resurrection; for thou lovest him on this account, John x. 17, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again;" where we see that Christ, as dying and rising in the room of his people, is the object of his Father's love, delight, and esteem.—Have respect unto his intercession, wherein he prays for all the blessings of the covenant that he hath purchased: doth not the Father hear him always?—Have respect to his commission, which is sealed by thee; for, Him hath God the Father sealed, anointed, and authorized unto all saving offices, relations, and appearances: let him get the glory of all these. O strong plea!

When he hath respect to the covenant, he hath respect to his Spirit, the great applier of the covenant-blessings, and executor of the testament, sealed with the blood of Christ, and by whom covenant love is shed abroad upon the heart, Rom. v. 5. Why then, the strength of the plea, "Have respect unto the covenant;" that is, have respect to thy own Spirit, that he may get the glory of applying by his power, what Christ hath purchased by his blood.—Have respect to the promise of the Spirit that thou hast made, that when he is come, he shall convince the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and testify of Christ, and glorify Christ, by shewing the things of Christ.—Have respect to the offices of the Spirit, as he is a Convincer, Sanctifier, and Comforter, according to the order and method of the covenant.—Have respect to the honour of the Spirit, who is the all in all of the covenant, in point of power, and powerful manifestation, communication, and operation.—Have respect unto the relations of the Spirit, as he is the Spirit of the Father and of the Son; the Spirit of the covenant, and of all the covenanted seed. Hence,

When he hath respect to the covenant, he hath respect to his people, on the account of the covenant of promise; for, they "as Isaac was, are the children of promise," Gal. iv. 28. Why then, the strength of the plea and argument here is, Lord, Have respect unto the covenant, and so shew regard and respect to us. We have

no confidence to claim any respect at thy hand, but merely upon the account of the respect thou hast to thy covenant.—Have respect to our persons on this ground, since the covenant provides acceptance in the Beloved, Eph. i. 6. Look upon us in the face of thine Anointed, and in the glass of the new covenant.—Have respect to our prayers and performances on this ground, since the covenant hath provided much incense, to perfume the prayers and offerings of all saints, upon the golden altar that is before the throne, Rev. viii. 3.—Have respect to our tears, when we sigh and groan, and mourn and weep before thee, since the covenant provides a bottle for our tears, Psa. lvi. 8, “Put thou my tears in thy bottle.”—Have respect to our needs on this ground, when we are hardened, that we can neither pray nor weep, nor shed a tear, since the covenant provides supply to the poor and needy, Phil. iv. 19, “My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

VI. I would now proceed to make some application of the subject in these four inferences.

Hence see a mark and character of true believers, that are fit for a communion-table, they are of God's mind; he hath a respect to the covenant, and they have a respect unto the covenant; and hence they know what it is to plead with God upon the respect that he hath to the covenant: they could not do so, if they had not a high respect to it themselves; they have such a respect to the covenant in kind as God hath.—They have a great respect to it, so as they esteem it more than all things in the world; they would not give one promise of it, on which they have been caused to hope, for all the gold of Ophir.—They have a dear and kindly respect to it, as all their salvation and all their desire; yea, and all their delight also. The word of grace is sweeter to them than the honey and the honey-comb.—They have a full and universal respect unto it, and to all the promises of it; they respect the promise of purity as well as the promise of pardon; the promise of salvation from sin, as well, and as much as the promise of salvation from hell; the promise of holiness as well as of happiness. As they have a respect to all God's commandments; so they have a respect to all God's promises; and particularly, as David had his golden psalms, so they have their golden promises that they are made to hinge upon.—Yea, they have an everlasting respect to the covenant, and to the promises thereof, even when their frame fails them; when their sweet enjoyments fail them, yet their respect to the covenant remains, and their respect to the Maker of the cove-

nant, to the Mediator of the covenant, to the blood and oath of the covenant, to the Spirit of the covenant, and to the blessings and benefits of it. They have an everlasting respect to the grace of the covenant of grace; they are adorers and admirers of free grace. They have an everlasting respect to, and remembrance of the words of the covenant, particularly these words that have been let in with any life and power upon their soul, or that they have been caused to hope upon; whatever they forget, they can never forget such a word, that brought life to their souls; I will never forget thy words, says David; for by them thou hast quickened me. They have such an everlasting respect to the covenant, that, when they have nothing in the world to trust to, they will rely on the covenant, and confide in such a promise, and plead upon it, saying, Lord, "Have respect unto the covenant."

Hence we may see the misery of these that are unbelievers, and remain strangers to the covenant of promise, and have no respect to the covenant. It is misery enough, that God hath no respect to you; no respect to your person nor prayers, as it is said, "Unto Cain and to his offering he had no respect," Gen. iv. 5. So God hath no respect either to your persons or performances; they are an abomination to him. Your prayers to him are but like the howling of a dog, if you have never taken hold of his covenant, nor seen the respect that God hath to the covenant. You have no respect to God, while you have no respect to that which he respects so highly.—And as he hath no respect to your persons or performances, so he hath no respect to your tears; they never flowed from faith's views of a pierced Christ.—He hath no respect to your souls, the redemption thereof ceaseth for ever, because you have no due respect to the Redeemer's blood and righteousness.—He hath no respect to your communicating; nay, he disapproves of it, and discharges you to sit down at his table, on peril of eating and drinking your own damnation.—God hath no regard nor respect to your salvation, because you have no regard nor respect to the Saviour he hath provided and offered. God thinks as little to damn you, as you think little to dishonour him. God thinks as little of you, as you little think of sin, and he hath as little respect to you, as you have little respect to Christ and to the covenant. Wo to you, if you remain in this case; for the day is coming wherein God will, before all the world, shew no more respect to you, than to say to you, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. But,

Hence we may see the happiness of believers, that have such a respect to the covenant, as I was speaking of, a great, dear, full, and perpetual respect to it, and to the Mediator of it, who have taken hold of the covenant through grace, and who knows what it is to take hold of God in the covenant, to take hold of God in a promise, and to hold him by his word, and rely upon him in it, saying, Lord, "Have respect unto the covenant;" here is your great happiness, God hath a respect to you: What respect? Even to your persons and offerings, as it is said of Abel, Gen. iv. 4, God had a respect to him and to his offering. Though you be saying in your heart, Oh! how can he have a respect to me, black and vile, and guilty me? Why? not for your sake indeed, be it known unto you, but for his covenant's sake, and his name's sake. He hath a respect to your praying and praising, and communicating; because he hath a respect to the covenant.—He hath a respect to your name; though the name of the wicked shall rot, your name shall be in everlasting remembrance; for God hath put his name in you; something of Christ in you, something of the covenant in you. Some observe, when Abram's name was turned to Abraham, that there were some of the letters of the name Jehovah put in Abram's name. Indeed, God gives the believer a new name, that he hath a respect unto.—He hath a respect to your suits and supplications; I have heard Ephraim bemoaning himself. O my dove, that art in the cliffs of the rock, 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.—He hath a respect to his beloved doves, when pouring out their hearts before him; that voice that the world laughs at, God hath a respect to it.—He hath a respect to your blood; precious in his sight is the blood of his saints—He hath a respect to your souls; and hence he gave his blood to be a ransom for them; and when your souls languish, he sends his Spirit to restore them; and when you die, he will send his angels to bring them to heaven.—He hath a respect to your bodies: you ought, being bought with a price, to glorify him in your souls and bodies, which are his. When your body goes to the dust, he will take care of that dust, and lose nothing of you, but raise you up at the last day, and make your vile bodies like unto his glorious body; and so shall ye be ever with the Lord.—He hath a respect to you, such a respect, that he puts honour upon you; Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable. He hath made you kings and priests to your God. Jacob was crowned a prince on the field of battle, the field of prayer, when he wrestled with the angel and prevailed as

a prince. The poor wrestling man is a prince, and the poor wrestling woman a princess, in God's sight; This is the honour of all the saints. They have power with God, therefore no wonder that they have power over the nations, to rule them with a rod of iron; they judge and torment them that dwell upon the earth, even here: And know you not, that hereafter the saints shall judge the world? God hath a respect to you, and he will shew it in due time; because he hath a respect to the covenant, and filled your heart with a respect to it also.

Hence see the duty incumbent upon us in pleading with God for his favour, presence, and blessing; let us go to him both in secret prayer, and in solemn approaches to his table, crying Lord, "Have respect unto the covenant." I know not a case you can be in but the covenant exhibits a cure, and you are allowed to plead it, Ezek. xxxvi. 37; after many new-covenant promises, it is said "I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them;" and how are we to enquire, but by pleading the respect he hath to the covenant.—Have you a polluted heart with the filth of sin, a polluted conscience with the guilt of sin? Why, here is an article of the covenant; "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you," verse 25. O then, go to God for cleansing, and plead, saying, O Lord, Have respect unto the covenant.—Have you the old hard stony heart still within you, and would you have it renewed and softened Here is an article of the covenant, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." O then, go to God, and plead it, saying, "Have respect unto the covenant."—Are you destitute of the Spirit, sensual, not having the Spirit? Do you find such a want of the Spirit, that you cannot walk in God's way? Well, there is an article of the covenant here, verse 27, "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." O plead for this great blessing, and say, Lord, "Have respect unto the covenant."

In a word when you consider what kind of a sinner you are, consider also what kind of a covenant this is; it is enough to say, that it is a covenant of grace, of all sorts of grace, for all sorts of sinners that are out of hell. Are you under dreadful guilt? Here is a covenant of pardoning grace, saying "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins, return unto me; for I have redeemed thee." Isa. xlv. 22. O then plead he may "Have respect unto the covenant."—Are you under fearful

pollutions? O here is a covenant of purifying grace, saying, There is a fountain opened to the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness. O then, plead he may have respect unto the covenant.—Are you in darkness and ignorance, having no knowledge of God? O here is a covenant of enlightening grace, saying, They shall be all taught of God. O then plead it, saying, Lord, “Have respect unto the covenant.”—Are you under deadness, and like dead and dry bones? O here is a covenant of quickening grace, saying, I am come to give life, and to give it more abundantly. The hour cometh when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live. O then plead that he may have respect unto the covenant.—Are you in confusion, and know not what way to take? O here is a covenant of directing grace, saying, I will bring the blind by a way they know not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight.—Are you under sad plagues and foul-diseases, over-run with sores from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot? O here is a covenant of healing grace, saying, The Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings. I am the Lord that healeth thee; I will heal your backslidings. O then plead, saying, Lord, Have respect unto the covenant.—Are you in extreme danger of hell and damnation, because of your sin and guilt? O here is a covenant of delivering grace, saying, Deliver his soul from going down to the pit, for I have found a ransom. O then plead it, and say, Lord, Have respect unto the covenant.—Are you in bondage unto sin, Satan, and the world, a captive unto lusts, and shut up in unbelief as in a prison? O here is a covenant of liberating grace! Proclaiming liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.—Are you a stupid soul that cannot move toward God, nor stir heaven-ward, by reason of a backward will, like a brazen gate, that resists all the force of moving means? Well, but, O! here is a covenant of drawing grace, saying, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” As the power and virtue of the load-stone draws the iron, so the virtue of an exalted Christ draws the iron-bar of the will; Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power. O then, plead it, saying, Lord, “Have respect unto the covenant.”

What other concerns have you?—Are you concerned for your children, that they may be partakers of covenant blessings, and saved of the Lord? O here is a covenant of extensive grace, entailing blessings on us and our offspring, saying, I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed. O then, look to God in behalf of your chil-

dren, saying, Lord, "Have respect unto the covenant."—Are you concerned for the church, and the dangerous circumstances she is into by reason of cruel enemies? This seems to be the great concern of the psalmist here, as appears from the body of the psalm, and the words following the text: "For the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty." These that live in the darkness of ignorance and error, and in the works of darkness, are full of cruelty against the church and people of God, and they are surrounded with them, in so much that the church is like a lily among thorns, or a sheep among wolves; what shall become of it? Why, here is a covenant of defence, and of defending and protecting grace, saying, Upon all the glory there shall be a defence; therefore, even when enemies "break down the carved work thereof with axes and hammers," verse 6; when they are casting "fire into the sanctuary," verse 7; when they are saying, "Let us destroy them together," verse 8: Yea, when it shall come to this, that a bloody sword shall come among us, and that foreign or domestic enemies, or both, shall devour and destroy, and perhaps, "have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land," as it is, verse 8; and when we shall not see our signs, and "there is no more any prophet: neither is there among us any that knoweth how long," verse 9. In all such cases, what course shall we take, but that of the psalmist here? Lord, "Have respect unto the covenant."

Are you concerned about inward enemies, spiritual enemies, and molested with the powers of darkness? Is your heart full of the habitations of cruelty, and fearfully inhabited with cruel devils, cruel lusts, cruel corruptions that master and conquer, and prevail against you, so as you lie many a time wounded and dead at the enemy's feet? O here is a covenant of sin-conquering grace, not only a covenant of mercy to your soul, but of vengeance to your lusts, saying, "The day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my Redeemed is come," Isa. lxiii. 4. O then, implore the promised vengeance on all your cruel foul enemies, saying, Lord, "Have respect unto the covenant."

Are you concerned about your soul-poverty and indigency, not only as oppressed with enemies without and within, but oppressed with wants and necessities, being absolutely poor and needy, and destitute of all good? O here is a covenant of soul-supplying grace, and of all needful provision, saying, "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the LORD will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them;" I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. O then, plead the covenant, as the psalmist

here in the following verse, "O let not the oppressed return ashamed: let the poor and needy praise thy name." "Have respect unto the covenant."

In a word, let your case be the worst case out of hell, this covenant contains all salvation as a covenant of grace, of all grace, of all sort of grace for all sort of sinners, and of all sort of cures for all sort of cases; and if you can get yourself wrapt within the bound of this covenant, by believing and pleading it; then you draw God upon your interest, so that your concern is his concern, your interest, is his interest, your cause is his cause, as the psalmist shews here, verse 22, "Arise, O God, plead thine own cause." It stands upon his honour, and he will do his own work in his own time. If ever you got grace to draw a bill upon God as a covenant promising God in Christ, and have any bills lying tabled before the throne, and are sometimes unable to plead and pursue the bill, with a Lord, "Have respect unto the covenant:" you have the strongest encouragement to wait on him, and expect his answering the bill in due time; for he will rather work marvelously, and create new worlds, rather turn all things to nothing, than quit his concern in, or give up with his respect unto the covenant.

Are you concerned for the advancement of the kingdom of Christ in the earth as you ought to be? Here is a covenant of grace to the Jews, and grace to the Gentiles; grace to the heathen nations, saying, "I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."—Are you concerned about generations to come, about the rising generation, when there is little hope of the present? O! here is a covenant of grace to succeeding generations till the end of the world, saying, "I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations; therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever."

Are you concerned about your latter end, and how it shall fare with you when in the swellings of Jordan, how you will fight the last battle? O here is a covenant of death-conquering grace, saying, Death shall be swallowed up in victory; O death, I will be thy plague; O grave, I will be thy destruction.—Are you concerned about a gospel-ministry, and thoughtful whether it shall be continued? There is many a word in this covenant about it; but especially that, Christ is exalted to maintain and support a gospel dispensation to the end of the world, Matt. xxviii. 20. Whatever spot of the earth he chooses or refuses, he having "ascended on high," hath "received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them," Psal. lxxviii. 18.

SERMON XX.

Faith's Plea upon God's Word.

—“*Do as thou hast said.*”

2 SAM. vii. 25.

DAVID was a strong believer; and it were our great advantage to follow him in his faith: and in this word that I fix upon to speak to, there are two ways wherein his faith works. 1. By believing the divine word, “Thou hast said” so and so. 2. By pleading the accomplishment thereof, “Do as thou hast said.”

1. Faith works by believing his word, “Thou hast said.” The object and ground of faith is the divine saying; and faith rests upon a thus saith the LORD; it is not upon a thus saith a MAN, or thus saith a MINISTER; nay, nor thus saith an ANGEL. Divine faith can stand only upon a divine testimony; Thus saith the LORD; “Thou hast said.” If you have faith then, you have received the word, not as the word of man, but, as it is indeed, the word of God, which effectually works in you that believe. Faith acts by taking God's word, Thou hast said; thou hast promised; thou hast spoken in thy holiness.

2. Faith acts by pleading the accomplishment of the promise, “Do as thou hast said.” God is not a speaker only, but a doer; he is not a promiser only, but a performer; and faith looks to a promising God, that he may be a performing God; and so puts him to his word.

OBSERV. That it is the business of true faith, to take God's word, and to put him to it.

In the illustration of this doctrinal proposition, we would incline, through divine aid, to essay briefly the following things.

- I. To shew, that it is the business of faith to take God's word.
- II. That it is the business of faith to put him to his word.
- III. How faith takes God's word.
- IV. How it pleads the accomplishment of the promise.
- V. Whence is this the business of faith to take God at his word, and to put him to his word.
- VI. Make application of the whole.

I. We are first to shew, That it is the business of faith to TAKE God's word, or to take him at his word: this is plain, because the word is the immediate object of faith. We have no other glass wherein to see God savingly, but his word, particularly his word of grace and promise, Rom. x. 6, 7, 8, Say not, "Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.*)" "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart:" so then, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. FAITH is a relative word, it relates to the faithfulness of the speaker; believing relates to a word to be believed. That it is the business of faith to trust in the word of God, is evident from the whole scripture. How many times, Psal. cxix. doth the psalmist speak of trusting in his word, and hoping in his word, and rejoicing in his word, and so taking him at his word?

II. We come, in the next place, to shew, That it is the business of faith to put him to his word, or to plead the accomplishment of his word, that he would do as he had said: this is evident from Psal. cxix. 49, "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope." And how many times doth he plead with God, to do to him according to his word? "Quicken thou me according to thy word," verse 25. Again and again we have this repeated, as verses 107, 154. "Strengthen thou me, according to thy word," verse 28. Save me, according to thy word, verse 41. "Be merciful to me, according to thy word," verse 58. "Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, according to thy word," verse 65. Let "thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word," verse 76. "Uphold me, according unto thy word," verse 116. "Give me understanding according to thy word," verse 169. "Deliver me, according to thy word," verse 170.—All comes to this, "Do as thou hast said."

III. We proceed to shew, How, or in what manner, faith takes the word of God.

It takes it by an intelligent apprehension of it in the understanding. The man is taught of God, and gets his eyes opened, to see the faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation; he sees it to be the word of God, and a word spoken in season to his weary soul. They will never take the word by faith that do not understand it; Philip said to the Eunuch, Understandest thou what thou readest? So we may say, Understandest thou what thou hearest? Are your eyes opened to see the wonders of his law or doctrine; to see the glory of Christ held to you in the word?

Faith takes the word of God by a particular application of it with the heart; insomuch that it is a cordial apprehension, a cordial assent that is given in the word; With the heart man believeth unto righteousness. Saving light goes to the heart. Many have only their heads enlightened, their judgments informed, but not their hearts engaged, nor their affections captivated. Faith is a cordial applying the word, and that particularly to the man's own benefit; whether we call it assurance or not, it comes to the same thing: as when in conviction the threatening is applied, the man trembles under the fear of hell and wrath, because he applies the law-threatening to himself, saying, I am the man to whom this threatening is spoken: so, in the day of conversion, or believing the promise is applied, the man is relieved with the view of the grace and mercy of God in Christ, because he applies the gospel-promise to himself, saying, "I am the man to whom this promise is spoken, and I receive and rest upon Christ for salvation, as he is promised or offered to me in this gospel; To me is this word of salvation." And if the man did not take it to himself, there would be no end of believing at all. But then,

IV. The fourth thing proposed, was, To shew how faith pleads the accomplishment of the promise.

It pleads upon the mercy that made the promise, that it is everlasting mercy, unchangeable mercy; "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious."

It pleads upon the truth that is to make out the promise; it is called, "The truth of Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham," Micah. vii. 20; that his name is faithful and true.

It pleads upon the power of the promiser, "Being fully persuaded that what he had promised, he was able also to perform;" that he hath not out-promised his own promise, or said what he cannot do.

It pleads upon the blood of the covenant that seals all the promises thereof; hence they are all Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus.

It pleads upon the love of God to Christ: this is to pray in his name, that God, for the love he bears to Christ, would do as he hath said.

It pleads upon the unchangeableness of God and of his word; that his word endures for ever, and that he is God, and changes not, therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed.

In a word, it pleads upon his oath, Heb. vi. 17, "God willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise, the immuta-

bility of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

And lastly, it pleads upon his name; What wilt thou not do for thy great name?

V. The fifth thing to be proposed was, To shew whence is this the business of faith to take God at his word, and to put him to his word. Why, because,

It is the end and design of God, in giving his word; These things are written, and spoken, that we may believe in the Son of God, and that believing, we might have life in his name, John xx. 31. The gospel is preached in vain, if men do not take God at his word, and then hang upon it.

Because thus we glorify God; and the more we rest upon the divine word, the more we glorify him: Abraham was strong in faith, giving glory to God. We give him the honour of his truth, and other perfections this way.

Because thus we engage the honour of God upon our side, when we put him to his word; his honour is engaged, He cannot deny himself.

Because faith hath no other way of living, but upon the word of God; Man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Thy word was found of me, and I did eat it. This is my comfort in my affliction, thy word hath quickened me.

VI. The last thing proposed was the application of the subject, which, indeed, was the principal thing intended. Here is a fit exercise before the solemn communion-work, to go to God and say, O do as thou hast said. Consider what he hath said, and take him at his word, and put him to it, that he would do to you accordingly. Whatever your case be, surely there is some word relative to it.

Some may be thinking, alas! God hath said nothing to me, that I may put him to his word. Why, man, if the gospel, that is in this Bible, be preached to you, and if there be any word of grace therein suitable to your case, then put not away the word from you, but take it, and plead upon it, that God would do as he hath said. If you can see any word of promise suited to your case, and to your need, then put out your hand by faith and lay hold upon his word.

Oh! say you, is there any word from God about my case, who

am a poor, needy creature like to starve for want of a spiritual meal, and a hearty draught of the living waters that go out from Jerusalem? What hath God said, or hath he said any thing concerning me? Yea, he hath said, Isa. xli. 17, 18, "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I, the LORD, will hear them, I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys. I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water." Hath he said so? Then take him at his word, and put him to it, saying, Lord, "Do as thou hast said."

Oh! but is there any word from God for me, who have been long waiting about ordinances and never yet seen his glory, as I would desire to see it? What hath he said concerning me? Why, he hath said, that he waits that he may be gracious; that he "is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him," Isa. xxx. 18. He hath said, "The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry," Hab. ii. 3.—Hath he said so? Then take him at his word, and put him to it, saying, "Do as thou hast said."

But is there any word from God, concerning my case, that finds my conscience challenging me for prodigious guilt; there was never such a guilty person on the face of the earth? Are you groaning under guilt? Hear what he says, Heb. viii. 12, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins, and their iniquities will I remember no more." Isa. xliii. 25, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."—O then! take hold of his word, wherein he proclaims indemnity, and put him to it, saying, Lord, "Do as thou hast said."

But, says another, is there any word from God concerning me, that am compassed about with such strong corruptions, and conquering lusts, that sin gets the mastery of me? Would you be delivered? Hear what he says, Mic. vii. 19, "He will subdue our iniquities;" and cast all our "sins into the depths of the sea." Rom. vi. 14. "Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." Isa. lxiii. 4, "The day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my Redeemed is come."—Hath he promised to take vengeance on your lusts? Then take him at his word, saying, O "Do as thou hast said."

But is there any word to me, that am such a filthy monster, such

a polluted creature in heart and way, that am sticking, as it were, in the grave of sin? He hath said, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, "From all your filthiness and from all your idols, will I cleanse you." Zech. xiii. 1, There is "a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness." Is there a promise of cleansing? Then take him at his word, and cry, Lord, "Do as thou hast said."

But is there any word to me a backslider, a grievous revolter, that many times after vows have made enquiry; my promises and resolutions have been but paper-walls before the fire of temptation? Are you afflicted with this and would have relief? Behold, he says, Jer. iii. 22, "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." Hos. xiv. 4, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely:" "I will be as the dew unto Israel."—Hath he said so? Then let your heart say, Lord, "Do as thou hast said?"

But what doth God say to me, that have no strength for any duty or difficulty, that am weak like water? Would you have relief in this case? God says, 2 Cor. xii. 9, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Isa. xl. 29. "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength."—Doth he say so? Then put him to his word, saying, Lord, "Do as thou hast said."

But is there any word concerning me, that am brought to a great difficulty, and know not what to do, or what hand to turn me to; I am straitened what course to take? doth God say any thing to me? Yea, he doth: Isa. xlii. 16, "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. Isa. xxx. 21, "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it." "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel."—Doth he say so? Then put him to his word, saying, Lord, "Do as thou hast said."

But what says God to a poor soul that is harassed with the temptations of the devil, and ready to be destroyed with the fiery darts of the wicked one? God says, I will bruise the head of the serpent. Rom. xvi. 20, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." For this cause was the Son of God manifested; to destroy the works of the devil.—Hath he begun to destroy him? and hath he said, Thou shalt bruise him under thy feet? Then put him to his word, saying, Lord "Do as thou hast said."

Alas! but what says God to a poor destitute creature, and hath nothing, no good, no grace, no light, no life, no strength? He says, Phil. iv. 19, "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus," Psal. ix. 18, "The needy shall not alway be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish forever." There is bread enough, and to spare, in your Father's house.—Hath he said so? O then! put him to his word, saying, Lord, "Do as thou hast said."

But what says God to me, that am longing, earnestly longing for some taste of his goodness, some communion and fellowship with him? Why, God says to you, that he will satisfy the longing soul, and fill the hungry with good things. Matt. v. 6, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." Hath he said so? Then let your heart say, Lord, "Do as thou hast said."

Oh! but is there any word for one that hath quite another case to tell you of, that hath no longing desire, no hunger, no thirst, that hath as much need as any longing soul here; but I have no spiritual longing, not so much as a desire, but, like the parching earth, the dry ground, that can have no active thirst, but hath many a wide cleft? God says, Isa. xlv. 3, 4; "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed and my blessing upon thine offspring: And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses."—Have you no other thirst, but like that of the dry ground, and hath he promised a flood? Then, O put him to his word, saying, Lord, "Do as thou hast said."

Oh! but is there any word for me, that am like the barren ground and unfruitful, that bears nothing but briars and thorns, and I find this ground is rejected, as nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned? Is this your fear and concern? Hear that word, Isa. lv. 13, "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier the myrtle-tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off." Hos. xiv. 8, "I am like a green fir-tree. From me is thy fruit found."—Hath he said so? Then put him to his word, saying, Lord, "Do as thou hast said."

Alas! but is there any word for me, that have been a fool, a mocker, a scorner, that have laughed at all religion and godliness; is there any merciful word that I may take hold of? Yea, God says, Prov. i. 22, Ye scorners, that delight in scorning, and fools, that hate knowledge, "Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will

pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you."—Doth he say so? Then put him to his word, saying, O "Do as thou hast said."

But what says God to one that hath a plagued heart, a hard heart, a base heart, full of all manner of evils, and all the plagues of hell? Why, God says, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes." And whatever be the plague, he hath said, I am the Lord that healeth thee.—Hath he said so? Then, O put him to his word, saying, Lord, "Do as thou hast said."

Ah! but doth God say any thing to a stupid wretch, that not only hears you, but is no more affected than the stones of the wall, and that is quite dead, and can no more stir than a rock, and hath no more life than a dead corpse? God says, and O that he would say it with power, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." Ezek. xxxvii. 12, "I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves," "and 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.—Hath he said so? Then, O put him to his word, saying, Lord, "Do as thou hast said."

But, Oh! is there any word that God says concerning me, that hath forfeited God's favour, by heaping up great insuperable mountains betwixt him and me, that I fear he will never come over? Why, he says, Zach. iv. 7, "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel, thou shalt become a plain: And he shall bring forth the headstone with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace, unto it." He can make the mountains skip like rams, and the little hills like lambs.—Hath he said so? Then, O put him to his word, and say, Lord, "Do as thou hast said." * * *

But is there any word for a poor creature that is in bondage through fear of death? If I have run with the footmen, and they have wearied me; then, how can I contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, wherein I trusted, they wearied me, then, what will I do in the swelling of Jordan? I tremble to meet with the king of terrors? Why, he hath said, Hos. 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:" Death shall be swallowed up in victory. Plead then, that he would Do as he hath said.

But I want assurance of all these things, may one say. Well, what mean you by that, man, woman, that you want assurance? I suppose many do not understand themselves, when they say they want assurance; for, what better assurance would you have than the word of God? If you have his word, and take his word, you need no better assurance. If a man of credit, whom you can depend upon, give you his word for such a thing, then you depend upon it, and say you are assured of it; for you have his word. There is an assurance of sense, that is, the assurance of the work, when you have got the thing that is promised; this is not properly assurance, it is enjoyment: but the assurance of faith is the assurance of a word. And though the assurance of sense be sweetest, yet the assurance of faith is the surest assurance: for, what you get in hand from God you may soon lose the benefit and comfort of it; but what you have upon bond in the promise, is still secure. If you take God's promise, you have the best assurance in the world: but if you say you want faith, you cannot take his word, or trust his word, then this is plain dealing; I fear this indeed be the case of the most: then you want assurance indeed, because you want faith, and cannot take his word, nor give him so much credit. But if any be saying, that is indeed my case; I cannot believe his word: doth God say nothing to me? Is there any word suited to my case? Yes, there are promises of faith as well as to it; Zeph. iii. 12, "I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the LORD." In him shall the Gentiles trust.—Hath the Author of faith so promised? Then, O take him at his word; cry for faith, saying, Lord, "Do as thou hast said."

But may one say, I would desire not only to have the word, but the accomplishment of the word; I would not only have the promise, but the performance; and there are some promises I have been looking to, some ten or twenty-years-old promises, that I think I got the faith of; but, alas! the accomplishment is not yet come; there are some prayers and petitions I have had long tabled upon the ground of the promise: What doth God say to one that hath never got these promises accomplished, nor these prayers answered? Why, man, be thankful, if you have got grace to believe the promise; for so much faith as you have to take God's word, so much assurance you have that the word will be made out. If you be waiting upon a promising God, gave him his time; * * * "Blessed is he that believeth; for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord," Luke i. 45.

And your fits and starts of unbelief, O believer, shall not hinder the performance of the promise you have once believed savingly; "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself," 2 Tim. ii. 13. Will he deny his word, will he deny his oath? No, no; he will have respect unto his covenant; because he hath a respect to himself.

But what says God of one that is afflicted, and mourning for the desolations of Zion, and particularly for the sins and defections of the day we live in? I will tell you what he says, They that sow in tears shall reap in joy; and though you have your mourning time for Zion, you shall also have your rejoicing times; "Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her," Isa. lxvi. 10. He says, that he will "set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof," Ezek. ix. 4. "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted," Matt. v. 4.—Why then, look to him to Do as he hath said.

But says another, I am one that has a family, and children that the Lord hath given me, and it is my concern, not only that I may be blessed myself, but that my seed and offspring may be blessed; is there any word for me in this case? Yea, what think you of that word? Isa. xlv. 3, "I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." What think ye of that covenant made with Abraham, which you are called to lay hold upon by following his faith? Gen. xvii. 7, I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed. You have not only the covenant of Abraham to look to, but the entail of the covenant to your posterity to look to, Isa. lix. 21, "This is my covenant with them, saith the LORD, My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever." He hath said, that children are his heritage, Psalm cxxvii. 3; and that his righteousness is unto children's children, Psalm ciii. 17; "The promise is unto you, and to your children?" Acts iii. 39. O take him at his word, and cry Lord, "Do as thou hast said."

But what do you say to one that finds himself deserted of God, and that God answers neither by URIM nor THUMMIM. "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. "The Comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me." Lam. i. 16. God says, Isa. liv. 7, 8, 10, "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer." "For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD, that hath mercy on thee."—Hath he said so? Then, O take him at his word, saying, Lord, "Do as thou hast said."

But what doth God say to one that is tossed with one wave of affliction upon the back of another, Deep calling unto deep, at the noise of God's water-spouts; all his waves and billows are gone over me? Psalm xlii. 7. Why, God says, Isa. liv. 11, 12, 13, 14, "Oh thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colors, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones. And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children, In righteousness shalt thou be established." Yea he says, Psalm xci. 15, "He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him." Many such sweet words of grace he speaks. O then, take his word, and plead, Lord, "Do as thou hast said."

But is there any word to one that is left in the wilderness, and knows not where he is, so as to think it impossible that ministers can find him out? I think I am lost in a thicket, and it is impossible to find out my case in your preaching, it is a matchless case, a nameless case. Why, may be that word concerns you, Isa. lxii. 11, "Behold thy salvation cometh;" "and thou shalt be called, Sought out," "not forsaken?" And Hos. ii. 14, "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and" there will I "speak comfortably unto her;" or, as the word is in the margin, speak to her HEART. O comfortable, when God speaks not only to the ear, but to the heart!—Well, hath he said it? O then, take his word and plead, "Do as thou hast said."

But is there any word to one that hath been incorrigible under directing providences, and hath his corruptions irritated by the cross, and rebellion rather increased by rods, instead of being reclaimed by word and rod? Is there any case like mine, or is there any word for me to lay hold upon? Yes; what think you of that word, Isa. 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." Well, what follows? "I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners." O astonishing wonder of free grace! that it was not said, I have seen his ways, and will DAMN him; but I have seen his ways, and will HEAL him: I have seen his ways, and will SAVE him.—Hath he said so? Then put in your petition, Lord, "Do as thou hast said."

But is there any word to such as are under the power of unbelief and impenitency? The gospel is preached to believers and penitents: O God forbid but it was not preached to sinners, that are both unbelieving and impenitent, in order to bring them to faith and repentance: why, what says God to such? He says, what they ought to lay hold and plead upon, Psalm cx. 3, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." Acts v. 31, Christ is exalted at the right hand of God, "to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." Plead then he may do as he has said.

But is it possible that God is speaking to any that hath been a notorious sinner? Perhaps, all the country knows that I have been a scandalous debauchee, a lewd and wicked sinner, a profane graceless wretch. O! if any were charmed with the joyful sound of gospel-grace to-day, he says, Isa. i. 8, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Though you have sinned to the uttermost, I am able to save to the uttermost; is your name wonderful, as a Sinner? Behold his name is Wonderful, as a Saviour.—O hath he said so? Well, go and plead his word, saying, Lord, "Do as thou hast said."

But besides my wickedness, I am grossly ignorant; doth God say any thing to a poor brutish ignorant creature like me? Would you be taught? There is a word you may take hold of, John vi. 45, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God." And, who teaches like him?—Hath he said so? Then take him at his word, saying, "Do as thou hast said."

But is there any word from God for one that hath crucified so many convictions as I have done; yea, and virtually crucified the Son of God afresh, by rejecting his calls, grieving his Spirit? Yea, we are called to preach the gospel to every creature, and even to the crucifiers of Christ; "Repentance and remission of sins should be

preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem," Luke xxiv, 47. Why beginning at Jerusalem, among the crucifiers of Christ? Because they have most need of his blood to wash them: Christ came to save sinners, the chief of sinners?—Hath he said so? Then put in your bill, Lord, "Do as thou hast said."

But will you tell me, Is there any word for one that cannot think that it is as you are saying, that there is any merciful word in God's mouth, or any merciful thought in God's heart towards me; it cannot enter into my thought; I cannot let it light in my mind or heart? Why, God says, Isa. lv. 8, 9, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." You are not to measure his thoughts by yours, no more than you can measure these wide heavens with your arms: but God knows his own thoughts, and what says he of them? Jer. xxix. 11, 12, 13, "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart."—Hath he said so? Then go and plead his word, saying, Lord, "Do as thou hast said."

In a word, Do you want his presence? He hath said, Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world: I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. Are you afraid of hell and damnation? He hath said, Deliver his soul from going down to the pit, I have found out a ransom.—O what encouragement is here to go and pray and plead, saying, Lord, "Do as thou hast said?"

O Sirs, search the scriptures, and study the word of God; consult and consider what he hath said; let there be no mouldy Bibles among you; let not the dust of your Bibles witness against you, for your eternal salvation depends upon your believing what he hath said, therefore study the faith of what he hath said. The Spirit is promised, and the scriptures are written to work this faith; Christ is exalted, and the throne of grace is erected to give this faith; and this faith comes by hearing what he hath said: by hearing not what Plato hath said, or Seneca hath said; what this or that man hath said; but what God hath said in his word, in this Bible, which is a book so prefaced, and so attested as

never any other book was: the Old Testament is prefaced by all the miracles wrought by Moses; the New Testament was prefaced by all the miracles wrought by Christ. And as Moses's miracles were wrought before the Old Testament was written, so Christ's miracles were wrought before the New Testament was written: never a book was so attested as this, even by a cloud of witnesses, a cloud of miracles, a cloud of martyrs, who sealed with their blood the truth contained in it. God, in the New Testament, exactly fulfills what he hath said in the Old; yea, the present state of all the world is a visible performing of scripture-prophecies.—Are not the Jews at this day a scattered and despised people, as the scripture said they should be? Hath not God done as he hath said?—Is not Antichrist, the long-lived man of sin, and the cruel man of blood, as the scripture told he should be? Thus it is done as he hath said.—Are not the Pagan parts of the earth the dark places and habitations of cruelty, as the scripture says they should be? Thus it is as he hath said.—Do not the seven churches of Asia lie desolate, as they were threatened, unless they repented? Thus it is as he hath said.—Is not Mahomet, the false prophet, and his followers like the waters of the great river Euphrates, to which they are compared in scripture? And thus it is as he hath said.—Does not the whole world lie in wickedness, as the word of God shews? And so it is as he hath said.—Is not every saint as a brand plucked out of the burning, as the scripture speaks? And so it is as he hath said.—Are not Deists and scoffers walking after their own lusts, and ridiculing the promise of Christ's coming, as the scripture speaks? And so it is as he hath said.—Are not the black marks of perilous times in the last days upon us, as the scripture speaks? And so it is as he hath said.—Are not the foolish virgins as many, yea, and more than the wise, and all slumbering and sleeping, and all according as he hath said?—Doth not the Spirit speak expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, and accordingly it is as he hath said?—Is not the gospel a savour of life to some, and a savour of death to others?—Is not Christ precious to some, and also a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to others, as the scripture speaks? And so it is as he hath said.—Look about you, and see if any thing that falls out be not an accomplishment of the word: and, O how should you value this word! not a jot or title of it shall fall to the ground.

Walk in this garden of the scripture, and pluck up the flowers of gospel-promises, and put them in your bosom; live by faith

upon the promise, and be persuaded, whatever stands in the way, that he will do as he hath said. He will do so, for what he hath said he hath written, what he hath said he hath sealed, what he hath said he hath sworn, what he hath said he will never unsay; therefore, take hold of his word of grace, and hold him at his word in life and death, saying, DO AS THOU HAST SAID.

SERMON XXI.

The Happy Victor;

OR, SAINTS MORE THAN CONQUERORS.

[THANKSGIVING-DAY SERMON.]

“Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.”—ROMANS viii. 37.

GLORIOUS things are spoken in the preceding part of this chapter, particularly from verse 28, concerning the love and goodness of God to his chosen people, in the co-operation of all things for their good; and that by virtue of a golden chain, reaching from eternity, in their predestination; to eternity, in their glorification: in contemplation whereof the apostle breaks out in proposing two questions, full of comfort, verse 31. The first is, “What shall we then say to these things?” How glorious are they! And the next is, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” We may bid a defiance to all our opposers. This text I have read, relates not only to these, but especially to other two questions, that are both high notes of triumph and encouragement; and the first is a question of triumph and encouragement against all sin and guilt, verses 33, 34, “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again,” etc. The second is a question of triumph and encouragement against all sorrows and afflictions, verses 35, 36, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (As it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as

sheep for the slaughter.") All these questions import a strong negation; who can be against us? Who can charge us? Who can condemn us? Who can separate us? Can men or devils do it? No; none can do it. But the apostle rests not in the negative, but proceeds to the positive determination of the point: "Nay," says he, "in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

In these words we have, 1. A victory proclaimed; "Nay, in all these we are more than conquerors." 2. The ground of it, it is "through him that loved us."

1st, A victory proclaimed: where it is asserted; "We are conquerors," and amplified; "We are more than conquerors."

It is asserted; "We are conquerors:" that is, we are victors and overcomers, as believers are frequently called, Revelation, second and third chapters; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, etc. Rev. xxi. 7, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things."

It is amplified; Nay, "we are more than conquerors." There is none so humble as a true believer, and yet none so confident even in the most desperate cases; though yet upon the most safe and solid grounds. It is with holy boasting the apostle speaks; as if he had said, Let not our enemies think, when they have done their utmost, that they have won the day, and got us ruined; Nay, we are conquerors, and more than conquerors; even conquerors to the greatest advantage, and double gainers by the battle.

2dly, The ground of the victory, is, through Christ that loved us.—The ground of the conquest is astonishing! How come we who are believers, united to Christ, justified and sanctified in him, to be more than conquerors? Why, it is through grace we are what we are; it is not through our own strength, but through Christ's strengthening us we can do all things. But the attribute through which, in a special manner, the glorious victory is obtained, is that attribute of love: this title of Christ was very familiar to the apostle; He loved me, and gave himself for me; and here the apostle chooses to speak of Christ's love, more than any thing else, because all that ever Christ did for us, issued in so many grains and branches from this great root of love; and all our victories are owing to the banner of love he places over our head, Song ii. 4, "He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love;" intimating, that as we are not to think strange to hear of a banquet and a battle at the same time;

for, a feast of love, and the fight of faith are very near relations: so the victory is only to be obtained under the banner of love, or owing to him that loved us. This shews,

The deficiency of our own strength; it is no where said in the whole scriptures, that we fight in our own strength, far less that we overcome; and least of all that we are more than conquerors; but only through Christ that loved us, and who must do all for us.

It denotes the efficiency of his strength in our behalf, and the power and efficacy of his love: it is strong as death, and conquered death itself for us; Through him, then, we are more than conquerors.

OBSERV. Christ is a lover, through whom every true believer, in all cases, be they never so hard, is more than a conqueror. "NAY IN ALL THESE THINGS WE ARE MORE THAN CONQUERORS," etc.

The method we propose for handling this subject, as the Lord shall be pleased to assist, is the following.

- I. To speak of the Christian conqueror.
- II. Of his being more than a conqueror.
- III. The grounds of the conquest, viz. the love of Christ.
- IV. Deduce inferences for the application.

I. We are to speak of the Christian conqueror. Two things seem necessary here to be considered, viz. The enemies he conquers, and the nature and import of the conquest.

As to the enemies that the believer overcomes and conquers.

The first enemy is sin: sin is the grave of all our mercies, and the mother of all our miseries; and it hath a twofold power, that must be overcome, a condemning power, that binds the sinner over to eternal death and wrath; and a polluting power, that makes the soul ugly and abominable in the sight of a holy God: but the believer overcomes both these; the one, viz. the guilt of sin, he overcomes completely by justification; and the other, viz. the pollution of sin, he overcomes gradually by sanctification: this conquest is asserted in the foregoing part of the chapter, particularly, verse 30.

The world must be conquered, and all the friendly blandishments thereof: for, the friendship of this world is enmity against God. It is hard to stand against such an adversary, because here we have

temptations suited to all our natural inclinations, 1 John ii. 16. If we are for carnal pleasures, here are the lusts of the flesh to wallow in; if we value ourselves for riches and full coffers, here are the lusts of the eye; if we be for honour, here is the pride of life presenting itself.—But these are what believers must overcome.

The devil is an enemy most powerful, spiritual, and subtile, we have to conquer: his great design is to tempt us to the practice of sin, and to hinder the exercise of grace, and to destroy immortal souls: for, he goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour: but he that establisheth Zion, on a lasting foundation, hath promised that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; he hath promised to bruise Satan under our feet; and his promise is like a mountain of brass that cannot be removed.

Raging persecutors are enemies to be conquered; or personal enemies, that are Satan's instruments; being either wicked men, that are confederates with Satan; or wickedly disposed men, though otherwise gracious, as Job's friends, Aaron, and Miriam etc. Acts xiii. 50. The believer overcomes, either by well-doing, or well-suffering: Sometimes by well doing, which is a notable conquest, 1 Peter ii. 15, "For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." Thus says the apostle, Rom. xii. 20, 21, "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head;" if not coals of conversion to melt him, yet they will be stones of confusion to astonish him, and consume him, and burn him up. Sometimes we overcome personal enemies also by well-suffering; a Christian conquers by patience, constancy, and resolution, and perseverance, in the faith; the saints have conquered, even by suffering unto death, Rev. xii. 31.

They have personal afflictions to conquer; such as these mentioned in the two preceding verses; viz. tribulation, and distress, and persecution, and famine, nakedness, peril, or sword. The godly are liable to these evils; but they are helped to conquer, by looking beyond the hatred of men, that have a sinful hand therein, to the love of God, who hath a sovereign hand; and so looking on them as loving chastisements, and signatures of adoption: by faith they can see God venting his love, even in these things wherein men may be venting their rage, revenge, and resentment.—There are three ways further whereby personal afflictions are conquered, either by prevention of them, or by cheerfulness under them, or by profiting by them.

Sometimes by prevention of them, as when the Lord either prevents and diverts the dint of the stroke, that it shall not fall, or the damage of it, that it shall not harm, as it is said, Prov. xxvi. 2, "The curse causeless shall not come."

Sometimes they conquer these afflictions by cheerfulness under them: men are conquered so far as they are dejected and cast down, and when their hearts, like Nabal's die within them; but they are conquerors, so far as they are hearty and courageous in a spiritual sense, having the Spirit of God and glory resting on them; and are enabled to rejoice in tribulation; and are delivered from fainting in the day of adversity.—This cheerfulness is not only a natural affection, but a spiritual grace: Paul and Silas did sing praises in the prison; and the apostle rejoiced "that they were counted worthy to suffer shame" for Christ's sake, Acts v. 41. A believer is a conqueror over his afflictions by contentment; when "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. And again,

They conquer by their profiting by affliction: then have we the better of affliction, when we are the better by them, and get meat out of the eater. The believer looks upward to the providence of God, and he looks inward to his own heart, that he may improve, and get all sanctified, sweetened, and blessed to him. Thus a man may have benefit even by his adversaries, whether they will or not, which is the greatest victory over them.

The last enemy they have to be conquered, is death, 1 Cor. xv. 26; and over this enemy also the believer shall be victorious. Death shall not be able to separate Christ and him, as you see in the verses following the text; nay, death makes the union the more close. This union begins to be more perfect at death, as to the soul of the believer; for it wins nearer to him when it enters into glory; and the body being still united to Christ, rests in the grave till the resurrection, when both soul and body shall be blessed with the full enjoyment of him. Hence the song of triumph over death and the grave, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"—"But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. xv. 55, 57.

2dly, As to the nature and import of the conquest: believers being conquerors, supposes and imports these following things,

That they have got some saving acquaintance with the Captain of salvation, having abandoned the old general, the devil, under

whose standard all the children of men are still fighting, before they enlist with Christ; but the believer is one that hath deserted the devil's camp, and enlisted himself a soldier of Christ, in whom he sees all the magazine of military provision, and all the furniture for the spiritual war; having no expectation of reaching this victory by himself, or any creature, but only by the Spirit of Christ, he expects to mortify the deeds of the body, and to bruise the head of the serpent, knowing that not by might, nor by power, but by his Spirit must the victory be obtained.

The conqueror is one that resolves upon, and hath some acquaintance with the warfaring life of the Christian; that this life is a fighting life: the conquest supposes a battle, and weapons of war, and a putting on the whole armour of God; I have fought the good fight, says Paul: I have hell and devils to fight against; but now I have overcome, and arrived at the crown. The conqueror knows, that the Christian life is one of the sweetest of lives, and yet one of the sharpest of lives, in several respects; for, they that would follow Christ must not expect to be always in the mount to behold him transfigured before them; they must come sometimes down to the valley and fight; and, perhaps, as Paul said, Fight with beasts at Ephesus: they must not expect still to sail with a fair wind, but oftentimes to sail in the dark, and in a storm, when Christ seems to be absent. This resolution of a warfaring life, would arm the Christian against many stumbling-blocks, and prevent fainting when the trial comes to a height, and saying, Why am I thus?

The conqueror is one that is acquainted with the nature of the war; that it is spiritual, and that the weapons are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds, etc.; that it is managed through grace, and that sometimes by flying, sometimes by fighting, and sometimes by watching.

Sometimes by flying; a Christian soldier may conquer by flying; Flee fornication, says the apostle: flee from sin and you fight against it; flee from both inward and outward abominations, drunkenness, whoredom, lying, cheating, Sabbath-breaking, ill-company; shunning all appearance of evil: it is dangerous to parley with temptation, or to reason with the devil, whether you should venture on such a sin, or not; for, though you should muster up arguments, yet you may find the devil a better politician than you. But there are some evils you cannot flee from; and therefore,

Fighting must take place: when you cannot flee, the next best

is to stand your ground; "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil," Eph vi. 11. Stand fast in the faith, with an entire dependence upon Christ for new recruits of grace and strength from him; for, We are not sufficient of ourselves; our sufficiency is of God: I live, yet not I, says the apostle, but Christ liveth in me; even so, may a believer say, I overcome, yet not I, but Christ overcometh for me.

By watching; Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation. The work of a sentinel is not to fight but to watch the enemy's approach; and when he sees them, he tells the captain, and prays him to draw out his forces to oppose them, and so conquers: even so, the Christian soldier may conquer by watching; and upon the approach of temptation, praying the Captain of salvation to come with help against the enemy. The conqueror is acquainted with the war by flying, fighting, and watching.

The conqueror is one that is acquainted with, and his conquest imports acquaintance with, the power and policy of his spiritual enemies, and with the means of the victory, and the way of using the spiritual weapons. Such acquaintance hath he with the power and policy of the enemy, that he hath had the the sad experience of many foils and falls in the battle; yea, the saints may lose many battles, though they win the war at last: the liveliest of the saints may have some deadness; the holiest have some sin; most humble have some pride, the most spiritual and heavenly, have some earthliness and carnality; and the most denied, have some self: hence they may be frequently overcome, and lose their liveliness, though not their life altogether. It is true, the doctrine of the foils and falls of believers may be dangerous to the secure, and a rock of offence to them over which they may stumble. "Why," say they, "I am daily overcome by sin, and my heart dead like a stone in prayer; but my blessing on the minister, that tells me, Believers may be just like me; and so I conclude myself to be among the number of believers, and hope to be saved, as well as the best." O beware, man, lest this kind of reasoning prove your spot, to be none of the spots of God's children; a saint may be foiled and fall, but he will not lie among the dirt, nor wallow in the puddle, like a swine in the mire; but struggles, like a sheep in the mire, and be restless till he get out.

The believer also is one that knows the way and means of the victory, viz. the spiritual armour; and the way and manner of using these weapons, particularly these four,

The weapon of the blood of Christ; They overcome "by the

the blood of the Lamb," Rev. xii. 11, they know that this blood cleanseth from all sin, and so washeth away the enemy as a flood: they make use of this blood, as sin-expiating, wrath-appeasing, promise-sealing, and victory-purchasing blood.

The weapon of faith; 1 Pet. v. 9, "Whom resist stedfast in the faith." It is by this shield of faith they quench the darts of Satan; yea, This is the victory whereby they overcome the world, even their faith: and by this they overcome the god of this world.

The next weapon is the word, which is the "Sword of the Spirit," Eph. vi. 17. By this, Christ the Captain, defeateth the devil, saying, It is written; it is written so and so. When people observe only what is said by such and such a man, they are in danger to be tempted, and conquered by temptation; but when they resist temptation, by minding what is written in the word, they overcome.

The fourth weapon is prayer; Matt. xxvi. 41, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." This weapon Paul used when he besought the Lord thrice. The prayerless man is the vanquished man; but as long as one can pray in faith, and pray in the Holy Ghost, he is armed against the devil, the world, and the flesh. The wrestler with God in prayer is the conqueror.

II. The second head of the method, was, To shew in what respects believers are more than conquerors. The word *ὑπερνικῶμεν* is very emphatic, and such as we cannot easily reach in our language; it is as if we should say, We over-over-come. Now, I shall shew, in eight or ten respects, how true believers may be said to be more than conquerors. And,

They are more than conquerors, in so far as their Captain, who fights for them, is more than man, more than a complete match for all his enemies. Christ, the Captain of their salvation, is their almighty General: this is the ground of their conquest; it is through him that loved them, as we may shew afterward. Only here we may observe, that having him on their side, it may well be said, as in verse 31, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" And as Elisha said to his servants, 2 Kings vi. 16, "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them:" and when his eyes were opened at the prayer of Elisha, behold the mountain was full of horses, and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

They are more than conquerors, in so far as they can glory in their cross; and not only bear it with patience, but triumph in it

with pleasure, as the cross of Christ; for a man to glory in his own crown is no great matter, but to glory in his cross is more than a victory over it: thus did Paul, Gal. vi. 14, when he is opposing himself to the false teachers of his time, who sought to glory in these as their converts, whom they could persuade to be circumcised, and to submit to the legal yokes they wreathed about their necks; but, says Paul, God forbid, that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified to me, and I to the world. Thus were the apostles more than conquerors, when they could "glory in tribulations," Rom. v. 3, and rejoiced "that they were counted worthy to suffer shame" for Christ's sake, Acts v. 41.

They are more than conquerors, in so far as they conquer the greatest enemies in a little time; and with the least ado, or with little strength; and by very weak and feeble means. Amongst men it is usual for that party that hath the greatest forces to carry the day: but take a view of grace when first cast into the soul, particularly faith, it is but like a grain of mustard seed: it is like nothing, were it not for the strength of Christ that helps and makes it victorious. If a great army conquer a small handfull, it is but a victory; but if a small handfull, conquer a great army, this is more than a victory: as when that small grain of mustard seed overtops, and overcomes the whole world; for, This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith. The children of God sometimes conquer with a little strength, and by very weak and feeble means: it is all one to God to conquer by many or few.

They are more than conquerors, in so far as they can conquer without any loss to themselves, but rather gain. When one army defeats another, but with loss of thousands, or of the greatest part of the army, it may be called a victory; but when the one roots the other without any loss, and with great gain, then it is more than a victory. What does the believer lose, when he conquers the world and its lusts, when he conquers the devil and his confederates? Nay, he gains unspeakably by the conquest; for, he divides the spoil: he reaps profit and advantage by his tribulations; for, "Tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed: because the love of God is shed abroad upon his heart, by the Holy Ghost." They conquer with the least loss, and yet the greatest advantage to themselves.

They are more than conquerors, in so far as they conquer to the greatest loss and disadvantage to the enemy. Their greatest enemies are at first disabled, and at last destroyed. A man can con-

quer his enemy for the present: but he may recruit and recover again, and fall upon him with a second encounter, and be stronger than ever he was before: but a child of God, in conquering his enemies, not only foils them, but disables them; for the heaviest stroke the devil and his instruments can give, brings in most profit to them, and does most disable the enemy; as the last stroke the devil gave to our ever-glorious Head, did most of all disable the devil: for, when he bruised the heel of Christ's human nature to death, our Lord gave the serpent's head a kick, as it were, and thereby brake his legal power; for By death he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. Thus the most bloody stroke the enemies give, tends most of all to disable and weaken their power; while the believer renews his strength the more, and waxes valiant in fighting. Our Lord Jesus, the Captain, is also to sit at the Father's right-hand, till all his enemies be his footstool; and therefore all the believers' enemies shall be at last perfectly subdued unto them, sin, and misery, and tribulation, and sickness, and death itself, they shall be all "swallowed up in victory," 1 Cor. xv. 54.

They are more than conquerors, in regard they can be sure of the victory before the war be at an end. What assurance have they of this? Why,

Christ, their Head, hath overcome, and gained the prize already; and there cannot be a victorious head, and a conquered body: if the head be raised, from the dead, the body shall rise. Their final victory is as sure as Christ their Head is already victorious.

Their weapons are invincible; the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit, cannot fail to be victorious.

They are assured by the promise of God; for it is promised, that the God of peace will bruise Satan under their feet.

They are assured by the earnest of the full victory; the Spirit enabling them sometimes to mortify the deeds of the body: and as this Spirit is the earnest of the inheritance, so the earnest of the full and complete victory. God is a rock, and his work is perfect: he hath begun the good work, and will perfect it. If then he that is assured of the victory before the war was ended, is more than a conqueror, every believer in Christ may be so.

They are more than conquerors, in regard that they conquer, even when they do not fight; for, even the rest of God's people is glorious and victorious, Isaiah xi. 10. They are sometimes called just to stand still, and see the salvation of God; "Fear ye not,

stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." "The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace," Exod. xiv. 13, 14. The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong: but when his children only go to the field of battle, he just takes their work and warfare off their hands, as the church, Song ii. 3. "I sat down under his shadow;" thereafter it follows, "He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love." He took me off my own hand; His own arm got him the victory.

They are more than conquerors, in regard they conquer when they are conquered, and overcome the enemy, even in that wherein the enemy thought to have overcome. Any man can overcome in his victories; but the child of God overcomes in his foils and defeats, that he meets with; his very losses themselves are victories: what enemies design for their greatest overthrow and debasement, issues in their greatest honour and advancement; "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive," Genesis i. 20. He overcomes even there where he is beaten and overthrown. And hence these things that seem to be the means of ruining, are the means of raising him; yea, matter of glorification: "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong:" "My strength is made perfect in weakness," 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10. Hence also here the apostle says, "In all these things we are more than conquerors." What things are these? You see them in the preceding verse, Tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, and sword. These things which seem to be so distant and remote from conquering, so opposite and contrary to conquest, even in all these things we are more than conquerors. The devil's aim, in all the sufferings of God's children, is to draw them off from Christ, to make them murmur and despair, and desert their colours; but in this he is defeated and disappointed: for, God inspires his children with such a generous and noble spirit, that sufferings abate not their zeal and patience, but rather increase it; as one of Julian's nobles said to him, "We Christians laugh at your cruelty, and grow the more bold and resolute." Thus they beat their enemies with their own weapons.

They are more than conquerors, in regard that they conquer and overcome themselves: *Fortior est, qui se quam qui fortissima vincit, mœnia*: "He that can, through grace, conquer himself, is

more than he that can conquer a castle." He that ruleth his spirit, is more than he that taketh a city, Prov. xvi. 31. Here is a notable conquest, for a man to have a command and victory over himself, and his own heart; for, it enables him easily to defeat all other oppositions: this we could never do, if we do not conquer ourselves; for, he that is a slave to his lusts, will be a slave to his enemies: he that never conquers his carnal affections, will never conquer his crosses and afflictions. The carnal natural man is a captive to every temptation that he meets with; he is like a city without walls, that is easily taken. Where the strong holds of sin in the heart are pulled down, other enemies would be the sooner subdued; "O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries," Psal. lxxxix. 13, 14. This is the way to get adversaries subdued; "He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron," Rev. ii. 26, 27.

In a word, lastly, They are more than conquerors, in regard they conquer HIM that is unconquerable, and overcome him that is invincible. The children of God, to speak with holy reverence, do in some respects conquer GOD himself; and that two ways, namely, by the beauty of their graces, and the efficacy of their prayers.

By the beauty and loveliness of their graces, which he himself hath adorned them with; "Turn away thine eyes from me; for they have overcome me," Song vi. 5. These are the words of Christ to his spouse, the church of true believers: Thine eyes; that is, the beauty and lustre of thy graces: Christ is in a manner charmed and ravished with the graces of his own Spirit in his people; "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart, with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck," Song iv. 9.

By the efficacy of their prayers; the prayer of faith holds his hands, as it were, and will not let him go; as one says, Ligat omnipotentem, vincit invincibilem: "It binds him that is omnipotent, and overcomes him that is invincible." He suffers a holy humble wrestler to command him; "Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me," Isa. xlv. 11. It is said of Jacob, He held him, and would not let him go, till he blessed him; and hence he is said, as a prince, to have prevailed with God, and to have had power over the angel: and so

much was signified in the change of his name from JACOB to ISRAEL.—How prevalent was Moses's prayer, when God said, Let me alone! How powerful was the prayer of Elijah and Elisha! God gives himself up to be bound and held by their prayers; and thus the King is held in the galleries.

This victory, in prevailing with God, is the great foundation of all other victories. They that can conquer God, and bring him to their will, may soon conquer every thing else: having him for their friend, they need not care who be their enemies. They that can prevail with God, and have power with the Most High, may grapple with all encounters; and are vastly more than conquerors over all other things. But now,

III. The third general head, was, To speak to the ground of this conquest; it is through Christ we are more than conquerors. How? "Through him that loved us;" even through this glorious and mighty Lover.—This name of Christ, as our Lover, through whom we are more than conquerors, imports these following things.

The humble frame of the believing conqueror. To boast of being more than conquerors, looks very big; and seems to smell of self-confidence and presumption; therefore it is here corrected and qualified, namely, through him that loved us; and through his strength and power. The conquest we have over sin and suffering is not from ourselves, or our own strength: no: we may say, "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory," 1 Cor. xv. 57. And as Paul, 2 Tim. iv. 17, "No man stood with me," "notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me;" and it is through him strengthening that we can do all things: I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God, which was with me. When we are in a cheerful frame, we are ready, with Peter, to be too confident of our own strength; and this is dangerous: for then we grieve his Spirit by presumption: and he is thereby provoked to grieve our spirit by desertion, and withdrawing of his Spirit from us: to prevent this in Paul, a thorn in his flesh, and messenger of Satan was sent to buffet him; because it is better to be under the power of an affliction, than under the power of a lust.

The expression imports a suitable name and title given to the Captain of salvation, through whom we are more than conquerors: he is described from his love; and, indeed, by this name, as our Lover and Friend, he is best known to us. This name we frequently meet with in the sacred records: "Christ also loved the

church and gave himself for it," Eph. v. 25. "Who loved me, and gave himself for me," Gal. ii. 20. Who loved us and washed us in his blood, Rev. i. 5. The apostle mentions troubles and afflictions, things seemingly opposite to love; therefore it was pertinent, for the preventing of mistakes, to set forth Christ in his love.

It imports, that love was the spring that moved him to make us conquerors, and more than conquerors. Love made him take on our nature, 2 Corinth. viii. 9, "Though he was rich," yet, "ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," that "he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich,;" that is, though he was God, yet he became man, in rich grace and love towards us; Though he was "in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God;" yet he "took upon him the form of a servant," and made himself of no reputation, Phil. ii. 6, 7. And, indeed, that he should marry our nature to his own, and take it into the union and subsistence of his own divine person, it was the lowest abasement on his part, and the highest advancement on ours; In this was manifested the love of Christ towards us. His being born, living, dying, rising, and redeeming us, were all the effects and results of his love, whereby we become conquerors.

"Through him that loved us," it imports, the power and efficacy of his love, and the conquering nature thereof: his love was strong as death, and conquered death, and came off victorious; and through him this last enemy shall be destroyed: for, his love conquered all the curses of the law; he being made a curse for us; it conquered the wrath of God, and underwent this for us. This love of his conquers all our guilt, and takes us, with all the guilt we have. His love conquers our unwillingness to take him, and conquers our willingness to depart from him. Here was the greatest difficulty and obstacle imaginable; yet love came skipping over all these mountains. His love hath fought the battle and gained it, so as we have nothing ado, but chase and pursue the conquered foe.

"Through him that loved us," it imports, that love is the principle of his assistance that he gives us in the war.—Not only did love buy the weapons, for he bought grace at the rate of his precious blood; but love confers and puts on the weapons. His love rubs off the rust off the weapons: when they are out of use, he blows on our graces with a fresh gale, a rousing north-wind, or a refreshing south-wind: he gives strength to exercise grace, and to go from strength to strength; and carries on the victory to

perfection, making the feeble as David, and David as the angel of the Lord, Zech. xii. 8. Our strength is God alone. There are three things that in love he gives us for our assistance in the conquest over sin and affliction both, namely, his example, his work, his Spirit.

His example; 1 Peter ii. 21, "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that *we* should follow his steps." He hath conquered before us, "Having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them" in his cross, Col. ii. 15. He tells us, In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world: and therefore we are required to keep our eye upon him; "Looking unto Jesus," "who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame," etc. "Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds," Heb. xii. 2, 3. His victory makes for ours.

His word is what in love he gives us; and in this he goes forth conquering and to conquer: it is his chariot of triumph; "Now, thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the favour of his knowledge by us in every place," 2 Cor. ii. 14. Hence it is said, 1 John ii. 14, "Ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you;" and that in all the kinds of it, threatenings, precepts, and promises. This was the weapon whereby Christ foiled Satan, so and so it is written; and so must we overcome, even by the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

The Spirit is what in love he gives for our assistance in the war.—He enables us to conquer by his Spirit, that dwelleth in us. The apostle John, speaking of Antichrist and seducing spirits, says, "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world," 1 John iv. 4. It is by this victorious Spirit of Christ, that first we ourselves are conquered, and then are conquerors, and enabled to conquer all other things: we are first conquered and overcome in the powerful word of conversion; and then, by the same Spirit, he works in us all conquering and commanding graces, whereby we may be able to overcome.—He works the grace of faith, which is a conquering grace; for, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith," 1 John v. 4. This faith doth, by apprehending and laying hold on Christ, and drawing strength and virtue from him: whatever power there is in Christ himself, that power is interpretatively in faith, which is nothing but an improving,

and making use of that power of Christ.—He works love, which is another conquering grace: for, love is strong as death; and constrains the soul to fight under the banner of love, and overcome.—He works humility: and as there is nothing nearer ruin than pride; so nothing is nearer victory than humility: God himself resists the proud and gives battle against it; but he gives grace to the humble, and success with it.—He works also the grace of patience; and this earnestly encounters with the greatest evils: he conquers that suffers.

“Through him that loved us” “we are more than conquerors,” it imports, that the faith of his love influences the conquest: whenever we look to the banner of love, that he causes to be carried over our head, then we conquer, and are more than conquerors, in all these things; even in all tribulations and distresses: I think there is an emphasis here, intimating, the believer’s safety in the midst of trouble, under the broad banner of love: here is not only a conquest over all these things; but a conquest, and more than a conquest, in all these things, even while we are in the midst of them. Why? because our heavenly Lover spreads his banner of love over us; and it is a banner so extensive that it stretches itself over all these things, while we are in the midst of them, so as we are not only safe from them, when they are over; but safe in them, while they are burning like fire about us, and we like the burning bush amidst the fire. Why, the banner of love that is over us, is over all these things that would annoy us; over all the flames of the fiery furnace that would consume us. His love is extensive love, that spreads itself over all these things, that in them all we may be conquerors, and more than conquerors. Let these tribulations, be never so extensive, never so high, never so deep, never so broad, never so long, the love of Christ is more extensive, being a love that hath a height, a depth, a breadth, and a length unutterable; even as high as heaven, as deep as hell, as broad as time, as long as eternity.

Therefore, what shall I tell you, Sirs? Something more honourable can be said of the believer’s conquest on earth, than can be said of the glorious conquerors about the throne in heaven: the church triumphant above may be said, through him that loved them, to be more than conquerors above all these things, and above all tribulations, above all distresses, above all persecutions, above all perils and swords, above all the killing swords of human fury and violence; but something more honourable yet can be said of the militant church below, and of the poor believer, that hath the faith of the love of Christ, that he is more than a conqueror,

even in all these things, in all these tribulations, distresses, and persecutions, and swords of violence, when troubled on every side, yet not distressed, nor defeated, but defeating, and conquering, and gaining more than a victory.

How this? Even because they can see what the redeemed above can see no more; that is, when they see the banner of love over them, they see it extended so far as to see love in these tribulations, love in these distresses, love in these persecutions; fatherly love, even in, and over-topping all these rods of his anger that may be filled with the fury of men, yet fraughted with the love of God, who says, Fury is not in me.—Thus through him that loved us, and through him as our Lover, and in the faith of his love, we are more than conquerors; the glorious victory is wholly owing to the Lord our Lover: love leads the van; love fights the battle; love carries the day; and under this banner we are more than conquerors.

IV. The fourth thing proposed, was, To make some application. If it be so, as we have said, hence see,

That the Christian life in this world, is not only a wayfaring, but a warfaring life. The conquest supposes a battle; If any man will live godly in Christ, he must suffer persecution; he must resolve to fight, and not to lie in a whole skin, or to live an idle life. The apples of Paradise will not drop into our mouth without any toil, or trouble, or pains: Strait is the gate that leadeth unto life; and there must be a striving to enter, and striving in earnest, in sad earnest; for, many “Will seek to enter in, and shall not be able,” Luke xiii. 24; i. e. they who only seek, but do not strive; for violence must be used: The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.

Hence see the dignity and excellency of all true believers. The world looks upon them as contemptible, and easily conquered, and overcome; and therefore every person is ready to tread upon them, and trample them under foot: nay, but they are conquerors, and more than conquerors, and can triumph over all opposition. A true believer is one like “A king, against whom there is no rising up,” Prov. xxx. 31; unconquerable: he is a prince that prevaieth with God; and who can prevail against him when he is in good terms with God? He may be conquered in his person, but cannot be conquered in his cause; that will always hold out: the apostle Paul was neither conquered in his cause, nor conquered in his spirit, Acts xx. 24, Bonds and afflictions, says he, abide in me; “but yet none of these things move me.” So may all the true and

faithful servants of Christ, through grace, preserve themselves in a courageous frame of spirit.

Hence see what ground of comfort and encouragement it is to the faithful servants and followers of Christ, that they stand not by their own strength and power, but by the power of Christ; their conquering is not from themselves, but only from him: We are "conquerors through him that loved us;" mark it, Sirs: he says not, Through him whom we love, which might be truly said; but then it would have seemed to attribute somewhat of our victory to ourselves, and our love to him, which would have taken very much off from the sweetness and efficacy of the comfort and consolation, as if our victory depended upon us; but "Through him that loved us;" this gives the glory of it all to Christ: "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory," Psalm cxv. 1.

Hence see this victory proceeds from the love of Christ, which draws out his power. By his own strength shall no man prevail, but by the strength of Christ, under his banner of love. Our conquest springs from his unspeakable love. Nothing, says the text, shall separate us from the love of Christ; Why? Because his love is so prevalent for us, as to unite us, and keep us close to himself; this being the nature of love, especially of divine love, to join itself to us, to join us to it, and so to preserve what is joined to it. It is from his love that he afflicts us; and it is from his love that he strengthens us, and enables us to endure affliction.—Many are ready to judge of God's love by other things, as by corn, wine, and oil they enjoy from him; but it is best to try and discover his love by this fruit of it, namely, in the matter of victory, especially over our spiritual enemies: What strength have we to resist temptations? What ability to subdue corruptions? What power to submit to afflictions? What fortitude to bear up under, and glory in tribulations, distresses, and persecutions, and to make a sanctified and holy use and improvement of them?—Here is a discovery of Christ's love to us.

Hence see what matter of comfort it is to fighting believers, who, though their life be a fighting under the cross, both without and within; it is much for him, even to overcome himself, and his own unbelief, impenitency, and selfishness; and though he has his own difficulties in this fight of faith, yet he is so much more than a conqueror, that his victory is not dubious, but certain and manifest: the devil is legally disarmed, and evidently disappointed; the victory that the believer hath in Christ is won, and cannot be lost

again; it is a sure and continuing victory; for, whatever hurt or damage the church and people of God may receive, by a particular assault from a present cross, a fiery dart, or a frightful temptation, yet it is sure they shall have the full and absolute victory in the close. The light of nature, the Pagan philosophy, could never carry men beyond a doubt about their future happiness: the famous Aristotle is said, in view of death, to have expressed himself thus, *Anxius vixi, dubius morioa, nescio quo vado*: "I have lived in anxiety, I am dying in doubtfulness, and know not where I am going."—But you, believer, in Christ, may be sure upon the word and oath of God, Heb. vi. 17—20, where you are going: you need neither live nor die in doubt, if you live and die in the faith. The victory is not dubious: the crown of life is sure to him that is faithful unto death.

Hence see, that proud and wicked persecutors take a hard task, and an ill trade in hand, to fight against the faithful servants and people of God. The sons of pride and violence will come off with shame and disgrace; but the people of God, the children of light, will come off with honour and victory: "Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the LORD be glorified:" they killed you, under pretence of doing God service, saying, with a solemnity, Let God be glorified; "but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed," Isa. lxvi. 5. Happy the followers of the Lamb, who are listed under his banner, they may be oppressed, troubled, persecuted, they may be separated from the society of men, and ranked amongst devils; but can tribulation and distress, can persecution or sword, separate them from the love of Christ? Nay, by no means: Nay, in all these things they "are more than conquerors."—Men may wickedly curse, and commit them to the devil: but the devil will not take the prey; but be obliged to cry out, saying, "Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time, it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought?" Num. xxiii. 23.

Hence see what an useful name our Lord Jesus Christ bears in relation to us, even when we are in the field of battle; why, the name of the Captain is a Lover of ours; for, the conquest is through him that loved us, whose love is the victorious banner, under which we are more than conquerors; and that even in all these things that bear the image of hatred. When men are haters, he is a lover; their hatred is a killing hatred, but his love is a con-

quering love, over all their tyranny and treachery.—This name of his tells us how he conquers, and by what engine, namely, that of love; and how we may conquer, namely, by believing his love, and imitating his love.—This name of his tells us how we may get amends of our persecutors, and how to be more than conquerors over them, even by following the example of Christ, who conquered them that murdered him, by praying, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. We conquer our persecutors, and have the better of them, when we do them good for evil, and bless them that curse us, and do good to them that persecute us, and despitefully use us; then we have the day of them, and heap coals of fire on their head, which will either melt them down, or burn them up; either convert, or consume them.—This name tells us, that they mistake much, who think that tribulation, and distress, and persecution, and a drawn sword against us, are signs of God's hatred; nay, it is the direct contrary: for, his love mixing with all these things, is the ground of our victory, and the cause why in all these things we are more than conquerors. When the viper fastened upon Paul's hand, the ignorant people thought it was a sign of God's hatred, and that he was a murderer, whom vengeance would not suffer to live; tribulations, distresses, persecutions, perils, and swords, are vipers that may fasten upon God's children; but think not the worse, but rather the better of them; because they may be rather signs of love than of hatred: they shall shake off the viper into the fire, and catch no harm.

Hence then let us see the duty both of saints and sinners.

The duty of saints, that are Christian soldiers, and would desire not only to be so, but also triumphant conquerors. In order to this, it is your duty to keep your eye upon your general, Christ, and serve yourselves heirs to his victories, believing his love, and fighting under his banner, remembering that it is the fight of faith you are called to; therefore, you are to fight in the faith of his love; your valiant Captain is a vehement lover of yours; therefore, aim at believing in him, by sitting down under his shadow, Song ii. 3; and then, though you have no strength in your own hand, he will take you off your own hand, and that both for provision and protection, as he did the spouse in the following verse: as to provision, you shall have it to say, "He brought me to the banquetting house;" and as to protection, that "his banner over me was love:" and in both he will take you off your own hand; for when you essay stretching out the withered hand, or endeavour to sit down under his shadow, or in the use of appointed means to be

active, then he will make you sweetly passive, by taking you up in his arms; "He brought me to his banqueting house;" and by lifting up his banner over your head, "his banner over me was love." In this way you cannot fail not only to be more than conquerors in the issue, but even in the midst of all your adversaries, and adversities; "In all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us." Live under this conquering banner.

See the duty of sinners that are strangers to this glorious and victorious Captain of salvation, through whom all believers and lovers of him are more than conquerors through his love; you are yet slaves to sin and Satan, captives to the world, and the flesh, and the lusts thereof, warring against God; but, who can harden himself against God and prosper? Your duty is, if you would not live and die in captivity to sin and Satan, and remain in perpetual slavery and misery, O come and enlist with our Lord Jesus Christ, the Captain of our salvation, that through him you may become conquerors over sin, and Satan, and death, and misery.

I have a ministerial commission, which neither men nor devils can take from me, and it is to take on soldiers to our Lord Jesus Christ, and to call them to come under his banner of love: his name is the Lord that loved us, he is a lover of ours, even of mankind sinners; and he courts you with his love, with a word of love, and a word of reconciliation. What! Is he willing to receive such a rebel as I am! Yea, he not only says he is willing, Whosoever will, let him come, and him that cometh, I will in no wise cast out: but he swears that he is willing; As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of sinners: as sure as death will be in earnest with you ere long, so sure is he in earnest, praying you to be reconciled to him.

O enemy, will you henceforth lift up arms of rebellion against that God who hath thrown down his arms of war and wrath against you, saying, in Christ, "I am pacified toward thee, for all that thou hast done?" What! pacified in Christ toward you! And, for shame! will you not be pacified, or at peace with him? If you will not be drawn to him with these cords of love, nor conquered to him with the power of his love, to your eternal salvation, you shall be conquered by the power of his wrath, to your eternal perdition: If you would not be crushed with his anger in the day of wrath, O refuse not to be conquered with his love in the day of grace. O Sirs, slighted mercy will bring you to the hottest hell! If this offer of mercy be slighted, it will gall you to the

heart for ever, as the murderer that, when he was to be executed for many murders, confessed, that nothing stared him in the face, nor galled him so much, as his murdering a pleasant child, when it was smiling in his face. Well, will you fight against mercy, when it is smiling in your face, and spurn against the bowels of love that are moving and yearning towards you? If you do so, nothing will torment you in hell so much as this. Therefore remember his name that is calling you to come to him: to whom is the gospel calling you to come? It is to him that loved us; it is to a lover. Oh! will you render him hatred for love? Is there any here saying, Is there love and mercy for me, for the like of me? Yea, for the like of you; though you have been like a devil for enmity against God hitherto. He speaks to you like a God of love; and if this fire of divine love melt your heart, and conquer your enmity, and draw your heart to him, then you may go away with a glad heart, triumphing in this valiant lover, that was able to win such a heart as yours, and saying, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword." "NAY, IN ALL THESE THINGS WE ARE MORE THAN CONQUERORS, THROUGH HIM THAT LOVED US."

SERMON XXI.—B.

The Day of Effectual Calling,

A LEVELLING DAY; OR, THE HEIGHTS FROM WHICH
SINNERS COME DOWN IN THE DAY OF
EFFECTUAL VOCATION.

“Zaccheus, make haste, and come down.”—LUKE xix. 5.

OUR Lord Jesus Christ is such a wonderful Physician, that he has a salve for every sore, a remedy for every malady, and a cure for every case, that any sinner on earth can possibly be in. In the close of the preceding chapter we find him miraculously healing Bartimeus of his bodily blindness; and here, in the beginning of this chapter, we find him curing Zaccheus of his spiritual blindness. Bartimeus was a poor man, sitting by the way side, begging; and he is mercifully raised up to be effectually cured of his disease. Zaccheus was a rich man, sitting very high on a tree by the way side, gazing; and he is mercifully brought down to be effectually cured of his disease. Whether people be in low or high circumstances, there is suitable help and relief in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, this Zaccheus is here described in the context six different ways.

By his nature and nation, verse 1. He was a Gentile, and a man of Jericho; a place once destroyed and cursed by Joshua: yet, even in this very place, as there was a Rahab to be saved, so there was a Zaccheus to be converted, by the Lord Jesus. The baseness of a place does not hinder Christ from calling his chosen. Heaven is open to one place as well as another: therefore, wherever ministers of Christ go, they may open up their heavenly commission, and preach the gospel to every rational creature under heaven, not knowing where a blessing may light. The cross of Christ, if we may allude thereunto, had four corners, inviting the four quarters of the world to come to him. If we consider the body of Christ upon the cross, we may learn how every part of

him bids welcome all comers: his feet fixed on the cross, to wait and expect all passengers; his arms stretched out and spread abroad, to embrace all that come to him; his head being down to sound into sinners ears, "Behold the love of a Saviour;" his blood gushing out like a stream, to refresh all that come; and none shall be excepted, but these that except themselves. But, again,

He is described by his profession and occupation, verse 2. He was a publican, and the chief among the publicans. They were persons detested by the Jews; for, after the Jews were subject to the Roman empire, they received the tribute money; and they were Romans and heathens: and he being the chief of the publicans, it is probable also that he was a notorious sinner; for, we find frequently that publicans and sinners were joined together. When Christ would describe a notorious and incorrigible sinner, he says, Matt. xvii. 17, "Let him be unto thee as a heathen man, and a publican." Now, this Zaccheus was a publican, and so hated by the Jews; a sinner, and so hated of God, who is angry with the wicked every day; but Christ came to call sinners to repentance, and so bring them into favour with him, as all that belong to Christ will be, they being loved in him with an everlasting love. Let no sinner then despair of mercy through Christ. It is true, if they go on in sin, and live and die, in a sinful, Christless state, they have ground to despair; and everlasting horror and despair will be their latter end: but if they come down with Zaccheus to the Lord Jesus, and so leave off their sinful course, as he did, they shall meet with the same welcome. Despair of the mercy of God in Christ, which is infinite and flowing, is one of the most prodigiously aggravated sins: Cain sinned more in despairing of mercy, than in killing his innocent brother. Judas sinned more in hanging himself, through despair, than in betraying his Master, through avarice. It is dangerous to pass a peremptory sentence upon any man's final state: here is a publican called.

He was described by his quality; he was rich, verse 2. It is hard for a rich man to enter into heaven, when he makes his wealth his strong tower: and hence, Not many rich and noble are called; but some there are. Riches, in themselves, are not hindrances to Christ. One observes, concerning Joseph of Arimathea, he was a great man in the eyes of the world, but a greater in the eyes of God: the wise men that came out of the east to worship Christ, were both rich and honourable. Neither the poverty of blind Bartimeus, nor the riches of this man, Zaccheus, did hinder

the Lord Jesus Christ from shewing favour and mercy towards them. Let rich and poor, high and low, and all sorts of sinners here, Look unto him, and be saved, and seek after a sight of him, as Zaccheus here did ; who is described,

By his present disposition and intense inclination, verse 3, " He sought to see Jesus." It would seem, from the event, that it was something more than curiosity that prompted him to seek after a sight of Jesus. It is probable, that by this time, the Spirit of God had convinced Zaccheus that he was a sinner, a great sinner ; and now he hears the report of Christ as a Saviour sent from God : and while the convinced sinner is hearing of a Saviour, even before effectual calling, he may be under such impressions, by the common motions of the Spirit of God, as tend to carry him out towards a blind, yet ardent desire after a yet unscen and unknown Jesus ; though yet these convictions, impressions, and desires may have nothing in their nature saving : however, in the elect of God, they may be saving evidentially, by virtue of the divine decree connecting them in the issue with his saving work. Thus Zaccheus, while other rich men were despising Christ, and would not give a farthing for a sight of him, is filled with an earnest desire after a sight of Christ, even before Christ manifests himself to him. It is a hopeful thing, that some saving good is to follow, when a secret desire is wrought in the heart, after a sight, even of a yet unknown Christ ; and when the report of Christ, works in a people a desire of acquaintance with him. But here you may observe the impediments which hindered Zaccheus from getting a sight of Christ ; and there are two mentioned : the first was outward from the people, namely, the press ; the second was inward from himself, namely, that he was of little stature. Hence we may observe, That when people desire to see Christ, and win near to him, there are manifold impediments to hinder it, both from without, and from within. From without, the hinderance may be a press : pressing business, pressing company, pressing crowds of worldly encumbrances, that tend to divert them from Christ, and spiritual things. From within ; as Zaccheus was of little stature, and could not get a sight of Christ ; so in spirituals, they are of little stature, having little affection to Christ, little conviction of their need of Christ, little sense of sin and wrath, and of the dreadful curse they lie under, while they are without Christ ; the stature of the good inclinations may be so little, and low, that they cannot see over the head of the pressing multitude of their outward worldly vocations ; yea, from within, there are not only

privative but positive impediments, not only little good about them, but much evil, especially an evil heart of unbelief. However, Zaccheus pursues his desire to see Christ, notwithstanding of the impediments. And so,

He is described by his endeavours that backed his desire, and the measures he took for attaining his desire, verse 4, "He ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore-tree to see him:" because "he was, to pass that way." O but it is good for people to cast themselves in Christ's way! though there be no infallible certain connexion, by divine promise, between natural and saving grace: yet the poor beggar, that keeps the way side, where the king passes, is certainly wiser and nearer his purpose, than the man that should go up to a distant mountain where the king never comes. It is good to be about God's hand in the use of means, even though we should mistake the right manner of using them: for, the Lord may send a word of power to direct them to the right way of entertaining him, as here he did Zaccheus, who here manifests his ardent desires to see Christ, by climbing the tree that was in the way where Christ was to pass: his desires were attended with endeavours; The sluggard desires, and has not; for, his hands refuse to labour: but here the desires of Zaccheus set both his hands and feet a-work, to climb up the tree. Rich men are generally proud, and would scorn to climb up upon a tree before a multitude; and reckon it mean and below them to expose themselves at that rate: but here Zaccheus, though he was rich, and a kind of prince, and chief among these that were of his order and office; yet he is not ashamed to climb the tree like a child, which, perhaps he would have blushed to do, had any earthly prince been passing by: but now, he values not the scorn of the multitude, might he get but a sight of Christ.

Remark, "That they that truly desire a sight of Christ in ordinances, will not regard the reproach and scorn of a wicked world." Many in our days, especially of the rich sort, think shame to be seen climbing the trees of duties and ordinances, for fear their neighbours gaze and laugh at them, and mock them; but that is an evidence that there is no secret heart desire to see Christ excited within them, otherwise they would despise the reproach of fools.

Zaccheus is described, by his effectual vocation, verse 5, where our text lies. Where you may observe two things. 1. The means. 2. The manner of his vocation, or effectual calling.

The means thereof. And here you may observe four powerful means.

The first mean was Christ's coming to the place; and, indeed, the day of effectual calling is the day wherein Christ comes by his gracious presence; it is not running nor climbing, nor using any endeavours that will be effectual, till the Lord himself come to the place. We may say of the place where we are met, What though people are come, and ministers are come; if Christ himself do not come, by his spiritual presence, nothing will be done. As Martha said to Christ, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died:" so we may say, if Christ be not here, we will remain dead in sin and security; but if Christ be here, his presence will quicken us to a lively hope, to a lively faith, to a new and spiritual life.

The next mean was Christ's looking up. Zaccheus had climbed up the tree with his hands and feet; and, behold! Christ follows him with his heart and eyes: "He looked up." Observe here, That whatever any person is, that belongs to Christ, he will surely give a look of love, and cast an eye of pity toward that person, whether he be down among the crowd, or up among the branches of a tree; let him be a cripple on the ground, or a climber on the boughs, Christ will be at him: though he were as far down as Bartimeus, sitting by the way side, begging; or as far up as Zaccheus, sitting on the tree, gazing: Christ will look over thousands, and give a look to him: "He looked up." Most of these whom Christ is about to call to himself are in such circumstances, that Christ must, in a manner, look up to him: and, O! what amazing grace is this! It is a wonder when Christ condescends to look down from heaven to us on earth, but for him to come down to earth, to look up to us here, is a wonder of wonders! That he should put himself among the rank of worms, Psalm xxii. 6, "I am a worm, and no man," and that for this end, that he might look up to men, placing themselves upon, and pleasing themselves in their own heights and altitudes; this is wonderful! Christ and sinners are sometimes represented in such a situation, as if the world were turned upside down, as indeed it is by sin; Christ is brought down so low, that, when he looks to the sinner, he must look up; and the sinner exalted so high, that when he looks to Christ, he must look down. High attempts, and lofty endeavours of our own will never do us any saving good, till Christ give us a saving look; and, as it were, looks up to us with pity and compassion, so as to cause us to look down with shame and confusion.

Another mean was Christ's seeing him; "He looked up and

SAW him." Christ not only looked up to the tree, but he saw Zaccheus there; he went there to see Christ, and Christ went there to see him: and so they behoved to see one another. Hence observe, That when a poor soul is seeking to see Christ, it is a happy omen that Christ is seeking to see that soul, and that they will not be long asunder. Here is a notable spur and excitement to diligence when we are seeking after Christ, Christ is seeking after us; when we would have communion with Christ, Christ would have communion with us; when we have an eye toward Christ, Christ hath an eye toward us: it is, notwithstanding to be observed here, that as we do not read that Zaccheus saw Christ, till first we are told that Christ saw him; so it is sure, Christ's looking to us precedes our looking to him: no soul can look to him with an eye of faith and hope, till he look to that soul with an eye of pity and mercy. If any seed of spiritual desire after Christ, was now sown in Zaccheus' heart, it was a fruit of Christ's seeing him. Though exercised souls are not always sensible of this, but may be, sometimes, through ignorance, thus speaking with themselves; "O! how willingly would I see Christ! but I know not if he be willing." What, man! this is a piece of blasphemy; if you be truly willing, his will has preceded yours; if your eye be toward him, his eye has preceded yours: "He looked up and saw him." Zaccheus could not see him till he looked up and shewed his face to him: none can see him savingly till he shews and manifests himself. It is true, Christ saw the multitude about him, and they saw him; but it was in another manner that Christ and Zaccheus saw one another: Christ conveyed himself into his heart with the look that he gave to him, and the word that he spake to him. Christ saw Nathaniel down below the tree, when he little thought that Christ was looking to him; "When thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee." And here, he saw Zaccheus upon the sycamore-tree, when he little thought he would notice him.

The fourth means of this effectual calling was Christ's speaking to him. Hence we may learn, That when Christ gives a merciful look; he gives a merciful word; when he gives a look of love, he gives a word of power; his gracious looks and his gracious words go together: the ordinary means of effectual calling is by the word of Christ accompanied with the power of the Spirit of Christ; Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But now, what said Christ to him? This leads me to the other part of the text, viz

The manner of his vocation, or effectual calling. Here again we may observe these four things, concerning it.

It was a particular call; he speaks to him by name, ZACCHEUS. It is said of Christ, John x. 3, "He calleth his own sheep by name." Here remark, That the effectual call is a particular call; they that are thus called are dealt with particularly, as if God were speaking to them by name and surname. I might here observe the signification of the name, ZACCHEUS, which signifies, pure, clean, and undefiled; but surely he was never rightly called Zaccheus, till now, that Christ called him so; and, by the particular call, did effectually sow the seed of holiness and purity in his heart: and that it was effectual appears from the event, his joyful answering the call, verse 6; his repentance and reformation, verse 8; and Christ's declaration concerning him, verse 9.

It was a declarative call; special direction being given him with respect to his present duty, Come down; as if he had said, That place, that situation you are in is too high and incommodious for seeing and entertaining me; come down from the height that you may better see me. The nearest sight of Christ is best; while you are too high, you are too far from me; Come down. Here observe, That these who desire to see Christ are ready to climb to such heights, and so take such ways of their own, as afterwards they will find themselves obliged to descend from, and abandon; for it is vain to think of getting a saving sight, or a right view of Christ in a way of climbing up by our own natural and legal endeavours. "Come down,—Zaccheus;" you must descend from your own natural heights and legal altitudes, to the gospel valley, and the low path where Christ walks. If Zaccheus had been where he ought to have been, Christ would not have called him to come down: it is true, it was a lawful and laudable shift for him, considering the great press and his low stature, to climb up the tree that he might get a sight of Christ; but if he should sit still and rest upon the sycamore-tree, when Christ the tree of life was come so near, to be the only resting place of his soul, all his pains and labours would have been lost. There may be very lawful, laudable, and commendable means and endeavours, that people may betake themselves to, and they may climb very high therein, that they may get a sight of Christ; but if they sit down and rest upon the tree of their own duties and endeavours, whatever external, common and passing views of Christ they may get, yet there is no saving sight, or special acquaintance with Christ they can have, unless they come down from all dependence upon means,

down to Christ himself. The call here is directive; and the order and direction he gets is, "Zaccheus,—come down." Whom Christ calls, he directs to proper duty; and it is the first duty of souls that would have communion with Christ, to come down, that they may meet with him.

It was a hastening call, "Zaccheus, make HASTE, and come down." As you ran before the rest, and made haste to get up; so you must make haste to be down. The call of Christ requires a present answer, without delay: Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation: to-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. The outward external call by his word is such a hastening call, that no man ought to delay a moment to come to Christ, at his call; for a delay is dangerous: why, if the next moment should cut his breath, and so cut the thread of his life, before he come to Christ, he is eternally and irrecoverably lost. The internal and effectual call is such a hastening call, that whosoever are the subjects thereof cannot find in their hearts to delay a moment. No sooner did Christ speak the word, than Zaccheus "made haste, and came down."

It was a kindly and a loving call, as appears from the reason of it; "For to day I must abide at thy house;" "come down," for I must be your guest: I will sup with you, and you with me to-day. Here is a blessed guest inviting himself, the Lord Jesus Christ. Here is a place of entertainment, thy house. Here is the fullness of the visit, it was not passingly and transiently; but he was to abide at his house. Here is the necessity of it, I MUST abide at thy house: a sweet necessity of love and kindness; I must do it. And here is the time when this was to be done, "TO-DAY I must abide at thy house:" the time to favour thee with a merciful visit is come. Here is surpassing and preventing love and mercy, Christ kindly calls upon Zaccheus, when Zaccheus was ashamed and afraid to call upon him: Christ invites himself to his home, when Zaccheus was thinking of nothing but a passing view of him by the way. And here it is remarkable, Zaccheus not only gets what he desired, but much more; he gets Christ to be his guest. When Christ calls, he shows his kindness far beyond all our desires and hopes; and whom he calls effectually, he draws with the cords of love: having loved with an everlasting love, he draws with loving-kindness.—So much shall suffice for the explication. I now confine myself to this one doctrinal proposition.

OBSERV. That they are certain heights people are apt to ascend, from which the Lord Jesus, in the day of effectual calling, causes

them to come down, in order to their having communion with him. "ZACCHEUS, MAKE HASTE, AND COME DOWN."

Christ, in the day wherein he manifests himself, speaks to his people, as Joseph did to his brethren, Gen. xlv. 9, "God hath made me lord of all Egypt, come down unto me, tarry not." So says Christ, The Father hath put all things into my hands; yea, All power in heaven and in earth is given unto me: come down unto me, and tarry not; make haste, and come down in a way of subjection and submission to me and my righteousness, renouncing all dependence upon other means. When they would help themselves, and add some cubits to their own little stature, by climbing up to sit on a tree, he calls them to come down and sit in the dust: as the expression is, Isa. xlvii. 1; and to see that in Christ only is their help; and that by no means or endeavours of their own can they add one cubit of their spiritual stature, nor advance their own spiritual welfare, but in a way of coming down from all confidence in the flesh. There is no communion with God in Christ, but in a way of believing, or by faith; and what is faith, but a down-coming grace? It is a quitting grip of all boughs and branches of creature-helps, that we are ready to climb up unto, and rest upon; and of taking hold of the man whose name is the BRANCH, the tree of life, under whose shadow alone we can be safe. Our safety lies not in climbing up to any other tree, but in coming down below the shadow and covert of the blood and righteousness of Christ. Here alone communion with God is to be had; hence, says the church, Song ii. 3. "I sat down under his shadow with great delight and his fruit was sweet to my taste."

The method we propose for the further opening up this subject, as the Lord shall be pleased to countenance, is the following.

I. To speak of some of these heights from which people must come down, that would answer the gospel-call.

II. Shew in what respects they come down.

III. Offer some remarks on the day of effectual calling.

IV. Assign the reasons why the Lord calls them to come down, and that with haste.

V. Deduce some inferences for the application.

We would speak of some of these heights and altitudes, from which all must come down, that would answer the gospel-call:—

The sinner must come down from his high thoughts, and towering imaginations; his high and lofty reasonings that exalt themselves against the knowledge of Christ: for, this is one of

the great ends of the gospel, to level these heights: "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds," 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. Proud reason in man is so far out of reason, that many reason themselves out of religion, and set up reason against faith, mustering up millions of thoughts and imaginations, and carnal objections against believing in God, and against believing also in Christ.

The sinner must come down from the height of his natural efforts to save himself, by the strength of his own free-will, or natural power and ability: for, as by nature we are without strength, Rom. v. 6, for any spiritual work, not being sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing as of ourselves; so, by strength shall no man prevail; and, It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.—Hence,

Sinners must come down from the height of their own legal endeavours, in "going about to establish their own righteousness," Rom. x. 3. This is a tree that all men naturally attempt to ascend, whenever awakened to a thought of heaven and hell: but in vain do men set their duties against their sin, as if these could take them away; for it is only "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," John i. 29. In vain do they set their works against the wrath of God; that fire will devour them as stubble; it is Jesus that delivereth from the wrath to come. Yea, in vain do men set the strength of Christ against the righteousness of Christ, which they do, when they get strength and enlargement from him to pray, and perform this or the other duty, then they make that a ground of their being justified. From this legal spirit it is that men confound assistance with acceptance; and think themselves accepted because assisted; but men may be assisted to do miracles in Christ's name, and yet never be accepted, Matt. vii. 22. The ground of acceptance is only in the Beloved, Eph. i. 6.—From this legal spirit it is also, that men confound the marks of faith with the grounds of faith; and so think they have no ground of believing, while they want the evidences of faith.

Men must come down from the height of their false maxims concerning GOD, as if he were such an one as themselves, and did approve of their sin, Psalm l. 21: false maxims concerning CHRIST, as if he were a Saviour to save them in their sin, while they want not to be saved from their sin: false maxims concerning themselves, as if they had good hearts toward God, not knowing their hearts to be "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," Jer. xvii. 6: false maxims concerning religion, as if they

could be religious without being regenerate and born again; whereas Christ says, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," John iii. 3.

Men must come down from their heights of false hopes, that are withering branches; for, "The hypocrite's hope shall perish," Job viii. 13. Many hope they will mend afterwards, though they give themselves a latitude for the present; they will get grace between this and the grave. Thus multitudes ruin themselves. Many presumptuously hope in the mercy of God, as the devil would have Christ casting himself down from the pinnacle of the temple; for why, The angels will hold you up. No, says Christ, Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God, Matt. iv. 5, 6, 7. So it is, when Satan, or the flesh, say, Plunge yourselves into sin, mercy will help you out: but, the mercy of God should lead to repentance, not to rebellion.

Men must come down from the height of worldly props and carnal confidence in arms of flesh; "For the Lord hath rejected thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them," Jer. ii. 37. These are refuges of lies, as Israel found when they were brought to say "Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses," Hos. xiv. 3. As if they had said, We have formerly trusted that the Assyrian would save us; that our horses and cavalry would help us; but we find them all to be vain confidences: Lord, it is in thee the fatherless find mercy; in thee the helpless find relief, and in no worldly props.

Those that would answer the gospel-call must come down from the heights of notable attainments, whether in respect of unsound experiences, natural graces, or gospel advantages. There are unsound experiences: some have convictions and awakenings, like these of Cain, Saul, and Judas; terrors and tremblings, like those of Felix, when Paul preached of "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come;" fears and sorrows, like these of Esau; joys and affections moving, like those of the stony ground hearers; partial reformations, like those who, through the knowledge of Christ, escaped the gross pollutions of the world. These are all slender branches to trust to and rest upon: you must come down from them.—There are natural and common graces also, that people must quit the hold of, as well as false convictions: some have a cradle faith, that they had all their days; this is so far from being of a saving nature, that men may have a temporary faith, like Simon Magus, who yet was "in the gall of bitterness, and in the

bond of iniquity," Acts viii. 23. They may suspect their graces, who were never humbled for their contraries; who have faith, and yet never were convinced of, nor humbled for their unbelief; who have love, but never were convinced of, nor humbled for their enmity; and have knowledge, but were never humbled for their ignorance.—There are gospel-advantages that many have and yet abuse; but, in as far as they are abused, they are rotten branches to hold by. Some abuse a gospel profession, contenting themselves with the form, without the power of godliness; they abuse gospel privileges; and, in respect of these are exalted to heaven, and yet shall be brought down to hell. Many abuse gospel grace, and turn the grace of God into wantonness, and to encourage them in their sin. Many abuse gospel promises, by making a loose, carnal application of them; and of the blood of Christ, and of redemption purchased thereby, without seeking after the effectual application of it to us by his holy Spirit. Many abuse gospel liberty and freedom from the law, as a covenant, by taking liberty thence to sin, as if they were free from the law as a rule of life too. Many also abuse gospel principles, such as this, That without Christ we can do nothing: as true a word as in all the Bible, that without him we can do nothing spiritually, formally, and acceptably good: however, men may do things materially good; but hence the carnal heart of many infer, Seeing the whole work is Christ's, in point of power: therefore they will do nothing, in point of means, but leave all to Christ; and so make Christ a lackey to their idleness, and a pillow to their sloth. Though the use of the means hath no casual influence in obtaining the good promised; yet there is a necessary connection of order, between using the means and gaining the blessing: thus, though the Lord promises many signal blessings, in absolutely free promises, Ezekiel xxxvi. 25,—29; yet, For all these things he will "be enquired of by the house of Israel," verse 37. That persons ought to be in the use of means, and have reason to expect a blessing in so doing, is evident from many places in scripture, particularly, Prov. viii. 32, 33, 34. Matt. vii. 7, 8. These are wicked abuses of gospel advantages, by these who receive the grace of God in vain.—These and the like attainments, experiences, graces and advantages, are vain boughs and branches, from which they must come down.

I mention another height that men must come down from, that would answer the gospel-call, and that is the height of vain apologies and excuses for their sin. There are some shifts and

apologies that are very poor, mean, and low ones : but I will name two that are very high and proud apologies.

The one is drawn from the translation of sin upon others, as if they were not guilty, but only such as tempt and ensnare them : hence some blame the devil only for that which is their own sin. But, if you father your sin upon the devil ; it may be, indeed, he is the father begetting ; but the flesh is the mother conceiving and bringing them forth ; “Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed,” James i. 14. Some father their sin upon God himself, as Adam did, when he said, “The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree,” Gen. iii. 12. As if he had said, “If thou hadst not given me this companion, I had not eaten.” But, says the apostle, “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God,” James i. 13. Yet thus men are ready to justify themselves and condemn others ; yea, and God himself.

Another proud and lofty apology is drawn from false comparisons ; men comparing themselves with others that are worse ; like the Pharisee, that compared himself with the Publican ; “God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men,” Luke xviii. 11. As if he had said, “Lord, I thank thee, I am not so ill as such a man, such a rake, such a debauchee, etc. ;” and so hiding themselves under the cover of a comparative righteousness. But, as runners in a race hasten their pace, by looking to those that are before them ; but do not slack it by looking to those that are behind them ; what a folly is it, if we be running the Christian race, to look to these that are behind, and reckon we are farther forward than they, and therefore we need make no more speed in religion ! But rather we are to look to these that are before us, and be ashamed that we are so far behind, and put the spur to our dull and naughty flesh, that we may run “the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith,” Heb. xii. 1, 2. You do not use to look to a poor begger, and say I am richer than he ; and need no more : and will you deceive yourself in the matter of religion, saying, I am better than such a man ; and therefore I am right enough !——From these and the like heights, men are to come down. Come down Zaccheus.

II. The second thing proposed, was, To shew in what respects they come down, who answer the gospel-call. And here it may be enquired, by what steps they come down ; and to what place or situation they come down.

1ST By what steps they come down. We name only these four.

The first step is consideration: none come down from the height of their vain confidences, till they be brought to consideration and thought; "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies," Psalm cxix. 59. God complains of men for want of thought and consideration; "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider," Isa. i. 3. And it is the first thing God calls people to, when he wills them to come down to meet with him, Hag. i. 5, "Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; consider your ways."

The second step by which they come down is concern: people may make a little step by consideration, and presently step back again, and let the thoughts pass away; like these who are slight hearers of the word, that opens up and discovers their case: but like men beholding their natural face in a glass, and go away, and straightway forget what manner of persons they were; therefore the next step must be concern, deep concern about salvation, saying, with the jailer, What shall I do to be saved? Or, with Peter's hearers, Men and brethren, what shall we do? The man is awakened to a restless concern, in the use of appointed means, how to get down from that dangerous and dreadful height, whence he is ready to fall into utter ruin.

The third step is despair and disappointment: finding all his legal hopes and expectations failing him; all his legal endeavours vain and useless; yea, vanishing, dying, and giving up the ghost. When a man comes down to this step, viz. to despair of help in himself, and to despair of relief from creatures and means, of themselves saying, as it is, Jer. iii. 23, "Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains:" By this step he just quits the grip of all those branches which he had hold on, and trusted to. He finds himself disappointed of these confidences, and that he cannot prosper therein: "The Lord hath rejected thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them," Jer. ii. 37. Some are wrathfully disappointed; for, the Lord destroys them and their confidences both, as the word here will read; I will destroy thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them. But others are mercifully disappointed; when God famishes their false confidences, it is a plague even for a man to prosper in them, and a mercy to be starved out of them, and to be brought down by despair and disappointment.

The fourth step I mention is resolution: the soul now resolves, through grace, to quit hold of all these lofty to-looks, and to come

down and take hold of Christ alone, saying with the prodigal, when he came to himself, "I will arise, and go to my father," Luke xv. 18. If he had not been starved, but had got bread enough abroad, he would not have risen up to go to his father's house. Thus when the Lord hedges up our way with thorns, that we may not find our paths, then we come to say, "I will go and return to my first husband," Hos. ii. 7. Indeed, none would come to this resolution, if the Lord did not blast their vain confidences, so as to make them ashamed of them: "Thou also shalt be ashamed of Egypt, as thou wast ashamed of Assyria; yea, thou shalt go forth from him, and thine hands upon thine head," Jer. ii. 36, 36.—This resolution to come down to Christ, though it be the best, yet it is the last shift that men take: see the disposition of man naturally, Hos. vii. 11, "Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart: they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria." The dove's young are taken from it every two months; and yet, like a silly bird, as it is, it builds in the same place, where it was deprived of its young, never remembering it will be robbed again and again, even as oft as it builds there: just so do men build their residences where they cannot but be still bereaved, till God bring them to put in practice this resolution to come down and build low, upon the sure soundation. This leads me to the next thing here: as by these and the like steps they come down: so,

2dly, To what place or position do they come down? I shall here but name these four things they come down to, when they answer the gospel-call: Come down, Zaccheus.

They come down to self-denial, Matt. vi. 24; "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself," says Christ. Self must be abased, and Christ exalted: the soul that comes down to Christ, is brought to self-abasement, self-abhorrence, self-judging, and self-condemnation: yea, self-hatred and detestation; "Now mine eye seeth thee," said Job; "wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes," Job xlii. 5, 6.

They come down to the gospel-terms of life and salvation; that is, to the renouncing of all legal terms and conditions, to which you can never come up.—You have heard perhaps, men speak of coming up to the terms of the gospel, saying, You must be so and so qualified, humbled and penitent, before you can come to Christ: why, this is, indeed, an ascending up, instead of coming down. But the call is, Come down, Zaccheus; to the terms of the gospel market: that is, to get all things freely, "without money, and without price;" all things for nothing, Isa. lv. 1.

They come down to God's righteousness, and submit to that, quitting all righteousness of their own as filthy rags. This, proud man has no will, by nature, to come down or submit to: "They being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God," Rom. x. 3. They that answer the gospel-call, they come down to the sure foundation that God has laid in Zion, disclaiming all confidence in the flesh; all confidence in their duties, prayers, tears, frames, and good affections or actions.

They come down to God's will, both his commanding and disposing will: to his commanding will, saying, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Brought down to an appropriation of the holiness of the law, and to a disapprobation of themselves for want of conformity to it. They are brought down also to the disposing will of God, to a submission to his providence, though he should order poverty, adversity, reproach, and contempt, if it be for his glory and their good. The man is delivered from the power and rule of a murmuring spirit. It is much for proud nature thus to come down.

III. The third thing proposed, was, To offer some remarks on the DAY of effectual calling. We observe only these things shortly from the context concerning it.

"It is a particular day, wherein the Lord gives a particular call to such and such a person, as it were, by name; ZACCHEUS, come down. I have called thee by name." Though God, in calling his children, doth not give them all the particular names wherein they were baptized; yet he particularizes them so as they are made to see, that they, in particular, are called, as it were, by name: for, God deals with their heart as particularly as if he were speaking to none else; yea, the Spirit of God directs the word as close as Nathan to David, Thou art the man.

We remark, "That the day of effectual calling is a day of dispatch: Make HASTE and come down, says the text." Much business is done and dispatched in that day: and the Lord does not suffer the soul to linger, but hastens it, as the angels did Lot out of Sodom. When Lot lingered, the angels pulled him out. God cries to us by his word, saying, "Haste you, man, woman; come out of this world, lest you partake of the judgments thereof." Men delay and are even averse from coming to God; but, in the day of effectual calling, Christ, the Angel of the covenant, by his Spirit, pulls them out, and compels them to come down in haste: in the day of effectual calling the soul makes haste. Now is the

accepted time, and now is the day of salvation. I made haste; I delayed not to keep thy righteous judgments.

I remark, "It is a day of love and kindness, wherein Christ gives a kindly look, as well as a kindly word." It is here said, Christ LOOKED up to Zaccheus, and saw him. Zaccheus wanted to have a look or a sight of Christ; but he little thought that Christ wanted to give a look to him. But as Jesus looked down upon Peter, when he was too low, in order to bring him up; so we may say, he looked up upon Zaccheus, when he was too high, in order to bring him down. In both these cases the look was a kindly look. Christ enjoins us to look unto him and be saved; but he must give the first look.

We remark, "That the day of effectual calling is a day wherein Christ invites himself to an interview with the poor soul: for, 'To-day,' says Christ, 'must I abide at thy house.'" Here Christ invites himself: and, indeed, when he calls effectually, he invites himself to the house, to the home, to the heart of his people. He seeks not our invitation, but precedes it: he is said to prevent us with the blessings of goodness, Psalm xxi. 3. Kindness begins on his side; he lays himself in our way, by promises, and proffers of mercy. O! happy these to whom Christ is saying, "This day, I must come to your house, to your family, to your closet, to your dwelling."

I remark, "That the day of effectual calling is a necessary day; 'This day,' says he, 'I MUST abide in thine house.'" There is a blessed necessity he is under; as it was with Christ, when he met with the woman of Samaria, John iv. 5, it is said, "He must needs go through Samaria." And, as it is said of his bringing in his scattered flock, John x. 16, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice." There was a necessity of purpose, of purchase, of promise, and a necessity of love in the case; and the thing must take effect.

We remark, "That the day of effectual calling is an abiding day, so to speak: it is a day wherein Christ comes not to make a transient visit, but a designed visit; designing to tarry and abide: This day I must ABIDE at thy house." It is a set day, wherein he designed from all eternity, to meet with such a soul. As it is said of Israel, Psal. cii. 13, "The time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come." A time set and appointed for his stay and abode in order to shew his favour: and though his sensible presence is not still abiding; yet he gives such a visit, as to leave a pledge of

his constant abode: "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever," John xiv. 16.

We remark, "That the day of effectual calling is a meeting day between Christ and the sinner: a day of communion and fellowship between him and them; wherein he makes homely and free with them and theirs: 'To-day I must abide at thy house.'" As if he had said, "You and I must be housed together: your house must be my house; your table my table; yea, your heart must be my home: I will not only stand at the door and knock, but I will make kings keys; you must open to me, and I will come in, and sup with you, and you with me."

I remark, "That the day of effectual calling is a notable and remarkable day." The day of effectual calling is a remarkable day, and that in two respects, viz. the remarkable names, and the remarkable signs and properties of it.

It hath remarkable names in scripture; it is called a day of power, Psalm cx. 2. A day wherein God exerts his power, for breaking the rebellion of the nature; as he did in the case of Zaccheus the publican.—It is called a day of espousals, and a day of the gladness of Christ's heart, Song iii. 11. For then the match is made up, between Christ and the believer.—It is called a day of salvation, 2 Cor. vi. 2, "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." It is true, every gospel-day may be so called; but, in a special manner, the day of effectual calling; for then, as Christ said to Zaccheus, it may be said, This day is salvation come to thine house.—Again, it is sometimes called a day of vengeance, Isa. lxi. 2, The day of vengeance is in mine heart; for the year of my redeemed is come. Then the Lord takes vengeance on all spiritual enemies, sin, Satan, and strong corruption; the vengeance of God and the temple pursue them.—Sometimes it is called a day of small things? Zech. iv. 10, "Who hath despised the day of small things?" The beginnings are ordinarily small, but the latter end may greatly increase.—It is called a day or time of love, Ezek. xvi. 8, Behold, when I saw thee polluted in thy blood, thy time was a time of love; for then he gives many a love token.—It is called a day of life from the dead, as the day of the conversion of the Jews shall be, Rom. xi. 15. Then the hour cometh "when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live," John v, 25.—In a word, it is called a day of the Lord's making, Psal. cxviii. 24, "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."

All days are of his making, but this especially; ministers cannot make such a day.

It is remarkable for the signs and properties of it. I name four. It is remarkable for success, liberty, victories, and discoveries.

The day of effectual calling is remarkable for success, because then the pleasure of the Lord prospers in his hand, and hearts are drawn to him, as Zaccheus's heart here was; for, he made haste and came down. Why, then Christ rides in his majesty, according to Psal. xlv. 3, 4. "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty; with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness." O man, woman, came there ever a word of power to your heart that made you a volunteer to the Son of God? Such a word as went out through, and in through your heart, and opened all the bolted doors thereof to the King of glory? It is a day remarkable for success.

It is a day remarkable for liberty; The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath anointed me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, Isa. lxi. 1. Many have come hand and feet bound, tongue and heart bound to preachings and sacraments; but there came a word of power that opened all their prison doors. The entrance of the word gives light, life, and liberty; liberty and freedom from all the threatenings and curses of the law; freedom to enjoy and make use of all the promises of the gospel; freedom to go in the strength of the Lord, making mention of his righteousness, even of his only. Then the man is at liberty to walk, to run, to fly, for his strength is renewed; he mounts up on wings as an eagle. Such freedom had Zaccheus, when he not only received Christ joyfully; but frankly forsook his former wicked way of living, and made restitution of all the wrongs he had done, verses 6th, and 8th, of this chapter, where the text lies. "And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully."—"And Zaccheus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor: and if I have taken any thing from any man, by false accusation, I restore him fourfold."

It is remarkable for victory; victories over hearts, victories over corruptions, victories over Satan. O Sirs, do any of you remember the day when, though one would have given you all the world, you could not get heart to follow the Lord in duties and worship; yet, lo! quickly you had it to say, Or ever I was

aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Aminadab? When though you were frightened with legions of devils, and legions of lusts, and great regiments of corruptions within you, or ever you were aware, you were made to believe and to lay hold on Christ, and so, by faith, to turn to flight the armies of the aliens, and say, Through God I shall do valiantly: "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory," 1 Cor. xv. 57.

It is remarkable for discoveries; such discoveries of God, as makes the soul to say with Job, Now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself. Such discoveries of sin and self, as makes one say with Asaph, So foolish was I and ignorant, I was as a beast before thee. Truth, Lord, I am a dog; I am a devil, a monster. Such discoveries of the world and the vanity thereof, as makes it appear nothing. Pleasures, and honours, and crowns, and sceptres, all vanishing nothings. Such discoveries of spiritual and eternal things, as make them appear in their excellency, and makes the man to give transient thoughts to transient things, and permanent thoughts to permanent things. But especially such discoveries of Christ by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of Christ, as makes him to be seen and admired in his infinite worth and excellency, so as all things appear worthless in comparison of him. The man sells his all for this pearl of great price. He is seen in his fullness and sufficiency, as he in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily: in his fullness of merit and Spirit, beauty and bounty, majesty and mercy, grace and glory. He is seen in his wonderful meetness and fitness for glorifying all the perfections of God, and for answering all the needs, straits and wants of the soul. The work of redemption is seen in him to be a work worthy of God's glorious excellencies, and suiting to the soul's lost condition, which is made to go into this method of salvation with wonder and admiration. O Sirs, have you seen the King in his beauty, and beheld King Solomon with the crown upon his head? Have ever the beams of his glory shined in upon your heart, according to 2 Cor. iv. 6, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ?"

Some may think, O! what is that the man is talking of? A sight and discovery of Christ's glory! That must be some wild enthusiastic notion; for our part, we never saw any glory beyond that of the sun, moon, and stars. O poor soul! saw you never any greater glory than that? I tell you, there is infinitely greater

beauty to be seen ; and if you say you believe the Bible, you must own it. Is not the word in the Bible, " We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory ; even as by the Spirit of the Lord ? " 2 Cor. iii. 18. Is not that word in your Bible, " The word was made flesh ; "—" and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth ? " John i. 14.

But may some think, What do you talk of seeing Christ ! Is he not at the right-hand of God in heaven ? It is true, we do not speak of seeing him with the bodily eye ; The heavens must retain him, till the time of the restitution of all things. It is not by any light like that of visionaries ; but we see the God-man by the eye of faith, and spiritual understanding, in the glass of the word. We see a God in Christ, reconciling the world to himself. We see his grace, his glory, his beauty ; though yet we cannot express what we see, we cannot explain to the world what we see : words cannot represent the beauty and glory that is in Christ, or the sweetness and comfort that is felt in him, when discovered. They that see him, can say no more but that they see him all grace, all glory, all beauty, altogether lovely : and it is no fancy or imagination of him. It is no imaginary idea of Christ as man ; but it is, according to scripture, an intellectual apprehension of him as God-man : witness Paul's experience, Gal. i. 16, He revealed his Son in me : and David's experience, Psalm lxiii. 2. O " to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary ! " In a word, it is just such a discovery of Christ as he was pleased to give of himself to Zaccheus here, verse 10, " This day," said Christ, " is salvation come to this house."—" For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." It is a view of Christ as the Seeker, the Saviour, and Salvation, of the poor lost sinner.—So much concerning the DAY of effectual calling.

IV. The fourth thing proposed was, To give the reasons why the Lord calls them to come down, and that with haste, in the day when he calls effectually ; " Zaccheus, make haste, and come down." And,

1st, Why he calls them to come down. He doth so, for the six following reasons, amongst others.

We are called to come down because it is God's great end, in the dispensation of the gospel of his grace, that self may be abased and Christ may be exalted. See Isaiah ii. 11, 17, " The lofty looks of man shall be HUMBLED, and the haughtiness of men shall be

BOWED DOWN, and the Lord alone shall be EXALTED in that day." "And the loftiness of man shall be BOWED DOWN, and the haughtiness of men shall be MADE LOW: and the Lord alone shall be EXALTED in that day." The high and lofty One, who inhabits eternity, cannot bear with high and lofty men, who inhabit houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust. Men must come down either in a way of judgment or mercy, that the Lord alone may be exalted.

The Lord calls men to come down, because, while they ascend too high, they are in a dangerous state. Before they be effectually called down, they are in danger of falling down and destroying themselves. If they come not down at God's call, and with his help, they will be brought down with shame and disgrace; for, "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble:" whereas, they that come down, and humble themselves under his mighty hand, they shall be exalted, 1 Pet. v. 5, 6.

He calls us to come down, because the farther down we come, in a state of due humiliation and abasement, the higher shall we be set up in a way of exaltation and advancement. As it was with the glorious head of the body, the church, his humiliation to the lowest, made way for his exaltation to the highest honour; "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that comes down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven," John iii. 13. Where, by the bye, we may observe what a wonderful person our Redeemer is. In one respect he was never out of heaven: for, when he was on earth, he calls himself the Son of man, which is in heaven: and yet, in another respect he both descended from heaven, and ascended to heaven: and both this low descent, and high ascent, were necessary for him as our Surety: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" Luke xxiv. 26. And, indeed, in some conformity to him, all that ascend, must in some respect descend; and the lower they come down, the higher will they be raised up.

They are called to come down, that so Christ may have a footstool on which he may mount his throne, and that free grace may be exalted in their salvation. While men are proud and lofty, and standing upon their altitudes and eminences, boasting of their own strength, glorying in their own abilities, resting on their own righteousness, and building their hope and confidence in their own excellency, industry, endowments, natural or acquired, Christ is put out of his throne, and free grace, reigning through his righteousness, cannot be exalted. But when once a man begins to come

down, he is content to be, as it were, a stepping-stone for Christ to be mounted up; satisfied to be a debtor to free grace, reigning through the blood of Christ to all eternity. "Where is boasting then? It is excluded." It is excluded! "By what law? Of works? Nay, but by the law of faith," Rom. iii. 27. Christ is made,—wisdom, and righteousness, and all, that no flesh might glory in his presence but that he that glorieth might glory in the Lord.

They are called to come down, that they may be valley ground for receiving the seed of the word, and being fruitful, which they cannot be, while they remain on their heights, no more than the tops of high rocks can be expected to prove a fruitful soil. Christ is "the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys," Song ii. 1. He loves to deck and beautify the low valleys, and make them fruitful and fragrant with his presence.

They are called to come down, that they may meet with Christ, and be housed with him, who loves to dwell and be housed with the humble: "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones," Isa. lvii. 15. This was the reason why Christ called on Zaccheus to come down, that he might meet with Christ, and that Christ, and he may be housed together: "Make haste," says he, "and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house." And this comprehends many more reasons, why, in a day of effectual calling, they are called to come down. Why, they must come down to get a better look of Christ, than they can have by climbing upon a tree. They must come down to embrace Christ, and receive him in their arms. Down to entertain him in their house and in their heart. Down to worship at his feet, of whom the Father has said, And let all the angels of God worship him. They must come down to tread in his steps, and keep the same ground. And in a word, they must come down to walk with him, Micah vi. 8, "Walk humbly with thy God." Or, as it is in the Hebrew, HUMBLE THYSELF to walk with God. Proud man scorns to walk with a meek and lowly Jesus; yea, with the high and glorious God, but wants to be as gods, and above God: but you must come down and humble yourself to walk with God.

2dly, Why must they make haste and come down? What is the haste, say you? Why, there is need of that haste here which David speaks of, Psal'n cxix. 59, 60, "I thought on my ways, and

turned my feet unto thy testimonies." Then it follows, "I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments." There is need of answering the gospel-call in haste.

Because time is hasting away; the wings of time are flying with the utmost speed. O Sirs, time, time; short and precious: therefore, make haste and close with Christ, while it is the accepted time, and day of salvation.

Because the day of salvation is hastening away: gospel offers, sermons, and sacraments, ministers and ordinances, all are in haste. I have read of the birds of Norway, where the days are shortest, that the birds are swiftest. The day of grace being a short day, there is need of haste: Now is the accepted time, NOW is the day of salvation.

Because death is making haste. That black scythe is mowing down old and young, like grass, here and there; and death shuts the door of gospel-offers for ever; therefore there is need of haste.

Because judgments are making haste; temporal judgments and spiritual judgments: and the particular judgment at death, and the general judgment of the great day. All are making haste, and crying to us to make haste to get into the city of refuge before it be too late, and the avenger overtakes us.

Eternity is making haste. The angel is about to cry, with his hand lift up to heaven, and to swear by him that liveth for ever and ever, that time shall be no more, Rev. x. 5. What then will follow? Nothing but eternity; eternity of weal or wo.

Because Christ is calling on us in haste, saying, Come, come; Whosoever will, let him come. His language not only is, Come to me, poor soul; but also, Come with me: come with me from Lebanon. He is making haste to put a close to his word of redemption by power, even as he was in a haste to accomplish the work of redemption by price; and he will never rest till he hath it to say of this, as of the former, it is finished.

V. The fifth thing proposed, was, To deduce some inferences for the application. Is it so, That in the day of effectual calling, there are heights to which men are apt to climb, from which the Lord calls them to come down, and hastily to come down? Then hence, I infer these following things.

See how high and haughty men are by nature; for as mean and low as they are, yet they affect heights from whence they must come down. The heights to which they aspire are several ways expressed in scripture and whence they, like Zaccheus, need to

haste down. Some are as high as the towers on which they build their hope; thus it is said, The rich man's wealth is his strong tower. Some are as high as the mountains on which they confide; but in vain is salvation looked for from the hills, or multitude of mountains; truly in the Lord only is the salvation of his people. Some would be as high as the clouds: but they are called clouds without water, and morning clouds that pass away. Some would be as high as the stars; but they are called wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. Yea, some are said to be as high as heaven in respect of certain privileges; but though they are exalted unto heaven, they shall be cast down to hell. What shall I say? Men affect to be even as high as God: Ye shall be as Gods, was the first temptation; and this prevailing, men set themselves in the throne of God; yea, would exalt themselves, like so many Antichrists, Above all that is called God: and hence spurn at the government of God, and strive with their Maker: and hence no wonder that men seek to be above one another; yea, to be gods over others. The spirit of Diotrefes, and love to have the pre-eminence, and to be Lords over God's heritage, and over men's consciences is too evident in many.

Hence see, that the gospel-market may be called a down-coming market; and gospel-grace, down-bringing grace. Men generally have a false notion of the gospel. So much do they affect to be high, that they think, if they see Christ, they must climb up, and be very high, very holy, very good, very penitent; yea, very eminent folk; but know not that they must come down from their heights, from their imaginary holiness and goodness, and be laid flat with the ground, and be nothing. They must come down from that thought that they are rich, and increased with goods, and stand in need of nothing. This thought will keep them away from Christ. But they must think, and know, that they are poor, miserable, wretched, blind, and naked: and that they stand in need of everything.—Hence, I say, the gospel-market may be called a down-coming market, where the price of wares doth not rise but rather fall. It is true, all the gospel wares and riches are bought with the price of blood, blood of infinite value. It was a high price to Christ; but to you in the gospel offer, the price is no price at all; for, all the buyers are to buy, without money, and without price. Yea, the price falls lower than men can think or imagine. This market is lower than the Popish market, where good works are the price; lower than the legalist's

market, where such and such good qualifications are the price. Lower than the Arminian market, where the act of believing, by the power of free-will, is the price. It is not a market of man's free will, but of God's free grace; nor of the power of nature, but of grace. It is a flying on the wings of grace, to the throne of grace: and this sovereign grace brings down all to her footstool, that share of her royal bounties. They are made content to be debtors to free grace.

Hence see the reason of God's dispensations towards his people that are of an humbling and down-casting nature. As he calls them by his word, so also by his providence, to come down and lie at his feet. The children of grace have no reason to grudge the want of these things, which they are naturally ready to trust to. It is a mercy to be brought down. It may be, God denies you riches; well, perhaps they would have been your confidence. Perhaps he denies you frames and enlargements; well, it is possible, you would have rested on these, as your refuge and righteousness. People may be mistaken concerning God's way towards them; it may look like wrath, when it is love. God disappoints you in all your own ways and shifts, and that by down pulling dispensations, breaking the branches you hang by. The fiery serpent stings you; why? It is not to kill you, but to make you look to the brazen serpent, Christ, on the pole of the gospel. The avenger of blood pursues the soul out of all his lurking holes; but it is to drive you to the city of refuge. A deluge of heavy judgments may come; but it is not to drown thee, but force thee to the ark. Personal afflictions, family afflictions, natural afflictions, all are levelled for breaking down your false confidences, and bringing you down to Christ. See Hos. ii. 8.—14. The matter is, if God has a mind to convert thee, he will never leave thee, without some one thing or other upon thy soul, tossing thee, wearying thee, vexing thee; that thou shalt never have quiet, till at length thou land upon Christ. Such is the baseness and degeneracy of man's nature; we are like Joab, Absalom sent for him, he will not come; then comes the second summons, no; he will not answer. Well, says he, I will give a summons of another nature, and so he goes, and sets all Joab's corn-fields in a fire: destroys all his confidences, as Jer. ii. 37. The corn-field of hopes and props must be set a-fire; thus Manasseh could never be brought down till brought to extremity among the thorns in Babylon, and then he knew that the Lord was God.

Hence see the nature of true faith; it is a coming down. It is

sometimes called a coming out, when it respects a leaving this world, and the Antichrists therein; Come OUT of her, my people, Rev. xviii. 14.—Sometimes it is called a coming in, when it respects a being housed with Christ; “Compel them to come IN that my house may be filled,” Luke xiv. 23.—Sometimes it is called a coming up, when it respects a mounting heaven-wards; “Who is this that cometh UP from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?” Song viii. 5.—Sometimes it is called a coming down, as here, and elsewhere, particularly, Isa. xlvi. 1, “Come DOWN and sit in the dust,” etc. And thus faith may be designed, as it respects the soul’s descending from all these heights men are ready to climb and aspire unto. It is a coming from self-exaltation to self-humiliation. No grace sets a man so high in God’s esteem, nor so low in his own esteem, as that grace of faith; which, viewing God’s infinite excellency, make the creature sink to nothing. By unbelief we set ourselves up before God, but by faith we come down.

How reproveable are they, who instead of coming down, and sitting in the dust, are setting themselves up on such heights as to ascend presumptuously the very throne of God; pretending a zeal for Zion’s King, and yet abusing his authority, and prostituting his royal prerogatives, by their pretended censures and excommunications, passed without any power, but what is sinfully arrogated and assumed, without any cause or ground, but what is imaginary and fictitious, as hath been documented unto the world. Yea, prosecuted violently to the exposing of the discipline of God’s house, and matter of laughter to a vain and profane generation, while exercised against those whom it cannot be executed against by the law of God, or man; nor by any rule of scripture or reason. If any enquire, how the proceedings of the separating Brethren, in these matters, appear to be sinful heights, and unwarrantable extremes, and extravagances, and a sinful climbing up, instead of coming down to keep upon solid ground? Why, that this work of separatists is not of God’s approbation, or agreeable to his word, will appear in these particulars.

If it is a work that deviates from the good old way; Jer. vi. 16, “Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein; and ye shall find rest for your souls.” Chap. xviii. 15, “Because my people hath forgotten me, they have burned incense to vanity, and they have caused them to stumble in their ways from the ancient paths, to walk in paths, in a way not cast up.”

If it be supported and carried on with lies, calumnies, and reproach; Isa. xxviii. 17, "Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding-places." Ezek. xiii. 22. "Because with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life."

If it covers violence with a mask of zeal; God hates robbery for burnt-offering: "For I the Lord love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt-offering;" Isa. lxi. 8. "And him that loveth violence his soul hateth," Psalm xi. 5.

If consequently it turn the keys of the temple into swords and staves, and instruments of fury, and fiery persecutions: "Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him, Be ye come out as against a thief, with swords and staves?" Luke xxii. 52. "For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off forever," Obadiah verse 10.

If it bear the mark of madness, or of men's being plagued in their prudentials; "Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of these wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid," Isa. xxix. 14. "The days of visitation are come, the days of recompense are come; Israel shall know it: the prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is mad, for the multitude of thine iniquity, and the great hatred," Hos. ix. 7.

If it foster pride, arrogance, and lordly pre-eminence: Zeph ii. 10, 11, "This shall they have for their pride, because they have reproached and magnified themselves against the people of the LORD of hosts. The Lord will be terrible unto them: for he will famish all the gods of the earth; and men shall worship him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the heathen." 3 John verse 9, "I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not." And if it lead men to act the part of lords over men's consciences.

If it shun the light. John iii. 20, "For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved."

If it make men unnatural and unsociable; Rom. i. 31, "Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, in-

placable, unmerciful."—The prodigious heights, that are of such a nature and tendency, and have such concomitants, that they that climb them, must come down humbly, otherwise they will fall down headlong.

Hence see, that few are called effectually, because few have come down to entertain Christ in their hearts and houses. They have no will to come from the tree they have climbed; they hold fast by the branches thereof. Many hold so long by some rotten branch, that they are in danger of letting Christ go his way, and call no more, saying, My Spirit shall no longer strive with them. But here is a mark of effectual calling, the soul is made, gladly and hastily to come down to Christ; down to his school, as a Prophet, to be taught of him; down to his altar, as a Priest, to be accepted in him; down to his footstool, as a King, to be blessed and ruled by him.—Why, say you, must we not come up to Christ and up to his terms? Nay, man, you are far enough up already: you are for more terms than he is seeking of you. He seeks that you come down from all terms, conditions, and personal qualifications; to a renunciation of your all, which is nothing, and to an embracing of Christ's all, which is all in all. The soul, in effectual calling, is made to come down from self-love, to self-loathing; from self-estimation, to self-abhorrence; from self-will to God's will; from self-ease, to an enduring of hardship, and a taking joyfully the spoiling of our goods, by plunder, and the spoiling of our names, by reproach and calumny: down from self-confidence, to a renouncing of all confidence in the flesh, and a placing our confidence only in God: from self-fullness and sufficiency, to self-emptiness, and contentment to be beggars at the door of grace's all-sufficiency, and daily travellers between creature-emptiness, and Christ's fullness.—Down from self-righteousness, to a counting all our own righteousness but filthy rags. A sight of God, as so glorious in holiness, that this attribute cannot be vindicated without a perfect obedience; and so glorious in justice, that this attribute cannot be satisfied without a condign satisfaction of infinite value; both which are only to be found in Christ. This brings down all lofty thoughts of self-righteousness, and makes the soul cry out, In the Lord only have I righteousness. In a word, a day of effectual calling is a down coming day: the soul that was rich and increased with goods, comes down to his shop to buy his wares, his tried gold, his white raiment, his eye-salve. The soul that was climbing too high, comes down to sit under his shadow, who is the tree of life; down to his pasture who is the

good shepherd; down to his wine-cellar, to be fed and feasted with him in his banqueting-house; down to his green bed of fellowship with him, in his pleasant fruits.

See hence how unkind it is to delay when Christ is calling us to haste and come down, and saying, To-day, even to-day, I must abide at thy house; I would be in to thy heart: "Now is the accepted time." The present time is the time wherein God calls you to come down and work in his vineyard. When death comes he will call you no more. The present time is the time wherein he is casting open his door to all beggars, saying, To-day ye may be saved; if ye delay till to-morrow, the door may be for ever shut. The present day is the day wherein the judgments of God are begun; his judgments are in the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are to learn righteousness. Come down, and own that ye are yet to learn the lesson of coming down, instead of climbing up.—There are three things should be considered by you that are lingering and putting off the time.

Your delay hardens you heart: Go thy way, said Felix, I will hear thee at a more convenient time; but that time never came. Time is not at your command.

Your delay wearies God, and not man only; I am weary with forbearing, saith God; and with waiting on this generation: If it be a small thing to weary man, saith the prophet, will ye weary my God also? If you wear out his patience, you are undone for ever.

Can you tell how long God will spare you? Can you tell me that you will be out of your grave till this day eight days? Do you know what a day may bring forth? Then, this moment, hearken to his call, when he is saying, Haste, haste; make haste, and come down.

Hence see the duty of all that hear the gospel, namely, to come down and sit in the dust, and to quit hold of all the branches by which they are holding, that they may come and take hold of Christ, the righteous branch. Let me here, exhort, excite, and direct you.

Let me exhort you to come down, and quit hold of all the branches wherein you confide. What branches?

Some hold to the branch of worldly confidences, minding only earthly things, and cast anchor there, making earth their heaven; but this world is like a floating island, such as some we read of, where it is folly for sailors to cast anchor, lest the land swim away with the ship. Oh! dangerous trusting to floating and flying things.

Some hold by the branch of carnal excuses, when invited to come down to the gospel supper with Christ, Luke xiv. 18, 19, 20, They all made excuse; and, among the rest, one said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them." Augustine made these to represent the five senses, which men want to gratify; instead of coming to Christ; called a yoke, because we have them, as it were, in pairs; two eyes, for seeing; two ears, for hearing; two nostrils, for smelling; two jaws, for tasting; and a twofold feeling, outward and inward: and a yoke of oxen, because occupied about the earth, and earthly things: but, Come down, Zaccheus; come down from the top of Amana and Hermon, from these mountains of vanity.

Some hold to the branch of proud self, setting themselves above all others, and embracing even the doctrine of devils, such as that, of forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2, 3. * * * But pride must down, for it is abominable in the sight of God.

I have read a pretty story, or a pretty fable, "Of an angel and a hermit travelling together: the first thing they met with, on their way, was a stinking carrion; at which the hermit stopped his nose, but the angel smiled; afterwards they saw a strumpet decking herself proudly and pompously, at which the hermit smiled, and the angel stopped his nose." The moral teaches us, That nothing is more abominable to God, and his holy angels, than pride and vanity; and of all pride, none more hateful to God than religious pride; men's saying, Stand by, for I am holier than you: these are a smoke in his nose, a fire that burneth all the day, Isa. lxxv. 5.

Some hold by the branch of human precepts and examples; their fear toward God is taught by the precepts of men, Isa. xxix. 13; for which God there threatens to make the wisdom of their wise men to depart, and vanish into folly, verse 14. When people make the precepts and examples of men, be they never so good, their rule, their Bible, no wonder that they turn aside into crooked paths, and be led forth with the workers of iniquity. I mentioned some heights formerly, that men attempt to climb in vain, and from which they must come down: I do not here resume them.

Some, I may add, hold by the branch of their own good purposes and resolutions; some by the branch of their own good duties and earnest prayers; but these confidences will fail you: therefore, Come down, Zaccheus; come down to Christ; for, many

shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able, because they come not down to Christ, and to the straight and narrow way; so straight and narrow is the gate, that you cannot enter with the bunch upon your back, whether the bunch of sin and wickedness, or the bunch of your legal services and righteousness.

Some hold by the bunch of their good affections: they have been so and so affected in hearing and communicating; they have shed tears at ordinances sometimes, and wept abundantly; and therefore may they not expect that this will do them good, and render them the more acceptable to God? Nay, man, what a tender twig it that you are trusting to. You may be as joyfully affected at a comedy, or dreadfully affected with a tragedy: is there any religion in these affections? or anything beyond nature? or any real mark of grace therein? Nay: come down, Zaccheus, to the Jordan of the blood of Christ, and wash there, and not in the puddle of thy own tears, otherwise thou hast no part in Christ. Come down, and let him wash you, who says, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me.

Some, again, hold by the branch of their own home bred faith, saying, "We believe as well as we can; and may we not hold there?" Nay, nay: come down, Zaccheus; the object of faith is the author of faith, and the all of faith; yea, the act of faith, whereof we are the subject acting, is an owning Christ to be all, itself to be nothing. The faith of God's operation quits its hold of all things; and of itself too; and throws itself into Christ's arms, that he may take and keep hold of it.

Finally, Some hold by the branch of legal hopes and expectations, saying, "Why, if I cannot believe of myself, I will wait;" not doubting but this they can do: still some twig of old Adam they will hold by. But, come down, Zaccheus; and know that you are not sufficient of yourself to think any thing as of yourself; your sufficiency must be of God in Christ; therefore, come down.

I shall endeavour to excite you by a few motives. Meantime, this call concerns sinners and saints both; for, as unregenerate, proud nature, that is still aspiring to climb and clasp about the forbidden tree, needs to come down; so the remains of proud nature, in the regenerate, makes it the duty of saints to be still coming down. Honest communicants, though they have communicated never so worthily, and acceptably, and have come down to entertain Christ in their house, and heart; yet, through the remaining power of natural pride and self, being ready always to

put confidence, even in received graces, frames, enlargements, attainments, or some old-covenant twig: some good thing done by them, or wrought in them, instead of trusting only to the righteousness of Christ, and living wholly upon the grace that is in him; therefore, they need daily to be coming down, and walking humbly with their God, and keeping themselves down with him in the low valley.

The exhortation then concerns sinners and saints both: and for motives consider,

That the market of grace is as low as ever it was; therefore, come down, if you would buy the pearl of great price. Here you may buy cheap, and sell dear: Buy the truth, and sell it not. You are to buy the pearl for nothing, by taking it freely; but you may not sell it for a thousand worlds. Here is the richest pearl for the lowest price. It is to be had at a lower rate than ever you, or any mortal could have expected. If you bid high, you cannot have it; the market is as low as your heart could wish. Christ offers himself freely to the vilest and blackest sinner here; and if you cannot think or imagine it is so, then I must tell you, that the market of grace is lower than you can imagine it is, or than your proud heart can think it is. Your lofty spirit thinks always there must be some terms or conditions required of you as the price; but come down, for the market is fallen far below your price. For, as all things are ready to your hand; so all things are to be had "without money, and without price," Isa. lv. 1. It is lower than you can think it; therefore, come down with every high thought that exalts itself against the knowledge of Christ.

Come down; for, while you are climbing too high, you are in danger of falling, and breaking your neck. It was by climbing too high at first that our first parents fell down to the pit of ruin. The prevalence of that temptation, "Ye shall be as Gods," made them fall into such a low state, that instead of being as Gods, they became as devils. Again,

Consider further, That you must come down with a vengeance, if you come not down by choice to Christ, when he calls you. God has sworn by himself, that every knee shall bow to him, Isa. xlv. 23; Rom. xiv. 11. If you come not down to kiss the Son, voluntarily, with a kiss of subjection; you must be brought down violently and wrathfully; therefore, come down, "lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little," Psalm ii. 12. * * *

If ye do not come down, ye cannot come profitably. Many come up to ordinances, they come up to communion solemnities: but they do not come to profit, they reap no success, because they do not come down.—They come most profitably who come down to Jesus' feet, to wash them, and wipe them with the hair of their head.

Consider that to come down is the way to come up, even as humiliation is the way to exaltation: Humble yourselves under the mighty hand to God, and he will exalt you. Yea, the farther down you come, the farther up will you mount. The deeper root you take downward, the more fruit will ye bring forth upward, to the praise and glory of God. For,

Consider, the great and high God loves to come down, and dwell with those who come down: "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones," Isa. lvii. 15. He loves to come down to be all in them, that come down to be nothing in their own eyes. He loves to come down and dwell with those that dwell low; and to come down and sit with those who sit in the dust. His voice is, "Come down, and sit in the dust," Isa. xlvii. 1. And afterwards his voice will be, "Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust," Isa. xxvi. 19. He will go down with them, and dwell with them, till he bring them up, even down to the grave with them, from thence to bring them up: "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you," Romans viii. 11.

We shall now close with a word of direction. Would you fall in with this call, to make haste, and come down to Christ; there are two advices I would give. 1. Study, through grace, to open your eyes to see him. 2. To open your ears to hear him; for, if ye but see his face, and hear his voice, you will quickly come down to him.

Study to open your eyes to see him; and there is a twofold look you are to take of him. 1. To look down, and see how low he was. 2. To look up and see how high he is.

Look down, and see how low he was in his state of humiliation. Christ came down to you, and for you, that you might come down to him: he came down to this earth, in assuming your nature; down to the womb of a virgin; down to a manger; down to a

sorrowful life; down to a shameful death; down to the grave!— O Sirs, has God come so far down to you, and will you not come down to him? O proud sinner, it well becomes you to come down to his feet, down to the dust, down to nothing before him. Yea, he has not given over coming down to you; for, now he comes down by his word, and down by his Spirit, to deal with you to come down to him.

Look up, and see how high he is, in his state of exaltation at the Father's right hand. The higher he is, the lower doth he look down towards you; and the lower he looks down, and deigns to cast his eye upon you, the more will you hasten down to hide yourself in the dust; especially if you look up, and see how high and lofty his throne is, and what a glorious, rich, and opulent Lord he is. Here I may allude to what Joseph said to his brethren, Gen. xlv. 9, "Haste ye, and go up to my Father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt, come down unto me, tarry not." O Sirs, look up, and see how high Christ is now: God hath made himself both Lord and Christ; Lord of heaven and earth, and all things: therefore, down to him, and tarry not. Make haste, Zaccheus, and come down.

Study to open your ears and hear him; hear him calling you, as he did Zaccheus, "Make haste, and come down;" and hear him promising, as he did to Zaccheus, "To-day I must abide at thy house."

Hear him calling you particularly, as he did Zaccheus, "Make haste, and come down," who, whenever he heard Christ calling on him in particular, then he came down. O then, hear him calling you man, you woman, whether old or young, though he does not give you your particular name, John, James, or Mary; yet if your general name, a guilty Sinner, be also your particular name, then you guilty sinner, in particular, are called upon to make haste, and come down to him, quitting hold of all your vain confidences, and false rests, and carnal refuges. On these heights, you will not see Christ, so as to entertain him in your heart and house. Therefore, hear the call; O hear him calling on you in particular, and then you will come down. And, again,

Hear him promising, as he did to Zaccheus, "To-day I must abide at thy house." O Sirs, whenever Zaccheus heard him thus promising, he speedily came down; and so will you, if you hear him promising, and found your faith upon his promise. Well, Sirs, the Lord is in haste, speaking to you; "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Why, to-day, I must be

in your house, in your hearts; there is a blessed necessity on my part and yours both. I must be in, and you must make open doors unto me. Another promise of this sort you have, John x. 16. "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice." I must bring them, and they shall hear my voice. O Sirs, hear then a promise with a promise, importing the necessity of the accomplishment. Do you hear him saying in effect, O poor sinful creature, many a call you have gotten and slighted; but now I will not take one refusal more; to-day I must be in: this day, this hour, this moment, I must be in: I must have your heart. Well, if Christ's necessity and your necessity meet together; that he must have you, and you must have him, that you will come down joyfully to him.—Hear him then in his promise; and let your faith be founded upon his word of promise, and not upon this or that good in you; for this is to stay up, instead of coming down. It is a piece of pride, as if you scorned to come to him in rags, like beggars: but down, down, man, upon your knees, before him: be content to come to him in rags, that he may clothe you; in your poverty, that he may enrich you; and with all your plagues, that he may heal you.

Faith must stand upon God's great and precious promise. Some will say, If I had faith, I would believe. But, what sense is here? This were to build your faith upon your faith. O my dear friends, consider this, for your eternal good; is it not more reasonable to say, If I had good security, I would believe; If I had God's bond, his word, his promise, I would believe? Now, God has given to the whole visible church many gracious promises: To them belongs the covenant. The promise is to you, and to your children: and your right thereto is sealed in baptism; and upon these promises you are to build your faith and hope. And if thus you hear him calling, and hear him promising, then it is impossible you can stay any longer away from him. You will come down speedily, and entertain him in your heart, and house; and walk humbly with him all you days, till he take you up to walk with him in white, in the higher house.

May the Lord bless his word and to his name be praise.

1750.

7/15

AUG 7 - 1946

