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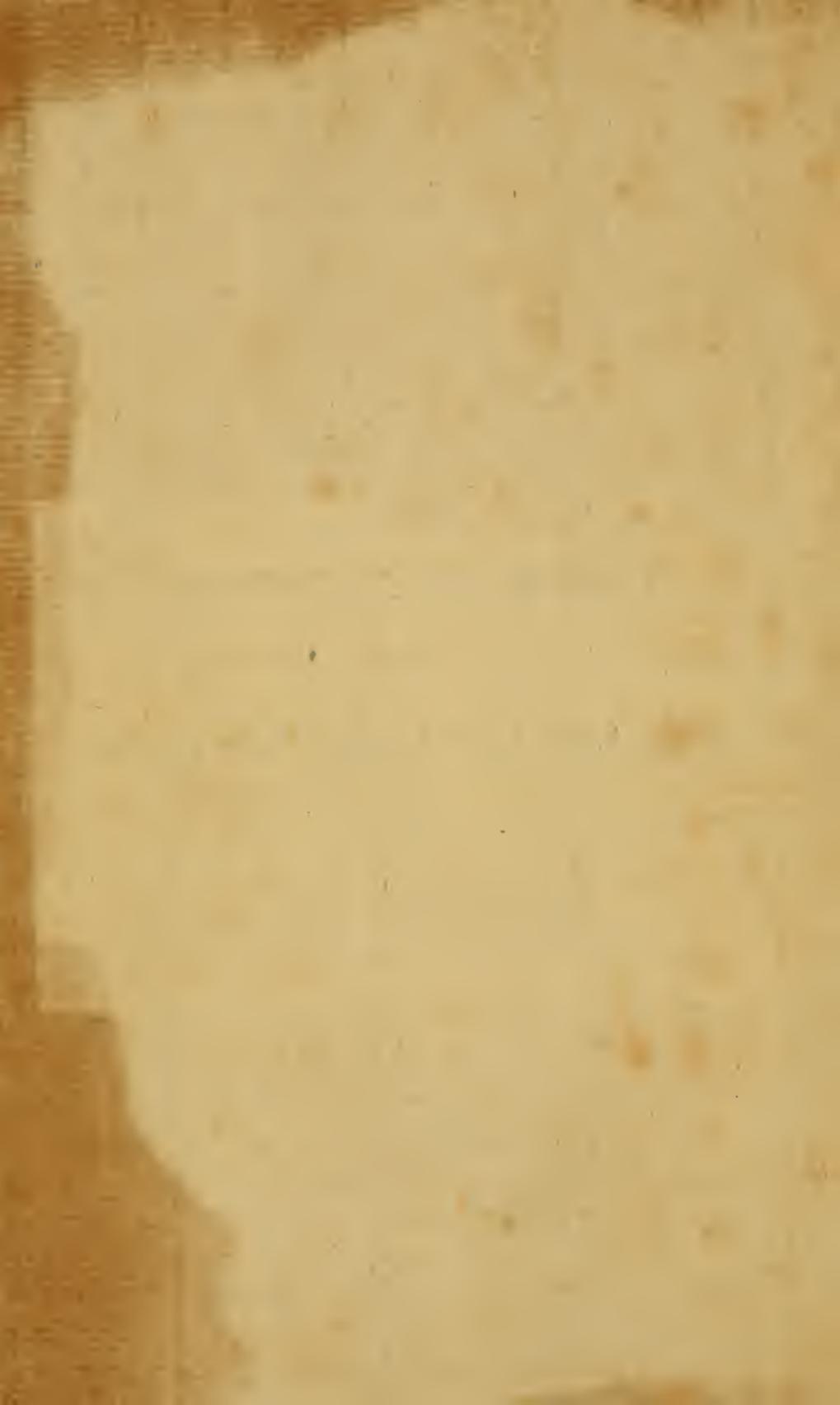
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

BY

Mrs. Alexander Proudfit.

SCC
2805





SEVENTEEN SERMONS,

ON
VARIOUS IMPORTANT SUBJECTS. Viz.

ON ORIGINAL GUILT—ORIGINAL DEPRAVITY—HUMAN IMPOTENCY—THE TRINITY—THE DEITY OF CHRIST—JUSTIFICATION BY CHRIST'S RIGHTEOUSNESS—THE NATURE AND USE OF FAITH IN THE SINNER'S JUSTIFICATION—ON THE CHRISTIAN'S WARFARE—THE CHRISTIAN'S COURSE—THE CHRISTIAN'S STEADFASTNESS—THE CHRISTIAN'S CROWN—LOVE TO AN UNSEEN SAVIOUR.

BY THE LATE REVEREND
Mr. SAMUEL HAYWARD.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED, THE PLEASANTNESS OF A RELIGIOUS LIFE,

OPENED, PROVED, AND RECOMMENDED TO THE CONSIDERATION OF ALL, PARTICULARLY OF YOUNG PEOPLE.

AND A
CHURCH IN THE HOUSE:
BEING A
SERMON
CONCERNING
FAMILY RELIGION.

BOTH BY THE LATE REVEREND
Mr. MATTHEW HENRY,
MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL IN CHESTER.

A I R:
PRINTED BY JOHN & PETER WILSON.

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TO THE
CHURCH AND CONGREGATION,
LATELY UNDER THE CARE OF
THE REV. S. HAYWARD, DECEASED.

Dear Christian Friends,

YOU, and the Public, are here presented with a small collection of your late dear and worthy Pastor's Sermons. Posthumous discourses indeed, always appear with a considerable disadvantage, as they come out destitute of that hand, which alone had a right to make alterations in method or expression. Care has been taken to select such as appeared distinct in their subject matter, and were most full and finished in point of composition; yet as they were not composed or preached in this connection, some coincidence of matter and sameness of thought will occasionally occur. However, they are published at your desire: a desire which flows from your cordial love to his memory, and genuine esteem for his labours, which were so acceptable and useful among you when alive; and with a view to be in some degree beneficial to his dear and tender family, now he is removed. Many of you doubtless have an agreeable remembrance of the earnestness and affection with which they were delivered from the pulpit, and also an experience of instruction and profit, as well as of entertainment from them. There needs therefore little apology for the present publication,

nor is there any fear about your kind reception of it. And as to others, even such as are in no degree prepossessed in its favour, I cannot but hope, upon their serious and candid perusal, they will find such a plain, scriptural representation of several most material and interesting doctrines of our holy religion, and these inforced in so earnest and pathetic a manner, on the hearts and consciences of men, as will yield them a solid pleasure. If there is any pleasure in perusing the remains of one who appears to have considered religion as a reality, its doctrines as the appointed means of holiness and happiness, principles not merely to be known and maintained, but also to be used and improved in the divine life ; one who considered himself a real friend to the souls of men, commissioned to lead them in the paths of peace, and warmly desirous of success in his work—The truly pious and favourly vein which runs through the whole of these discourses must necessarily gain a general acceptance, and with the divine blessing afford both profit and delight. It is proper farther to inform you, that this collection has been made in conformity, in some measure, to a plan our deceased friend had formed a little before his last illness, which was to lay together in a plain and concise manner, the scripture evidences for the several principal doctrines of the Gospel, and to employ a considerable part of each discourse in a large and familiar representation of the importance and influence of these great truths in the Christian's life of faith and holiness : the five first Sermons were composed upon this plan ; illness prevented a farther prosecution of it, nor was he able to review them for the press, as I know he proposed. Those which follow will, it is hoped, appear to have some degree of conformity to his design, and yield a share of satisfaction to the intelligent reader.

As to our worthy deceased friend and brother, it would be but a debt of friendship paid to his memory, were I to take this occasion of mentioning some particulars in his life, which the great intimacy and long continued correspondence between us have enabled me to lay together ; but it may be sufficient just to observe, that he was enabled to support the ministerial character, with reputation and usefulness, for almost twenty years. He entered upon the work young, and it pleased God to own and bless him, even in

his first attempts, for the awakening, quickening, and reviving the souls of many, especially of young persons, in the congregation where he ministered. From his first entrance upon the sacred office, I have good reason to think his heart was very seriously turned, and in a good degree engaged, upon these two great branches of ministerial care and concern, "The saving our own souls and them that hear us." How truly his mind was bent in pursuit of heart religion, how close and affecting his inward exercises, how great his solicitude about his own interest in the great salvation, while he was thus successful in preaching it to others, will most naturally appear by the following extract from a letter wrote in the first year of his public ministry.

Dear Friend,

Saffron Walden, 1739-40.

"I TAKE my pen, but know not what to say ; I am full
"of complaints and have too much reason to be so ; I
"complain, and yet am unconcerned ; I fear, yet am stu-
"pid ; it will be a mercy if God give me not up to an
"hardened frame. My mercies have made but little im-
"pression, love commonly constrains, but it seems other-
"wise with me ; mercies are forgotten, and sins too much gra-
"tified. Therefore if I enjoy any comfort, I fear it is only ima-
"ginary ; it is a mercy to distinguish between the consolations
"of the spirit and the flows of affection ; it is pleasant to have
"the affections raised in duty, and I fear I often take this
"for something higher. Duties are pleasant to God's
"people, but burdensome to me ; spiritual mindedness I
"know but little of, carnal mindedness I am too much ac-
"quainted with, and that we know issues in death. In
"short, if I am a child of God, I am sure I behave not as
"such ; if I have an interest in Christ, the least, the weakest,
"the most unworthy and contemptible need not to be
"afraid ; but if I am an hypocrite ! Oh ! let every one
"search their own hearts, examine themselves, and keep a
"diligent watch, lest, when weighed in the balance, they

" are found too light : for common convictions may carry
" us very far. I bless God my worth'efs labours have been
" beyond expectation blessed, to the good of some souls, but
" I may be a cast away myself, &c."

These deep concerns about vital religion in himself were connected with as genuine a desire, and endeavour, to promote the same in the hearts of others. As he advanced in life, he seems to have been growingly solicitous to advance the interest of religion where providence had placed him. In the course of our correspondence, his letters frequently expressed his great concern about the success of his ministrations. What special methods could be taken to stem the tide of immorality and prophaneness ? What, to quicken and revive the spirit of religion amongst professors ? What could be done particularly with young persons, to bring them to a serious sense of things ? &c. were inquiries, which appeared often to lie near his heart, and were the leading topics of our epistolary converse. In one of his letters, he lays open the result of his own observation, experience, and concern, in respect to a material branch of ministerial duty, with that judgement, humility, and freedom of thought, as rendered it not a little profitable as well as pleasant in the first perusal ; it may be so to others, and therefore I hope without offence transcribed.

Dear Brother,

Pool, 19 March, 1751.

" **I** Am sorry to find you complain of the state of re-
" ligion amongst you, &c.—Infidelity abounds, and
" Christians grow cold and lukewarm: Ministers labour, and
" in a great measure in vain; sufficient causes of lamenta-
" tion these : Yet both ministers and private Christians have
" reason to be ashamed of their frequent neglect of those
" important duties, a serious and regular discharge of
" which, has a tendency to revive the power of religion ;
" though I am fully sensible nothing will do without the
" presence of the spirit of God, yet so far as we live in the
" neglect of any means, so far we are certainly culpable.

“ The great defect in serious Gospel ministers in the present day, I apprehend is impertinent conversation, and not labouring in private, to impress upon the minds of their hearers, a sense of what is delivered in public. If our visits were more religious, we might hope to find our labours more owned. When we are in Christian company, where we may use the utmost freedom, how backward to a serious enlivening conversation! And we can spend perhaps an whole evening amongst our less religious hearers, and not drop a single word that favours of the real power of godliness. I speak too much by experience, having often lost a disposition to converse about the things of God, by impertinent chat, &c. It is a difficult matter to retain a serious temper, and an inclination to intermix with indifferent subjects, serious and suitable reflections. We are either ashamed, or afraid, to speak for God; or else our inclination is wanting, or some trifling excuse or other keeps us from the discharge of our duty. I am often convinced of my neglect, and promise to strive against it; but I am soon overcome with fear, or filled with that shameful modesty which is a great hindrance to usefulness. It is certainly a minister's duty to preach in private and to use plainness and faithfulness: when instead of inforcing in private what we preach in public we readily join in impertinent talk, unrenewed persons are hardened in their impenitency, and if they have had any convictions, upon this they presume to take encouragement, either to think well of their state, or to think there is nothing in religion; by which means our public performances are despised, or looked upon as a mere form. It is necessary then that we use plainness with sinners in private, as well as publicly admonish them, and talk with them about their souls in the most serious and affectionate manner, if we would be successful. I am only telling you, how it has been with me; I hope God has given some others a greater measure of resolution, and grace, to stand up for him: yet as this is too generally the case, and you may have found something of it, let us resolve, in a dependence upon our great master, to add this to all our other endeavours; hoping to find success in a greater measure crowning our imperfect labours in the conversion of souls. Infidelity appears more and more

" barefaced ; it requires courage and resolution now, to
" confess Christ before men : things cannot continue long
" in the present posture, either a reformation, or some sore
" judgement. God grant it may be the former ! I cannot but
" entertain great hopes from those means in town which
" are made use of, to send serious Gospel minister's out,
" &c. I have lately, I bless God, been more deeply impres-
" sed with a sense of the worth of souls, the awfulness of
" death and eternity, than usual, though I could wish it did
" stir me up to greater diligence, in the pursuit of eternal
" blessings : I have such a sense of the awfulness of dying
" in a state of suspence, that I cannot bring my mind to give
" up the point to God, from whom I am sensible I deserve
" no favour, yet I cannot but beg for a cheerful frame in a
" dying hour, to bear a testimony to the truth God enables
" me to deliver. Oh happy case, when the soul is enabled
" to bid a cheerful farewell to time, and boldly ventures
" into eternity, secure of eternal life, through a dear Re-
" deemer."

How far my deceased brother was enabled to conduct himself in after life, according to the excellent and important view of pastoral duty, above expressed, you and others are best able to witness ; so far it is evident he did, as to gain your sincere love and esteem, and with such success in connection with other duties of his station, as to be instrumental, of reviving and increasing the interest of religion among you, and of giving a very pleasing prospect of the church's farther enlargement and prosperity.

Amidst the pleasing scene of harmony and usefulness, and at an age of life, which promised much longer public service to his generation, it pleased the wise, the sovereign God, to put a period to his days, and bereave you of so amiable a friend,—so faithful and active a servant, in your best interests. The greater is your loss ! A loss which many besides yourselves deplore. But, " The will of the Lord be done," is the language of filial submission ; " And shew me wherefore thou contendest with me," is the language of humble prayer, which our heavenly father allows, yea which he calls for, from his people under all such mournful and striking instances of his displeasure. And may I not add the well chosen text, at the late funeral solemnity, Job xix. 21. " Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, Oh my

" friends, for the hand of the Lord hath touched me ;" is still the sorrowful language of a widowed church and interest, which labours under the singular discouragement of this declining age, wherein it is a very difficult thing, fully and speedily to repair so great a breach. Yet as a considerable allay to our grief, and encouragement to our own hopes towards God, it deserves to be remembered, how mercifully the Lord dealt with him in his last illness ! What had been matter of his earnest prayers, years before, as expressed at the close of the above letter, was now the matter of his happy experience. The evening of his life was serene, and without a cloud ; heaven was in his eye, and much of heaven appeared to be in his heart ; he was enabled to bear testimony to the truths he had preached, and to take a cheerful farewell of time, comfortably secure of eternal life through a dear Redeemer.

And now my Christian friends permit me to take leave, with reminding you, that Jesus the great shepherd still lives ; lives to exercise the tenderest care over his humble dependent flock. The promise yet stands, " I will give you pasture according to my heart." Jer. iii. 15. His power and faithfulness are yet engaged, in the conveyance of that, and every promised good ; the residue of the spirit is still with him : he can, and I trust will yet appear for you, will direct and unite your choice, in another useful instrument for your continued prosperity, and the furtherance of your spiritual and everlasting advantage. Only remember your solemn engagements, who are church members, to one another, as well as to the Lord ; your Church relation continues, though your ministers are mortal ; keep together in God's fear, and cheerfully expect his presence among you. That this may be your constant experience, is the earnest prayer of your

Sincere friend and servant,

for Christ's sake,

Jan. 1. 1768. §

J. CONDER.

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S E R M O N I

G A L . iii. 22. F O R M E R C L A U S E .

But the scripture hath concluded all under sin—

O F all kinds of knowledge, that which relates to our everlasting interest is the most important, and particularly that of *one's self*. This is absolutely necessary to our knowing Christ aright, and therefore is so, to our salvation; and is what the spirit gives, when he begins a gracious work in the soul. Yet what is more neglected? How curious are persons to inquire into the works of creation! How diligent in searching into the histories of nations and countries! How careful are many to view and examine this outward fabric the body, with all its various surprising parts! but never inquire into their state God-wards! They never ask, what that guilt is we all lie under, and whether it is removed, but appear to be contentedly ignorant of these most momentous concerns; all which shows the sad effects of the fall, in that blindness and stupidity we are naturally under, and should fill us with the deepest humiliation. Nay, notwithstanding our picture is exactly drawn in God's word, and our state represented as awful and deplorable, we will not *believe* it; at least, we will not attend to it, though we are in danger of falling into everlasting misery; for *the scripture has concluded us all under sin.*

The great design of the apostle in this epistle was to establish the doctrine of justification by the righteousness of Christ, and to guard the Galatians against a dependence upon the law. He therefore makes use of a variety of ar-

gements for this purpose, particularly in the verse before our text, says, that if there had been a law which could have given us an unquestionable title to eternal life, then there would have been no need of a mediator; as our justifying righteousness would have consisted in a conformity to that law: but this is far from being the case, for *the scripture hath concluded all*, both Jews and Gentiles, *under sin*, and therefore under an incapacity of being justified by any obedience of their own, that so the free promise of life and salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, might be fulfilled to all who should be enabled to believe in him. Thus we have in the words an awful and affecting account of our state by nature, and a glorious intimation of gospel grace; the one to humble, the other to encourage and quicken us. It is the first of these I am now to consider, and may the view of it suitably impress each of our hearts, that under a sense of our lost condition we may be thankful for, and may be stirred up cheerfully to embrace the saviour whom God has provided. The great truth then that lies before us is this, viz. *That all mankind are concluded under, or are naturally in a state of sin.* There is not an individual that can be excepted, but all are alike. And this is not a fancy, a human fiction, but is a truth built upon divine testimony, and supported both by the Old and the New Testament. The *scripture* hath concluded us all under sin. To lay open this truth as it appears in scripture, I must represent it under the three following most affecting views.

- I. We are all under the guilt of sin.
- II. We are all under the pollution of sin.
- III. We are all under its power and government.

These three things give us a just view of human nature, and show the miserable state we are all in, from the oldest to the youngest, so long as we are destitute of the grace of God. This is the state in which the Father viewed us when he laid the plan of our salvation, and chose a number of the fallen race of Adam to be his peculiar people. This is the state in which the Son of God viewed us, when he undertook to redeem us, and came actually to accomplish it. And this is the state in which the Spirit finds us, when he comes to apply the blessing of salvation to us. Particularly,

I. We are all under the guilt of sin. This is the case not only with men of years, but with infants of a day old. None are excepted but our Lord Jesu Christ, who descended not from Adam in an ordinary way. To make this truth appear clear, I would

- I. Inquire into what is meant by guilt.
- II. Prove that we are under the guilt of sin.
- III. How it is that we are all guilty. And,
- IV. Improve the subject.

I. Let us inquire what is meant by guilt? Guilt is an obligation to punishment on account of sin. When I say, therefore, that we are all under the guilt of sin, I mean, that we are all of us so chargeable with the breach of the law of God, as to be justly bound over by it to punishment. Thus says the apostle, Rom. vi. 23. *The wages of sin is death*, which is agreeable to the threatening which God pronounced upon Adam's disobedience, Gen. ii. 17. *In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*. So that you see, whoever can justly be charged with sin, is brought under an obligation to punishment, by the righteous constitution of God, and according to the nature and demerit of sin. It may not be amiss here to inquire into that punishment which sin renders us obnoxious to. And I cannot give a better description than you have in that excellent form of words, the *Assembly's Catechism*, which gives us this account: *That all mankind by their fall lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever*. Let us spend a few thoughts upon this view. And,

1. *By sin we lose communion with God. Can two walk together except they be agreed?* A very important and significant question, which the prophet put to the Jews in the name of God, to convince them of the reason that he had withdrawn his favourable regards from them, Amos iii. 3. When our first parents heard the voice of the Lord God, they attempted to hide themselves among * the trees of the garden, sensible of what they had done to prevent all communion with him, and to expose them to his everlasting

* Gen. iii. 8.

displeasure. When God did not save his people, nor hear their cries, it was not because he was incapable of doing it, but their iniquities had separated between them and "their God, and their sins had hid his face from them, "that he would not hear *." Sin is so dishonourable to God, that it provokes him to withhold the light of his countenance from the soul, and stop all comfortable communion; an affliction which the Christian too often knows to his grief and sorrow. But,

2. *Sin brings us under the wrath and curse of God.* Every one that believes not in Jesus Christ is under the wrath of God, John iii. 36. And the apostle tells us, Rom. i. 18, that "the wrath of God is revealed from "heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of "men. The curse of the Lord is in the house of the "wicked †; and therefore you read of the awful curses that were to be brought upon the Israelites, if they did not observe to do all the commandments and statutes of God. Deut. xxviii. 15—20. "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. The Lord shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, "and rebuke in all that thou settest thine hand unto for to "do." Thus we see that sin imbibes our common mercies, sharpens our afflictions, turns our very table into a snare unto us, and brings down the curse of God upon our persons and upon all we do.

3. *Sin renders us liable to all the miseries of this life, and to death itself.* It is sin that makes man "eat his bread in "the sweat of his brow, till he return into the ground," Gen. iii. 19. Sin brings public judgements and calamities, "famine, and evil beasts, pestilence, and blood, and the "sword," Ezek. v. 17. The righteous themselves shall not escape, or be exempted from trials. Does David sin? David ‡ must feel the smart of the rod too, though a man after God's own heart. There is a difference indeed between the common sufferings of the godly and the wicked,

* If. lix. 1, 2. † Prov. iii. 33, ‡ 1 Chron. xxi. 7, 8. Ps. li.

To the one they are, through distinguishing grace, turned into blessings ; to the other they are curses. To the one they are sanctified, and made a means of preparing for heaven ; whereas to the other they are forerunners of everlasting calamities. They all have a share in them, and all must die. And from the account which the apostle gives us of death, and its relation to sin, we cannot look upon it as a mere necessary consequence, but the punishment of sin, Rom. vi. 23, and chap. v. 12.

4. *Sin exposeth us to the pains of hell for ever.* Eternal death, as well as temporal, is the wages of sin. The apostle appears evidently to carry it farther than death temporal, even to eternal death, because he puts *eternal* life in opposition to it. And as he establishes it as a general preposition, *that the wages of sin is death*, without mentioning any particular sin, that by reason of various aggravating circumstances, may be more heinous than others, so we may conclude, that *every* sin deserves eternal death. Sin not only renders life uncomfortable, but if not pardoned, death and eternity too ; nay, it gives death a sting which will be destructive of our everlasting peace, and will pierce our souls through with everlasting sorrows. Oh, come and see the punishment of sin ! An everlasting separation from all outward * enjoyments. An “everlasting destruction † “from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his “power. Weeping ‡, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth “in outer darkness. *A gnawing worm* ||, that dieth not. “A fire that can never be quenched. Indignation § and “wrath, tribulation and anguish. *The society of the devil* ** “and his angels. A lake which burneth with fire and “brimstone †.” Dreadful despair and horror, without one beam of hope. This, all this is the proper desert of sin, what it exposeth us to, and shall be inflicted upon all those who are found out of Christ. Awful description ! Such is the punishment to which sin renders us obnoxious. Let us now,

II. Endeavour to prove this important point, viz. that we are all under the guilt of sin. It need not take up any of our time to prove the point, was it to be referred only to those, who arrive to the years of maturity, so as to be capable of actual sin ; experience sufficiently shews that there is none, not

* Job vii. 10. † 2 Thess. i. 9. ‡ Matt. xxv. 30. || Mark, ix. 44. § Rom. ii. 8, 9. ** Matth. xxv. 41. † Rev. xx. 10.

even a good man, that liveth upon earth and sinneth not. Therefore, if any are so insensible as to esteem themselves free from sin, they deceive themselves, and the truth is not in them. We consider not man as grown up, but as he comes into the world, and therefore we include all infants, and affirm that all such who have descended, or shall descend from Adam by natural generation, must be considered, and are concluded by the scripture under the guilt of sin. However disagreeable this truth may appear to corrupt nature, it is confirmed by that revelation, which we are to make our guide in all affairs of a religious concern. Thus the apostle sets the point out in the clearest light, Rom. v. 12, 16, 18. In the twelfth verse, he absolutely tells us, "that we all have sinned;" and that he does not exclude infants, is plain from the 13th and 14th verses. In the 16th verse he says, "the judgement was by one to "condemnation." The word condemnation is a law term; it supposes a charge of guilt, and therefore an obligation to punishment, the desert of sin. And that this is the case with *all*, we are told in the 18th verse, where it is said, "judgement came upon all men to condemnation."

This truth is further proved *from the miseries and death of all, even of infants*. See what a train of evils come upon these little creatures. They are born to trouble, and therefore feel it as soon as they see the light. What cries and tears, what pains and agonies, enough to move the hardest heart! Some soon take their leave, disappoint the wishes and expectations of their fond indulgent parents, and enter eternity; while others stay some days or months to taste the bitter cup of sufferings, to linger under painful diseases, till their tender frame is intirely broke, and they yield to all-conquering death. And what can be the reason of all this but sin? We cannot suppose that all this comes by chance to the infant. And, if it come from God it must be on the account of sin. It would be inconsistent with our ideas of the infinite goodness, love, and compassion, nay, the infinite righteousness and justice of God, to consider him inflicting punishment upon a perfectly innocent creature. Is he a father, and has he no bowels of compassion? A father indeed takes the rod and corrects his child, but then it is always supposed to be for some instances of dis-

bedience, and where there is a probability of his improving the correction. But in the case of infants, they are incapable of reflection, or insensible of the hand that chastiseth them, and are not therefore proper subjects of correction upon that account. It would be consequently ascribing cruelty, severity, and injustice to God, whose character is perfectly contrary to these, to represent him as putting these little helpless babes to extreme pain and misery, when they have no manner of guilt. Has this been his usual custom of dealing with innocent creatures? Have the good angels in the course of their unspotted obedience, been under the awful evidences of their Creator's frowns, and felt any kinds of distress; or did our first parents, when in their innocent condition, groan under any degree of pain? No! it is *sin* that has brought every evil upon us. Besides, if there is any compassion shewn to one another, it is to persons of advanced years, or to infant-children. And therefore it is a sign of the greatest insensibility and cruelty when a mother, who should be all tenderness, can so far overpower the struggles of nature, as to forget and forsake her sucking child. From the whole then it appears, that an infinitely gracious God would never suffer affliction and death to seize upon infants, did he not view them under the *guilt of sin*. Thus the scripture in many places points out *sin* as the cause of afflictions and death. "Wherefore," says the prophet, "should a living man complain," or grieve; vex, and murmur under his various afflictions, when it is all for the "punishment of his sins," Lam. iii. 39. The apostle in the above-mentioned, Rom. v. 12. says, that "death came into the world by sin," and that the reason that *all die* is because *all have sinned*. Thus it reigned from Adam to Moses, and has reigned ever since, even over them that have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression. Therefore, as they are subject to death, and death is upon the account of sin, even as a punishment, so these infants must be considered as *guilty*.

This truth further appears from what the apostle says in Eph. ii. 3, that we are "by nature children of wrath, even as others." That is, that as soon * as we are born, we deserve, lie exposed unto, and are under a law-sentence of

* Dr. Guyse's Paraphrase. See likewise the note there upon this verse.

the wrath of God. This is the natural state then of all mankind, not only of the children of disobedience, but also of those who through grace are made heirs of eternal life; not only of grown persons; but of infant babes. I am now,

III. To inquire *how it comes to pass that we are all thus naturally under the guilt of sin.* This can be no otherwise than by the imputation of Adam's sin to us. Now to impute sin is to charge it upon us, so as legally to inflict deserved punishment. We do not mean that the sin is reckoned to be committed by us; for we did not commit it, but Adam; but it is so reckoned ours, upon our being included in him as our covenant-head, that we are punished for it according to the demerit of the sin. To represent this point therefore in a proper light, we must consider Adam as a *public head*, when God made that covenant of life with him, and threatened death upon his disobedience: the consequences of that act were not only to affect himself, but all that should descend from him by ordinary generation. That he was a covenant head appears from his being a figure of Christ, Rom. v. xiv. "The figure of him "that was to come." This appears in the following instances. The first Adam was the head of the covenant of works: the second Adam was the head of the covenant of grace. The first represented all mankind that should descend from him in the common way; the second represented all the chosen of the father, all that were given to him. By the one therefore came death; by the other eternal life. You may see the parallel run by the apostle in the above chapter. From whence it appears, that if Christ was a public head and representative of his seed, Adam must be so of his too, as there are no other instances in which he could properly be said to be a *figure of him that was to come.* That it was every way reasonable that he should represent his posterity, appears, if we consider, that he was a common parent to all, was perfectly holy, had not the least bias or inclination to sin, and had a full capacity to fulfil every command, as well as that all would have been put into the possession of eternal life, had he continued in his obedience. If the scripture represent it, we are sure it is truth, and it is our duty immediately to believe it, knowing that God can do nothing but what is perfectly right.

After the first sin his headship ceased. The covenant broken, all the evils threatened came upon us; so that afterwards, though Adam was a common father, he no longer represented his posterity, but all his after sins were charged upon himself alone. But let us return to what the apostle says in the 5th of Romans for a more direct proof of this truth. Thus when he says, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, he adds; for that, or in whom all have sinned." Let but a common reader attend with an unprejudiced mind, and he will easily and readily conclude that the apostle's meaning is, that we all have sinned in Adam, and that this is the reason of the death of infants, mentioned in verses 13th and 14th: for, as we have already observed, death is the punishment of sin, and as infants die as well as others, so they must be necessarily concluded to be sinners; but they are absolutely incapable of actual sin, and therefore must sin in their great head, even the first Adam. Thus, verse fifteen, we are said to be dead through the offence of one, plainly pointing to Adam mentioned before; and, verse sixteen, judgement was by one to condemnation, by one offence, or by the offence of one man, as in verse eighteen; and, in verse nineteen it is again confirmed, when the apostle says, that by one man's disobedience many were made sinners. From the whole of these passages then we may gather this truth, viz. "that in the covenant of works, Adam represented all his posterity; who were to be dealt with according as he fulfilled or broke the law; that dis obeying the command he entailed guilt upon all his race, and they therefore have lost communion with God, become liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever."

But here let it be observed, that "this guilt in all adults is increased by numberless actual transgressions." We lie not only under the guilt of Adam's first sin, but under the guilt of actual sins which will sink us into an abyss of everlasting misery, unless pardoned through the blood of Christ. We are "transgressors from the womb *," have been adding sin to sin, and iniquity to iniquity; so that, if we could reckon them all up, oh how vast the sum! They

*. Isaiah xlvi. 8.

may fitly be compared to the sand upon the sea-shore for multitude. David says concerning his, that they exceeded the hairs of his head, Ps. xl. 12. Who can draw up the catalogue of his sins, and enumerate every instance of guilt? Who can reckon his sins of omission, and sins of commission, sins of thought, word, and deed, secret and public sins; sins attended with peculiar aggravations, committed against light and knowledge, against conviction and love; sins in every character and relation in life; who can reckon them up? Had we received the desert of our sins, our lives must have been full of misery and wretchedness; nay, we must long ago have taken our dwelling with devouring fire and everlasting burnings. Thus, having taken a view of the doctrinal part of our subject, I come,

IV. And lastly, *to consider what use it may be of to us.* This doctrine appears in a most unfavourable light to many. Some can by no means relish it, and therefore absolutely disbelieve, nay despise and contemn it. Others though obliged to acknowledge it, yet are for treating it rather as a matter of speculation, than of any importance to us. But however disrelishing it may be to flesh and blood, surely it has a tendency to answer some valuable and important purposes, both in promoting the glory of God, and our own present and future welfare; particularly, if this doctrine is viewed aright.

1. *It lays a foundation for admiration, humiliation, gratitude, and obedience.* We must hereby be convinced that our salvation is *perfectly free*, in the contrivance, in the purchase, and in the application of it; because God considered us as fallen, guilty creatures, and therefore as deserving everlasting punishment. And how does this exalt the riches of his free mercy, and call us to stand and admire, and adore! How rich was the grace of the Father, in that whilst we were sinners he laid out the plan of salvation, and cheerfully appointed his own Son to be the Saviour! How inconceivably glorious the love of the Son that he undertook the work, and so readily came to finish it, though attended with so much shame and suffering! How great the love of the Spirit in coming to rescue hell-deserving sinners from unquenchable fire, by leading us to the great sacrifice, and enabling us to lay hold on Jesus for salvation! Here is no room for boasting; that is absolutely unbecom-

ing one who is guilty, and who is saved by free, rich mercy. Under a view of this doctrine then, see how the soul admires infinite grace who has any solid hopes of heaven, and how humble he appears.—“ What, says he, “ was my name wrote in the Lamb’s book of life? Did the “ Father look upon me, guilty as I was, and say *deliver him from going down into the pit**? And did the son immediately agree, and say, yea, Father, for behold I will become a ransom for him? What heights and depths, “ what lengths and breadths of love! Has the Spirit in consequence of all this taken possession of my heart? Are my sins pardoned, and am I an heir of eternal life? Whence is all this, Oh my soul? A guilty creature pardoned! A creature deserving hell raised to heaven! Oh Grace, Grace! free rich mercy to an unworthy wretch! Lord, I can resolve it into nothing but thy sovereign pleasure and good-will, and say, even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight†! O! what was I, as I came into the world, but a child of wrath? And why am I not so now? What was I a few months or years ago, a rebel against God, increasing, by numberless transgressions, my guilt? and what am I now? A child of God; Oh, for a tongue to set forth the praises of God! Oh, for a heart to love him! what obligations has he laid me under to him! Why does not a sense of it quicken thee, my soul, endear the saviour more to thee, engage thee with greater cheerfulness in his service, and stir thee up to every act, to every instance of gratitude, and humble and cheerful obedience? I would chide myself that I am so slothful, so secure, and that I have done no more for God. Lord help me to be for ever thine, and to devote that body and soul which thou hast preserved from the bottomless pit constantly to thy praise, and bring me at length to that world, where I shall love, and praise, and worship thee day and night, for ever and ever.” Thus this doctrine may be improved by us But,

2. There is something in this doctrine that tends to excite us to pity poor sinners, and to use all possible means to open their eyes and bring them to a proper sense of their danger. Who that has a sense of guilt can forbear dropping *

• Job. † Matth. xi. 26.

tear over the rebellious sinner? Did every minister see and consider the state, the unrenewed part of his congregation are in, oh how importunate would he be with them to flee from the wrath to come! With what compassion would he address them! Every sentence would come with a peculiar pathos, and he could not certainly be careless and slothful. Were but parents properly affected with a view of the state of their children by nature, Oh, how would it engage their attention, make every bowel move within them, and put them upon every possible method to pluck those dear parts of themselves out of everlasting fire! Come then my hearer, come my child, let me personate this minister, let me act this parent, and expostulate with thee about thy state I must tell thee this awful truth, that thou art guilty, concluded under sin, and exposed to everlasting burnings, if a stranger to the Redeemer. Do not think that I tell thee so out of caprice and humour, out of a cruelty of temper, or merely to affright thee, and render thy life uncomfortable; I only speak what the scripture does, and what thy own conscience often tells thee, wouldst thou but hearken to it; I speak it out of tender compassion to thy soul, and with a sincere view to thy salvation. Believe it, Oh believe it that "thou art a child of wrath," and seriously consider it. What are all thy comforts, so long as thy sins remain unpardoned? How canst thou be at ease, when every moment thou art exposed to hell? Is not this "dreadful sound "often in thine ears *?" Dost thou not sometimes "flee, "when no man pursueth †?" Canst thou enjoy a moment's peace, under the guilt not only of Adam's first sin, but of innumerable actual sins of thy own? Let me beseech thee to consider thy state, consider thy soul, consider eternity and the bar of God; How canst thou die in such a condition? How wilt thou appear before the supreme tribunal above? How wilt thou bear to see an angry God, or be able to endure that wrath which thou hast deserved? Oh, to be for ever in the midst of the bottomless pit! The thought one would hope, *should*, and thy compassionate minister, thy tender parent prays, that it *may* thoroughly strike thee. Perhaps thou thinkest to escape; but how can it be? Did justice seize upon the Lamb of God, and fill

* Job xv. 21. † Prov. xxviii. 1.

his soul with so much sorrow, and shalt thou escape ? Dost thou think to pass unobserved ? No ; it is impossible. God is every where present *, and nothing passes unnoticed by him. Thou canst not possibly fly from him. Consider this, you who are in the bloom of life ; young as you are, you are exposed to hell. You have the guilt of many sins upon you, and if it is not removed you must be for ever miserable. Art thou old, and yet unconcerned ? It is time for thee especially to awake. How great must thy guilt be ! And see, the storm is gathering, and all looks black : it will soon break upon thy head to thy everlasting confusion and distress, if sin is unpardoned. Oh, what couldst thou do, were the judge to summon thee before his bar, and sentence thee to the infernal prison ? Would he be unjust ? Hast thou not sinned ? Thy mouth then must be for ever stopped, whilst infinite justice is inflicting upon thee that punishment which is the proper desert of thy sins. The Lord awaken thee therefore before it is too late, and the door of mercy is shut for ever.

3. This doctrine shews us *the dreadful nature of sin, and how much we should be concerned to guard against it.* If one sin ruined Adam and all his posterity, we may certainly conclude, that nothing is more hurtful than sin. It is an enemy to our temporal and spiritual comforts, to our peace here and hereafter. It is dishonourable to God, so dishonourable that immediately upon the commission of it, he withdraws his favour and refuses to smile ; the soul is possessed with awful fears of an hereafter ; the body becomes liable to be distressed with painful diseases, and death comes to separate these two intimate companions, comes with a sting in it, which if not taken away, will fill body and soul with everlasting anguish. Every sin has an infinite guilt in it, as it is the violation of the law of God, who is a being of infinite perfection. It tends to sink his infinite wisdom into folly ; it depreciates his infinite goodness, despises his omniscience, and omnipresence, is a contempt of his almighty power, a defiance of his infinite justice, a disbelief of his infinite faithfulness, offers the highest affronts to his infinite holiness, and tends to obscure all his glory ! This, this is sin. And can you think lightly of it ? or, when con-

science is acting a faithful part, and cautioning you against it, can you say, spare it, for it is but a little one? Can you sport with that which cast the angels out of heaven, and our first parents out of paradise, which has slain its thousands and its ten thousands? Can you roll that as a sweet morsel under your tongues, which damned spirits in hell are feeling the sad effects of, and are therefore groaning under the most extreme torments? Oh! consider, when sin entices you, consider and say: "Why should I be thus foolishly bewitched with sin? Let me not hearken to this solicitation, and gratify this criminal corruption, let its pleas be never so powerful. What but sin separated God and man? And as sure as Adam was ruined by it, so surely will it eternally destroy my precious soul, if I pursue it. However beautiful it may appear, and pleasing to flesh and blood, it has the most destructive poison concealed in it: However sweet it may be in the mouth, it will be most bitter in the belly; however desirable in the enjoyment, it will be inconceivably painful in the review, and ruining in its consequences; therefore, Lord fill my heart with an irreconcilable hatred of all sin, and help me by thy grace to be continually upon my guard that it may not enslave my soul, and cast me into captivity."

4. This doctrine tends to make us set a peculiar value upon the Gospel, and to stir us up to seek after an interest in that Saviour it reveals. Are we all guilty, and do we lie naked and exposed to the wrath of God. How pleasing should the tidings of salvation be, how welcome the news of a saviour! How amiable is the gospel! The discoveries it makes are all suited to the circumstances of guilty creatures, not to increase our terror, but to scatter our fears, and enliven our souls with the hopes of eternal life. It brings the news of pardon; pardon bought with the blood of Jesus; pardon for the most unworthy, and those who have contracted the greatest guilt. See, ye the children of Adam, see there is balm in Gilead, there is a physician there to ease your souls. Hear, you whom the law has condemned and cursed, hear the proclamation, and rejoice. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come, buy and eat, yea, buy wine and milk without money and without price,"

Isa. iv. 1. If you have nothing to recommend you to God, this is no objection ; nay, if you are in the state of condemned malefactors, and never so deserving of death, yet there is encouragement for you in the gospel, there is free and full pardon : there is a glorious and all-sufficient Saviour, who is able and ready to deliver you from the wrath to come ; and why do you not rejoice ? Why haste you not to this Jesus, who is holding out the golden sceptre ? Is not the news of pardon acceptable to a condemned criminal ? does he not receive it with a heart full of joy ? Would not every one justly blame his stupidity, was he to neglect the prospect of life and liberty ? And are not you a thousand times more reprobable to be secure under the sentence of eternal death ? A sentence which may be executed upon you this very night ? Awake, awake ye sleepy dreaming sinners, and “turn ye to the strong hold as prisoners of hope*.” The gospel is now sounding in your ears ; sounding the blessedness of pardon, sounding the riches of the Redeemer’s grace, and the infinite virtue of his blood to deliver guilty souls from deserved wrath. It is setting before you a mercy-seat, a throne of grace, and inviting you by the most endearing motives to seek after salvation. Sure one would think, I need not make use of arguments to press you to seek after Christ, when you are “under the wrath of God †.” Your hearts should leap within you under a consideration of the declarations of the gospel, a Saviour provided, a sacrifice offered and accepted, and a God who can and does “abundantly pardon ‡.” Let it be your concern then to have your souls sprinkled with the atoning blood of the Lamb of God, that the hand-writing which is against you may be blotted out, and that you may be freed from the condemnation of a broken law.

5. *This doctrine tends to guard us against envying the outward condition of an impenitent sinner, however prosperous, and to make us esteem ourselves unspeakably happy, if our sins are pardoned.* How inconceivably more happy are the righteous than the wicked ? The one, though in circumstances of outward meanness and poverty, is truly blessed, having “his transgressions forgiven, and his sins covered|| ;” whilst the other is miserable in the midst of

* Zech. ix. 12. † John iii. 36. ‡ Isa. lv. 7. || Psal. xxxii. 1.

all his outward abundance, in as much as he is bound over to eternal death.—What means then this envy, Oh my soul, when I view the “prosperity of the wicked, and see “their eyes stand out with fatness? They are set in slippery places; they shall be cast down into destruction. “How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment? “They are utterly consumed with terrors*. They are reserved to the day of destruction, and shall be brought forth to the day of wrath†. Because they have no changes they fear not God‡.” They are increasing their guilt, and treasuring up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath. But I, though by nature guilty as they, am plucked as a brand out of the fire, am delivered from all condemnation, and have everlasting happiness in prospect. Cease then to envy the poor sinner’s little all, and rather let my breast be filled with tender compassion. “Rejoice, “Oh young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth; 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 judgement||. “What will all thy carnal mirth be, but as the crackling of thorns under a pot §?” Thou wilt make a little flash, a little noise, and then thy sins will sink thee down into everlasting darkness and sorrow. Cease then every angry passion, and let me rejoice that my state is not like theirs.

6 This doctrine teacheth us to be humble and submissive under all our afflictions. We are too ready to murmur and repine under the various disappointments, and afflictive dispensations we are exercised with, and to accuse God of severity and injustice, but a consideration of our being guilty creatures is enough to put a stop to every reflection, and to forbid the least uneasy thought.—Shall I censure the conduct of divine providence, or think it hard that I am stripped of this and the other comfort, when if God had been strict to mark mine iniquities, he might have taken all from me, and have sent my soul to the bottomless pit? Do I not deserve it? Why so angry, my evil heart? Why dost thou rise up in rebellion against that God, who has punished thee far less than thy iniquities deserve **! I will bear the indignation of the Lord, there-

* Psal. lxxiii. 4, 7, 18, 19. † Job. xxi. 30. ‡ Psal. iv. 19. || Ecc. xi. 9.

§ Ecc. vii. 6. ** Ezra ix. 13.

“ fore,’ whatever it is, ‘ because I have sinned against him * ;’
‘ Lord, do what thou pleasest with me and my comforts ;
‘ I must and will justify thee in all thy proceedings, and
‘ submit with the utmost cheerfulness to thy various dispens-
‘ sations : nay, I would bless thee that thou art dealing so
‘ gently with me ; that thou art not taking away my all,
‘ and giving me an awful view of everlasting distress and
‘ misery. Do with me therefore whatsoever seems good
‘ in thy sight.’

Thus we see how this doctrine may be improved. It may be of use to the sinner, to strike him with a conviction of his guilt and wretchedness, and to stir him up to seek after an interest in the Redeemer. It may be of use to the Christian too, by filling him with admiration and thankfulness for deliverance from the guilt of sin, by quickening him to all humble obedience, by keeping him from an envious disposition, and by engaging him to behave with the most cheerful submission under all the various dispensations of providence.

• Micah vii. 9.

S E R M O N II.



G A L. iii. 22. FORMER CLAUSE.

But the scripture hath concluded all under sin—

WHEN we look into heathen countries, and consider their astonishing ignorance, we have the greatest reason to be thankful for that revelation which God has distinguished us with, and which removes the mists of darkness from us, and leads us into the knowledge of truths of everlasting importance. The doctrines of original sin, justification and salvation by Jesus Christ, are infinitely above the reach of nature, and would not have been known by us, had it not been for this sacred word. The heathens found their minds agitated with a variety of most ungovernable passions, and that they were exposed to all manner of pains and afflictions, yea even to death itself, as soon as they came into the world, but they were at the utmost loss to know the rise and spring of all this. What they were ignorant of, the scripture declares to us, shews us the origin of evil, concludes us all under sin, and tells us how we became guilty, and so liable to all the miseries of this and a future world.

We have already considered the scripture account of original guilt—What is meant by it—That we are all under it—How it came about; and have endeavoured to point out the use and importance of this truth both to the sinner and the believer. We now come to take another view of original sin, as *polluting our natures*, for this view the scripture gives us of it. And it is a truth of equal importance with the other, though by no means suitable to the polite

taste of the present age. To set this truth in a clear light, and so, as it may tend properly to affect our hearts, I would take the following method.

I. Consider what this pollution is, with the extensiveness of it.

II. See what proofs we have of it, and how we are to account for it. And,

III. Shew the use and improvement of this doctrine, which I hope will be sufficient to convince us all of its great importance.

I. Let us consider what this pollution is, with the extensiveness of it. And now we come to take a further view of the death of the soul. Sin has not only robbed us of the favour of God and exposed us to his displeasure, but it has occasioned a melancholy alteration in us, defaced all the beauty we had, and has rendered us worse than the beasts which perish; sin has destroyed the image of God in us; has depraved our whole nature, and is a constant spring and fountain from whence proceed all the streams of actual transgressions. And this is the sad case with every individual of the human race.

I. Through sin the image of God is destroyed in us. We read that when God made man, he made him after his own image. Thus, Gen. i. 26. "God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness." And we find he did so, ver. 27. "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them." And Gen. v. 1. "In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him." This image, as the Assembly's Catechism well expresses it, consists in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, with a dominion over the creatures. It chiefly lay in a resemblance which man had of God in his soul. Thus it consisted in knowledge. Agreeably to which the apostle says, Col. iii. 10. "Put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the knowledge of him that created him." He had a perfect understanding of the law of God, and a large measure of wisdom and knowledge to direct and lead him, which is partly restored when the spirit comes to open our eyes and bring us again into the divine likeness. It consists in righteousness and holiness, as the apostle says,

Eph. iv. 24. "Put on the new man, which after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness." He was free at his creation from every blemish, had not the least irregularity in his soul, nor the least imperfection, but had an intire conformity to God in every faculty. And to this we may add the dominion he had over the creatures who were all brought to Adam * to yield their united subjection to him, and to receive their respective names from him. This image, sin upon its entrance, has sadly defaced. Our gold is become dim, and our fine gold is much corrupted; our beauty is gone, wo unto us that we have sinned. We have lost that which was the glory and excellency of the creature, and the crown is fallen from off our heads. Where is that wisdom and light necessary to discern between good and evil, to guide us in the way of duty, and to guard us against every error? Where is that ready subjection of soul to God, that sweet acquiescence and joy in him; that holy awe of him, that care to please him, and that conformity to him that was so conspicuous in man at his first formation? Where is that regularity and harmony amongst all the faculties of the soul, that orderly subjection of one to the other, and that ready union in divine exercises, which appeared in our innocent parent? We have lost our highest glory, our original rectitude and purity, and our dominion over the creatures too. Instead of paying their proper homage, and being ready to serve us according to their ability, they naturally run from us, rebel against us, and would set up a sovereignty of their own. And thus we see the loss we have sustained through sin; but this is not all; for,

2. *There is an actual pollution of our whole nature.* It has seized upon the whole man. Body and soul feel the sad effects of it. It has spread its contagion throughout the creature, and turned every part from that end to which it was directed. Let us take a view of the soul: and we shall find the understanding awfully darkened, so that no true spiritual light is to be found in it, till the spirit comes and opens our eyes, and gives us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Therefore when God effectually calls a sinner, he calls him "out of

* Gen. ii. 19, 20.

" darkness into his marvellous light." 1 Pet. ii. 9. The will, instead of being obedient to the divine will, and choosing that which is good, is full of prejudice and rebellion against God, saying to him, " Depart from me ; for I " desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Al- " mighty, that I should serve him ? and what profit should " I have, if I pray unto him ?" Job xxi. 14, 15. Our af- fections are sadly depraved, and therefore naturally cleave to nothing but evil, having a distaste to every thing that is of God. Instead of mourning over sin, we lament our wordly disappointments, and are concerned that we have not the opportunities we desire of gratifying our ambition, pride, covetousness, or love of pleasure. Instead of rejoicing in Christ, and in the hope of the glory of God, all our joy lies in the narrow compass of earth and sense, and so ebbs and flows with outward comforts. Instead of esteeming the most amiable objects, we love that which we should hate, and desire and long after that which is dis- honourable to God, and ruinous to our immortal souls. In- stead of being afraid of sin, and of offending God by it, we are rather afraid of temporal evils, and our greatest concern is to avoid that which is painful and disagreeable to flesh and blood. Once more, instead of fixing our hopes upon the glorious realities within the veil, we confine them to the short-lived happiness of the present state. We are crying out, " who will shew us any good *," and are " spending " our strength for nought, and our labour for that which " profiteth not †." Our affections are upon the whole all carnal, fixed either upon unlawful objects, or else upon those that are lawful, in an immoderate degree. Our memory is depraved too, so that we retain not spiritual things, but soon lose ‡ them, though we can easily remember and are ready to treasure up that which is impertinent and sinful. Our thoughts and imaginations are evil, and are naturally ready to run after things most criminal and displeasing to God. Nay our bodies are partakers of, or are affected with the contagion too, for we " yield our members as instru- " ments of unrighteousness unto sin." Rom. vi. 13. Thus our whole nature is defiled ; we are all over sin. " From " the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, we are full

* Psal. iv. 6. † Isa. lv. 2. ‡ Psal. cvi. 13, 21.

" of wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores," in a spiritual sense, so that there is " no soundness in us*." This, this is our state by nature, this our case as we come into the world. And further,

3. This is a constant spring and fountain in us, from whence proceed all actual transgressions. These are as so many streams from it: they are so many branches sprouting out from this root. From hence proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies and every evil word and work. Every sin is virtually contained in this, and arises from it. It leads one to sensuality and uncleanness, another to pride, another to covetousness, another to infidelity. It pushes one to acts of cruelty and inhumanity, another to blasphemy. It shews itself in an open contempt of divine things in one, in another in hypocrisy and deceit. It is to be found in all the natural descendants, of Adam. It comes into the world with us, and it equally defiles us all. None but the holy one of God was perfectly pure, and he was free from all depravity. He bore our sins, and yet was free from sin. He was tempted by Satan, but the prince of this world found nothing in him; for though he was made of a woman, yet he was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the virgin, and therefore was absolutely without a spot. Thus we see the deplorable state of all mankind. Let us now,

II. Inquire what proofs we have of the point, together with the reason of it. We must go back to our first parents to find out the cause. Adam is not only to be considered as a covenant-head and representative of his posterity, but as their natural root. In one view, guilt is imputed to us, in the other, he conveys a corrupt nature. Defilement therefore has been propagated from father to son in all ages and generations hitherto, and will be so to the end of time. And however we may be at a loss to know how the soul, which comes pure from God, is corrupted, yet it is an undeniable fact, and so, as that he is by no means the author of sin. That this defilement is universal, appears,

i. From scripture representations of the matter. Thus it is said that " Adam begat a son in his own likeness, after

“ his image.” Gen. v. 3. It would be a low interpretation to say, that all that is meant by it is this, that he begat a child who had all the features and parts of a human creature. The words appear to be more significant, *viz.* that the son he had came into the world with the same corrupted image which he himself bore after his fall. This therefore seems to be put in opposition to that likeness of God in which man was at first created, and which is mentioned in the first verse. Again, when “ God saw that the “ wickedness of man was great in the earth,” he adds, “ and “ that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was “ only evil continually,” Gen. vi. 5. Who that reads these words but must immediately conclude that there is a corrupt fountain in the heart, else the imaginations that are in the heart could never be *only evil, and that continually*. This is more fully delivered in Gen. viii. 21. where God says, “ that the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his “ youth,” from his childhood, so that he comes into the world with a depraved heart. Job therefore represents the impossibility of our being pure, by asking, “ who can bring “ a clean thing out of an unclean?” Job xiv. 4. He easily answers it, and says, *not one*. It cannot be. Can an impure fountain send forth pure streams? “ Can a corrupt tree “ bring forth good fruit? Or, of thorns do men gather figs, “ or of a bramble-bush gather they grapes?” We may as reasonably expect this to come to pass, as that from a corrupt root should spring a pure offspring. If Adam had continued innocent, he would have had an innocent and holy seed, but falling, and his nature being tainted with sin, it comes thus from him to all his posterity. And therefore Job again asks, chap. xv. 14. “ What is man that he “ should be clean; and he who is born of a woman, that he “ should be righteous?” Bildad believed this important truth, when he says, Job. xxv. 4. “ How then can man be “ justified with God, or how can he be clean that is born “ of a woman?” David had a deep sense of the sinfulness of his nature, when he says, “ behold I was shapen in ini- “ quity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” Psal. li. 5. We have no reason to believe that David is here lamenting over some heinous sin that his father and mother had been

guilty of. To charge them with a detestable crime, only to evade the truth of a particular text, when there is nothing in all scripture to support it, is indecent and unbecoming a Christian, and shews that we had much rather be guilty of forgery and falsehood, than yield to a doctrine so unsuitable to our natural pride. Besides, David is not in this Psalm lamenting the sins of others, but his own sins, and therefore goes to the root, and shews how his very frame was formed in sin, that it is therefore inseparable from his nature, and came into the world with him. These passages then make this point appear evident to an unprejudiced mind, and tend to establish us in this awful truth, the corruption of our nature. "Whatsoever," says our Lord, "is born of flesh is flesh," John iii. 6. It is a certain truth that *like produceth like*. We cannot suppose then that Adam's children could be free from corruption, when the stock from whence they came was all polluted. They must have the same nature conveyed to them; from them it must come to others, and so will be propagated to the latest posterity. But,

2. *This truth is evidently proved by the ordinances of circumcision and baptism.* Circumcision was not only designed as a standing memorial of God's regard and care for the Jews, as long as that dispensation continued, but was intended to point out the impurity of the heart, and the necessity of its being cleansed, that they might be the real children of God, and be fitted for the enjoyment of him. As long as this ordinance therefore remained in the church, and was attended to, it was a striking representation of the corruption of nature, even in children of eight days old. Thus baptism under the present dispensation is designed to be a standing proof of the same important truth. The regenerating and sanctifying influences of the spirit are represented by water *; and as water is made use of by divine appointment in this ordinance, so it has a reference to this spiritual blessing, and therefore must necessarily suppose impurity, and that our souls are polluted as we come into the world. But,

3. *This truth evidently appears in the temper and behaviour of children and others.* Solomon says, "that foolish-

* Ezek. xxxvi. 25. Tit. 3, 5.

“ness is bound up in the heart of a child,” Prov. xxii. 15. and the Psalmist, “that the wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies,” Psal. Ixiii. 3. If nature was not corrupted, could we suppose that all would be led by the influence of example into sin? Some are favoured with the privilege of godly parents, and therefore with a religious education. Their tender relatives early instruct them in the principles of Christianity, and endeavour to instil in their minds sentiments truly evangelical; recommend the ways of God to them, exhort, intreat, and take every method to guard men against sin, and lead them to holiness, inferring all by a suitable and becoming example. But you see how many under all these advantages discover the greatest inclinations to sin, and the strongest prejudices against God. Cain, notwithstanding the opportunities he had of instruction, yet discovered the depravity of his heart by destroying his own brother, because God had given him such testimonies of his acceptance of Abel’s sacrifice. Yea, those children, who have appeared under the most early religious impressions, have yet given many evidences of a polluted nature, and made it manifest that they came into the world impure. Else what means that pride, envy, resentment, and other criminal gratifications so observable in them. It is strange if the babe is perfectly innocent and pure, that before he can well form an articulate sound, he should be passionate, obstinate, and disobedient, and that not a single instance could ever yet be found, except the holy Jesus, of a child’s withstanding the influence of every evil example, and of walking in a perfect course of unspotted holiness. The reason plainly is this, that every one has enough in his heart for temptations to work upon, and therefore that all are depraved.

Lastly, *This appears from the experience of the saints;* These see the odiousness of sin, the beauty of holiness, and are under the influence of the strongest motives, and most powerful persuasives to obedience; but see their numerous backslidings, hear their frequent complaints, their mournful confessions, all which shew the sad defilement of nature, which is not perfectly washed away. The heart will never be thoroughly pure till the soul gets above. A tree will not be totally destroyed unless you cut it down; to take away a branch will not answer the end. ‘Sin says an old divine,

' is like the wild fig-tree, or ivy in the wall, cut off stump, body, bough, and branches, yet some sprigs or other will sprout out again, till the wall is pulled down.' Notwithstanding our high enjoyments, yet sin will discover itself, and we shall be in danger of being exalted above measure *. Though we should be engaged in duties, where the presence of God should enliven us, the fear of God awe us, yet sin will be there: and what is this but the body of death, the fountain of corruption, original sin in the heart from which the believer is not intirely cleansed, whilst he is in the body? For the proof of this consult Paul's seventh chapter of his epistle to the Romans; from the fifteenth verse, and let every Christian examine his own experience.

Thus I have endeavoured to state and give you some proofs of this truth, and now come,

III. *To shew the use and improvement of it.* However disagreeable it may appear to our natural pride and self-flattery, and whatever contempt may be cast upon it as useless and unprofitable, and only fit for enthusiasts, and persons of contracted spirits to believe, a serious view of the matter will easily point out to us, how necessary it is that our minds should be deeply impressed with a sense of this truth, because it directly tends to answer the following important ends.

1. *To keep us ever humble and fill us with self-loathing.* Humility is an amiable grace, a most beautiful garment, a robe with which we should be always clothed. And what tends more to secure us from pride and haughtiness, from every lofty look and thought, and make us appear low and desppicable in our own eyes, than a serious view, and a suitable sense of our natural depravity? This keeps the soul humble in his addresses to God. He dare not now come in the temper of the boasting Pharisee, but like the penitent Publican, is ashamed, and smites upon his breast. In his confessions of sin to God now, how humble! And he does not only mention and lament over actual sins, but original. Thus David contented himself not with a mournful acknowledgement of his public sins, but he goes to the fountain head, and laments over its great impurity: "Behold "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother con-

"ceive me," Psal. li. 5. As if he had said, "why should I dwell upon my actual sins, let me go to their spring and source. They are as so many outbreaks of that defilement that cleaves to my heart. Oh let me turn within: And see, I am nothing but sin. I brought it into the world with me, and therefore have been a transgressor from the very womb." The Christian's petitions are all put up with humility, and accompanied with self-abhorrence, under a sense of his own vileness, and therefore of his great unworthiness to appear before God. This keeps him humble under a consideration of that distinction God has made between him and others. "Has the Lord called me by his spirit, whilst others remain in darkness and sin? let not me ascribe it to any beauty or worthiness he saw in me: I am the same by nature with the vilest sinner, therefore let a sense of my original depravity be a curb to every rising of pride, and keep me continually humble." This keeps the Christian humble under all his enjoyments and glorious prospects. "Has the Lord been pleased to favour me with the light of his countenance, and bring me to the top of Pisgah, to give me a view of the promised land? Is it day with my soul, whilst it is night with many of my fellow Christians? Oh let me yet lie low, and not think too highly of myself; let me keep constantly in view of the corruption of my heart, and that will check my vanity, and make me appear vile and despicable." Thus likewise, has the Christian been kept from public backslidings; has he walked with God from day to day, made progress in grace, and been careful to maintain good works? Yet so long as he has a proper sense of this truth, he finds enough to lament over, and to convince him that he deserves to be cast out of God's favour and to be separated for ever from him; and thus whilst he is a shining example to others, and is had in reputation among the churches, he is yet kept humble, by a daily view of his own heart. A sense of this truth too guards us against behaving with a haughty and superior air to others, or being lifted up with any outward enjoyments. Who art thou that boastest of thy extraction, thy noble birth, the dignity and antiquity of thy family? Thou wast conceived in sin, and art just upon a level with those thou art ready to despise. Who art thou that pridest thyself in thy numerous titles, honours,

and preferments? See here is enough to debase thee: and were but thine eyes open to see thy depravity, it would fill thee with self-loathing amidst all thy grandeur; and make thee esteem others equally with or above thyself. Who art thou that art elated with riches, and an abundance of outward enjoyments and cannot stoop to take notice of thy poor neighbour, thou who art ready to look with an air of haughtiness upon all beneath thee, and to claim before others a right to and interest in the favour of heaven? wast thou but to have a suitable sight and sense of the fountain of corruption in thy soul, it would bring down thy loftiness to the ground, make thee look upon all thy riches as empty trifles, fill thee with self-abhorrence, and engage thee to behave with all Christian decency and respect to those who are below thee. Thus in these and all other cases, where there are temptations to pride and haughtiness, a becoming sense of this truth would be a great means of keeping us humble, correcting our tempers and regulating our behaviour. This truth upon the whole, leads us to that poverty of spirit, to which our Lord has annexed real blessedness, and to that excellent frame and temper of mind, which runs through, and is recommended in the whole gospel, and appears so amiable both to God and man, and therefore this truth is of great importance.

2. *This truth greatly enhances and leads us to adore and admire the free grace of God in our redemption, effectual calling, and salvation.* It not only magnifies the grace of God in taking notice of us, who are guilty and therefore unworthy of his favours, but filthy and polluted and so, therefore, contrary to his pure and holy nature. Did the father see us in this condition, when he fixed upon us as the vessels of his mercy? Sure we may well say, why were we not the objects of his abhorrence, having lost his image, and become all over polluted with sin! Did he, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; he in whose sight the heavens are not clean, and who chargeth his angels with folly; did he look upon us in our depravity, and determine our everlasting salvation? Has the Son of God therefore visited this lower world, appeared in fashion as a man, offered up himself a sacrifice upon the accursed tree, and made a complete purchase of all the blessings of salvation for us? Has the Spirit visited our souls, opened our eyes, renewed our hearts,

and partly restored the image of God to us? Did he see us polluted in our blood, and say unto us live? Has God been pleased to manifest himself to us, shed abroad his love in our hearts, and given us the hopes of the everlasting enjoyment of himself? We may surely say, "his ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts *." Whatever contempt may be cast upon this grace by some, those who have a suitable sense of the evil of sin, and the plague of their hearts cannot but admire the riches of it. The more they view themselves, the more they are astonished at that Grace that chose them, has redeemed, quickened, and given them the hopes of eternal glory. Far, yea very far is this truth from encouraging us to run from God, it leads us to him, fills our souls, when under divine influences, with holy wonder, and presents us with the strongest motives to everlasting love and admiration. Oh, none but the believer can sing the heights, and depths, and breadths, and lengths of the love of God, because none else see properly their own hearts. This makes the mysteries of redeeming saving grace more glorious than all the mysteries of the creation. This engages the attention of angels.
O, what was I, yea, what was I a few months or years ago? In my sins, my understanding a confused chaos, my will obstinate and rebellious; my affections all impure; nay, what am I now? Does not this body of death still continue within me? Do I not find it often leading me into captivity to the dishonouring of God? Am I not yet carnal and sold under sin? And will God take me into his bosom, dwell with and in me? Is he leading such a wretch as I am to the top of Nebo, and giving me at times a cluster of Canaan's grapes? Oh my soul, for ever love this God, admire his Grace and never cease to sing his praises."

3. A sense of this truth tends to convince us of the necessity, reality, and importance of regeneration, and to guard us against a dependence upon an outward reformation. It is no wonder that he who will not believe the corruption of nature ridicules the new birth, and thinks a change of life to be sufficient to denominate him a Christian. He has never seen the uncleanness of his heart, and therefore in his own

* Isaiah iv. 8.

apprehensions wants no cleansing. Has he been a drunkard? If he becomes sober and temperate he thinks it enough. Or, has he been a swearer, or any open or public sinner? He is satisfied by abstaining from these notorious immoralities, and more especially if he is brought to go through a round of duties, or to a regular attendance upon ordinances; now he cries peace, peace, when he is still far from the kingdom of God. Here lies the danger of despising this truth. Persons are not aware, how insensibly a denial of it leads them to a neglect, and often a contempt of real holiness: whilst on the other hand, when we firmly believe our natural corruption, and especially, when we have a becoming sense of it, we cannot be contented with an external religion, but must be seeking after a change of disposition and heart, as well as a change of life. He who acts consistently with this belief, and with the voice of this truth, must reason in some such manner as this. ‘I now see the necessity of inward holiness, an inward change, and that I may therefore be a hypocrite notwithstanding all my fair appearances. Oh, let me see then that my heart be cleansed. My hopes of heaven cannot be right, if my heart is not purified. Let me not then be deceived in a matter of so much importance to my salvation, but seek to have the image of God restored in my soul, which sin had destroyed.’ To heal a stream will not be sufficient; the fountain itself must be purified. The believer’s care is therefore to lay the axe to the root of the tree, and never to be easy or happy till the body of death is totally destroyed. Permit me therefore to address you my friends, who are strangers to the new birth, and like the Pharisees are only concerned to go through the forms of religion. I must tell you, and I hope I do it out of real tenderness and faithfulness to your souls, that you are not fit for the kingdom of God. You may acknowledge that holiness is absolutely necessary to happiness, but you have never yet been duly sensible what this holiness is. You may be outwardly sober and regular, but you have never yet felt the sanctifying influences of the spirit in your hearts. You have no real knowledge of sin. You see not its odiousness, and how the sad contagion has spread itself through the faculties of your souls, and thereby rendered you unmeet for the enjoyment of God. You have no true relish for the spiritual

part of religion, no real love to God in your hearts; no delight in him, and how can you then think of heaven? Can you carry a polluted nature there? Nothing unclean shall ever enter the gates of the New Jerusalem. Besides, could you find admittance, you would have no happiness, because you have no suitableness of soul to the enjoyments and employments of heaven. Let me intreat you to consider, that religion lies not in outward forms. You must be born again. You must have new hearts. Old things must be done away, and all things must become new. You are naturally filthy and polluted, and you must be washed, you must be sanctified by the spirit of God. You must be pure in heart, or else you can never enter into the mansions above. Believe the important truth therefore, and seek with the utmost earnestness to be regenerated, that you may have the image of God in your souls here, and may stand in his presence hereafter, having neither spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing.

4. *It is an evidence of the Christian to be made sensible of the fountain of sin in the heart, to mourn over it, and to get it cleansed.* Though the Spirit of God may oftentimes fasten the first conviction upon some actual sin, yet whenever he begins a real work in the soul, he always opens the heart, and gives the awakened creature a view of his uncleanness. This you find was the case with Saul when converted. Before, he thought he was blameless, but “when the commandment came sin revived, and he died.” Rom. vii. 9. You see therefore how the Spirit opened to him, and set before him the plague of his heart, that though he was chargeable with no public immoralities, yet he had such a view, and such a feeling sense of the corruption within, that he mourned over it, appeared vile in his own eyes, and longed to be delivered from it as that which was his greatest burden. And this you find in a great measure in every Christian. Though he is not all at once led to see what a vile, depraved creature he is, yet as he grows in grace he is more acquainted with himself: and this is his peculiar complaint before God, the darkness of his understanding, the depravity of his will and affections. These lay him low, fill him with real contrition, and warm and earnest desires to be cleansed in the fountain of the Redeemer’s blood. With this he struggles as long as he is in

life. The sad remains of sin perplex him daily, lead him often into captivity, unfit him for duties, interrupt him in them, and lay a foundation for deep humiliation, and make him frequently water his couch with tears. ‘ Oh this body of sin, when will it be destroyed ? This unclean heart of mine, when will it be all pure ? I long for deliverance as much as a poor captive whose bondage is peculiarly distressing, I am burdened, I am burdened ; who will take off the load ? Oh for an understanding free from all darkness ; for every power of my soul to be made perfect ! Oh for a heart to love God for ever ! Blessed be God I have the prospect through Jesus Christ my Lord.’ We never find that Paul mourned because of his persecutions and afflictions. He was ready not only to be “ bound, but even to die at Jerusalem, for the sake of Christ * ;” but when he came to look within, and to see and feel the corrupted fountain, rendering him so unlike God, and filling him with so much coldness, he was grieved ; he was cut to the very heart. What can we conclude then from this, but, that all those who are not sensible of the plague and wickedness of their hearts ; they who see not their inward depravity, but think themselves perfect, have never yet experienced a saving change. And thus we see the importance of this truth. It is that which the Spirit opens to all his people, as being the great means of bringing them into an evangelical frame.

5. *This doctrine should put us all upon the great duty of examination.* Here let me call upon thee to attend, whilst I put a few questions to thee of everlasting importance. Hast thou ever considered this soul-humbling and awaking truth ; or, art thou one of those who cast contempt upon it, as a mere fancy, or art thou passing it by as a matter of speculation ? Dost thou believe it as a part of revelation, and hast thou not yet inquired how thou shalt be delivered from it ? Hast thou seen and felt this inward corruption, and hast thou been convinced of the necessity of regeneration, and been seeking after it ? or, does not a consideration of a loss of God’s image, and the depravity of all thy faculties affect thy mind ? Art thou apprehending that a mere acknowledgement of this truth is suffi-

cient ; and art thou therefore contenting thyself with a zealous vindication of it in opposition to all those who deny it ? Dost thou never think of the impossibility of getting into heaven with such a polluted nature, and therefore never inquire how thou shalt get it cleansed ? Dost thou never consider that one great part of the Christian's happiness lies in a total deliverance from this body of death ? Does it never give thee concern, that thou art unfit for the kingdom of God ? What are thy hopes of heaven founded upon ; or what encouragement hast thou to hope for eternal life ? Is thy soul sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, and art thou in some measure sanctified by his Spirit ? A view of this truth will furnish us with a variety of the most important questions to put to our souls, and lay out much work for examination ; and therefore it is a truth of great moment, and highly deserving our attention. But,

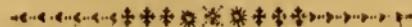
Lastly, *This doctrine should put the Christian much upon watching and prayer.* We see the Christian is in perpetual danger of falling into sin. We have not only an enemy without us; but we have one within us too. Satan has a friend in our hearts ; he sees our pollution, and his concern is to suit his temptations to it : and when sin and Satan are both importunate, it is a difficult matter to stand. How earnest then should we be with God in prayer for his divine presence and assistance, and how watchful over our own hearts, lest at any time we should be ensnared ? Like sentinels be ever upon your guard, remembering that you are always in danger of a surprise.

Thus we see how important this doctrine is, and what a peculiar tendency it has to be useful to us as to our everlasting interest. I might have mentioned some other instances of its importance ; as, that it tends to set off the gospel, and make us highly prize and admire it, for the provision that is made for our sanctification as well as for our justification. It tends to wean the Christian from this imperfect world, and to set him a longing after a better, where all his complaints will be for ever over, and his soul made perfect in holiness. Upon the whole, a right knowledge of original sin is of signal use to us in our way to heaven. It is, says a divine of the last age, the curb of pride, the foil to set off grace, the glass of man, the spur of industry. It is that which makes the best of saints to weep in the best of duties,

and the worst of sinners to look pale in their greatest prosperity. Let us not therefore be ashamed of this doctrine, but firmly believe it, and be concerned to get a suitable knowledge of it, that we may not hold it speculatively, but may improve it for the ends and purposes that have been mentioned. Look therefore into the word of God where this doctrine is revealed. Examine your own hearts, and see whether they correspond not with it. And above all, be concerned to look up to the Spirit of God, to open your eyes, and to give you a spiritual discerning of this truth, and to lead you to the blood of Jesus*, which *cleanseth from all sin*. And you who are parents, teach your children early this most affecting doctrine; set before them their pollution; tell them of the necessity of their being born again; and do not take so much pride in seeing them in a gaudy dress, but be concerned to see their souls adorned with the image of God. Not only get them sprinkled with water, and then think you have done your duty, but pray that they may be baptized with the Holy Ghost, that you and yours may be purified and cleansed, and so be fitted for, and at length brought to the mansions above, where you will appear without a spot, and love and praise for ever and ever.

* John i. 7.

S E R M O N III.



GAL. iii. 22. FORMER CLAUSE.

But the scripture hath concluded all under sin—

THE representations which the scriptures give us of our natural state, though never so just and consistent with truth, are yet highly disagreeable to our corrupt sentiments and inclinations, as they so evidently tend to check our pride and vanity, and to destroy all our self-confidence. The two doctrines we have considered are therefore rejected upon this account: And that we have now in view is equally offensive, and is therefore as much disregarded, though it is never so well supported by the word of God.

The scripture hath concluded us not only under the guilt and pollution, but under the power and government of sin too: so that man *cannot possibly save himself*. This is the great point we are now to prove, and then to improve, or to shew the use and importance of.

That this point may appear clear to every one's understanding, I shall consider man's impotency in two views.

I. *His absolute incapacity to restore himself to the divine favour, and obtain a title to eternal life; and,*

II. *His utter inability to subdue the dominion of sin, and to purge and cleanse his soul from it.* From these views it will appear how weak and helpless man is of himself, and that, had not God graciously undertaken our salvation, we must have perished for ever.

The two great parts of salvation are justification and sanctification; or our being delivered from the guilt of sin, and

having a title to eternal life, and our being delivered from the power and being of sin, and so having a fitness for the everlasting enjoyment of God. Man's impotency lies in these two things.

I. *He is absolutely unab'e to deliver himself from the guilt of sin, recommend himself to the favour of God, and obtain a title to eternal life : Or, he cannot do any th.ng to justify himself before God.* That we may be justified, two things are absolutely necessary. 1. *That atonement be made for sin.* And, 2. *That we have a perfect righteousness.*

1. *Atonement must be made for sin.* This is the first step towards justification ; and if man is unequal to this, all his attempts to justify himself by a course of obedience will be insignificant, even if he could perfectly fulfil the law. There is a debt that is contracted, and how must this be paid ? We have all sinned in Adam, and have been guilty of violating the law of God in thousands of instances, and how must these breaches be made up ? God has absolutely threatened death upon our disobedience, and how can we escape it ? To say that God will overlook our many past imperfections, if we are but sincere and upright in our walk, is to say that which is contrary to the whole current of scripture, and to reflect upon all the other perfections of the divine nature. The pleas of truth and justice are as powerful and importunate as those of mercy, and therefore demand an equal attention. God will not pardon sin, either to depreciate his law, to stain and sink his government, or to fully the glory of his truth, justice, and holiness. He requires a suitable satisfaction therefore, before he will issue out a pardon, that the honour of these may be preserved. The penalty threatened must be borne, and no relaxation granted ; and this is his solemn determination, that “ without shedding “ of blood, there shall be no remission.” This appears plainly to be the doctrine of the Old Testament, and therefore represented in the sacrifices that were offered. These sacrifices all pointed at the guilt of sin, the demands of justice, and shewed that if we were delivered from the wrath of an offended God, it must be by satisfying these demands : And as they were typical of the great sacrifice, the Lord Jesus Christ, so they plainly represented this soul-humbling truth. Man's weakness and inability to atone for sin by any sacrifices he should offer, or any sufferings he

should endure. “ Wherewith shall we come before the Lord, “ and how ourselves before the high God ? Shall we come “ before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year “ old ? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, “ or with ten thousands of rivers of oil ? Shall we give our “ first born for our transgression, the fruit of our body for “ the sin of our soul ? ” Mic. vi. 6, 7. All these, were they in our power, would be absolutely insufficient to repair the honour of law and justice, so reflected upon by sin. You find the apostle therefore representing us as “ without strength,” when “ Christ died for us.” Rom. v. 6. It is evident, that if man could have made satisfaction to the demands of justice, so that God could have been glorified in our pardon and salvation, he would not have sent his son to be a propitiation for us. All thy tears and sighs, then, all thy signs of sorrow and humiliation ; all thy sufferings of whatever kind ; all thy mortifications, thy wasting thy body by abstemiousness and fastings, all bear no proportion to the infinite evil and demerit of sin, and therefore cannot redeem thy soul from the curse of a broken law. Thus man being a sinner, is weak and helpless, and therefore lies naked and exposed to the awful threatening denounced against sin. But,

2. Besides atonement for sin, we must have a perfect righteousness, or we can never be justified before God. There are the same terms of justification now as in the state of innocence. “ Do this and live.” The law will not admit of any thing less, neither will infinite justice. That the obedience that justifies us may be complete, it must be universal, free from all sin, and perpetual. Unless it has these three properties, it cannot lay any solid foundation for our expectation of eternal life.

It must be universal. Every divine command must be obeyed, and none neglected. Therefore the Pharisee’s righteousness was greatly defective, as all he had to say was, that he was “ no extortioner, unjust, adulterer, or so vile as the poor Publican ;” that he had “ fasted twice in the week, and given tithes of all he possessed.” Luke xviii. 11, 12. No wonder that our Lord said, “ Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in nowise enter into the kingdom of God.” Mat. v. 20. They paid tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, but they neglected the weightier matters

" of the law, judgement, mercy and faith : These they " ought to have done," as well as " not to leave the other " undone." Mat. xxiii. 23. The curse of God stands in full force against all those, who continue not in " all things " that are written in the book of the law to do them." Gal. iii. 10. If one command is laid aside, all our obedience will prove insufficient to justify us.

But, our obedience must be *absolutely perfect too, or free from all sin.* Every command must be perfectly obeyed in thought, word, and deed. We are greatly mistaken in our natural conceptions of the law. Saul the Pharisee thought himself blameless, because he had endeavoured strictly to observe the letter of the law, not knowing its full meaning and extent. It requires purity of thought, as well as purity of life ; and according to the explanation which our Lord has given us of it, he is not only a murderer in the eye of the law, who actually kills his fellow creature, but who entertains malice and resentment in his heart against him, or indulges angry passions : and so of other things. Matth. v. Thus, " whosoever shall keep the whole law, *and yet offend in one single point, he is guilty of all,*" and therefore is as far from justification, as if he had broke every command of the law, James ii. 10. Law and justice will admit of nothing less than an absolutely perfect righteousness as our justifying righteousness. Again,

Our obedience must be perpetual. We must " continue in all things written in the book of the law to do them," Gal iii. 10. A single act, or a few acts of obedience, a day or a year's watchfulness against sin and observance of the law will be of no avail to us. Our obedience must be perfect and complete, and therefore perpetual, else we shall find it intirely insufficient to justify us before God.

If this then be the case, who can stand before God ? Who can say, he is free from sin ? Who can perform such an obedience ; and, who then can justify himself ? " In many " things," says the apostle, " we offend all," James iii. 2. If every one would but take a view of his own heart, he must acknowledge with the assembly of divines, that *no man since the fall, is able in this life perfectly to keep the commandments of God, but daily doth break them in thought, word and deed**. Who can, who dare say, that his services

* Assembly's Cat. Q. 82.

are perfect? What a mixture of sin is in our best duties, and therefore how insufficient to justify us before God? The believer cannot perform a religious duty without some imperfection. An apostle was obliged to say, that "when he would do good, evil was present with him," Rom. vii. 21. And how then must it be with a person, in whom the power of sin is not subdued? If the church esteemed her righteousnesses all as filthy rags, and an unclean thing, and therefore every way unable to intitle her to the divine favour, oh what must the duties and services of a poor unrenewed sinner be, which are never animated with a sense of the love of God, neither are ever performed with a view to his glory. Upon the whole, as our nature is sadly and universally polluted, so our services must be polluted too, and consequently insufficient to justify us before God. And thus we see man's impotency in the point of justification.

To this we may likewise add, that he is so much under the government of sin, as to be unable to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for justification, and therefore would remain for ever in a state of condemnation, did not God graciously impute to him the righteousness of the great Mediator, and his spirit enable him to receive and rest upon it for eternal life. But,

II. *Man is of himself utterly unable to subdue the dominion of sin, and to purge and cleanse his soul from it.* This is absolutely necessary to be done, else there can be no enjoyment of God; and we shall soon be convinced how unequal man is to it, when we consider what power sin exercises in every faculty of the soul. Particularly,

His understanding is so much blinded, that he cannot discern things as he ought. He is therefore said to be "Darkness," Eph. v. 8. He is so dark that he cannot see himself to be that guilty, odious, and despicable creature that he really is represented to be in the scriptures. He sees not the plague, the wickedness of his own heart, but is ready to speak of his goodness, his soundness, his cleanness of heart, as if he had no sin. He is ignorant of the spirituality of the law, and therefore esteems an obedience to the letter of it sufficient to intitle him to the favour of God. Thus * Saul was alive without the law once, and never saw himself such

a transgressor, till the Spirit came and set the commandment before him.

He sees no amiableness in Jesus Christ, no excellency in his person, his righteousness, his fulness, his titles, and offices. He sees no need of the sanctifying and renewing influences of the Holy Spirit, and therefore is ready to look upon all representations of these things as enthusiastic fancies, and wild chimeras of a disordered brain: “He calleth ‘evil good and good evil,’ If. v. 20. “The natural man ‘receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they ‘are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, be- ‘cause they are spiritually discerned,’ 1 Cor. ii. 14. This is the case with all, “for there is none that understandeth,” Rom. iii. 11. Thus we see one of the noble faculties of the soul, even the understanding, robbed of its native beauty, and so far enslaved by sin, as to be turned into darkness itself; so that all the representations which are made of sin, of holiness, of Christ, and of spiritual things to a natural man, are absolutely lost, and therefore without any saving effect, as he sees no real importance, excellency, or suitableness in them. But again;

His will is absolutely in subjection to sin. He chooses nothing but sin, can delight in nothing else, and is full of the bitterest enmity to, and strongest prejudices against the ways and things of God. “The carnal mind is enmity “against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, “neither indeed can be,” Rom. viii. 7. “His understand-“ing is not only darkened, but he is alienated from the life “of God, through the ignorance that is in him, because of “the blindness or hardness of his heart,” Eph. iv. 18. Sin has gained such a dominion over the will, that it is obstinately prejudiced against the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, so that the sinner will not come to him that he may have life *. The heart is called a “heart of stone †;” so hard that nothing but an almighty power can make a saving impression upon it. The sinner is represented as stout hearted. He walks in the ways of his heart; and in the sight of his eyes, and will not be controlled by man. “He “stretcheth out his hands against God, and strengtheneth “himself against the Almighty. He runneth upon him;

* John v. 40. † Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

"even on his neck, upon the thick bosses of his bucklers." Job xv. 25, 26. Thus his will is determined for and bound to evil, and averse to all good. He cannot bear to think of plucking out his right eye, and cutting off his right hand sins, and of submitting to the yoke and government of Christ. His heart rises therefore against God, and discovers its implacable enmity by despising gospel truths, by persecuting God's people, and by running into every act of rebellion against him. But further,

The affections of the soul are absolutely under the power of sin. They are intirely enslaved, so that you find no moaning for sin, no joy in God, no fear of him, no love to him, but every affection turned from its proper object, and going aside readily and fully from God. The sinner is absolutely insensible and stupid, a lover of pleasure, a hater of God, stands in no awe of sin or hell, chooses the way to everlasting darkness, and is like the wild ass used to the wilderness that snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure, he will not bear reproof.

His memory is led captive by sin: He likes not to retain God in his mind, but his memory is set against every thing that has a tendency to be really useful to him, whilst it carefully endeavours to store up things, that are of the most polluting and hardening nature to our hearts, and the most destructive to our souls.

The conscience is hardened through sin. It stands out against every awful threatening, and desperately out-braves hell and damnation. In fine, the whole soul is not only polluted, but led captive by sin. It binds us with the strongest fetters; it governs us like a law *; it commands us like a tyrant: it reigns in us, and exercises a sovereignty, which none can subdue but that power, which brought all things out of nothing. The soul and body are both in subjection to it, and ready to execute it's orders, however ruinous to our everlasting peace. We are naturally so under the power of sin, that no calls, no exhortations, however pressing will move us, no awful representations of the terrors of the law, and of the bottomless pit will awaken us, no human rhetoric will persuade us, no invitations and intreaties, though delivered with all possible endearment, will

* Rom. vii. 23.

win us, no descriptions of the love of Christ, though never so strong, will melt and captivate our souls, and bring us into obedience. Our passions may be moved, whilst our hearts remain still hardened and impenitent. Like Agrippa we may be almost persuaded to be Christians; or like Felix we may be made to tremble, but still continue under the dominion of sin. Not all the afflictions we meet with can really awaken our stupid souls, or soften our rocky hearts: nay, not even the views of death itself can bring us really to God. We may be in some measure alarmed, and through fear of hell, promise and vow, and bring ourselves under the most solemn engagements to amend our lives, and return to God; but after all our resolving, and re-resolving, we just continue and die the same, unless God is pleased to enlighten and save us. We are represented as past feeling, Eph. iv. 19. and as dead in trespasses and sins, Eph. ii. 1. Which shews evidently our inability to do any thing in, or even towards the spiritual life, so as either to renew our hearts, sanctify and cleanse them, or prepare ourselves for the reception of divine grace, as some have imagined. We are not sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing as of ourselves, 2 Cor. iii. 5. Without Christ we can do nothing. John xv. 5. Who can put forth an act of saving faith in the Redeemer? Who can exercise real repentance towards God? Who can crucify one corruption, get the dominion over it, and at length eradicate it out of the heart? Who is sufficient for these things? The believer readily owns his utter inability to do it: and we may therefore without hesitation conclude that the unrenewed sinner must be every way unfit for a work so important.

Thus we have a view of man's impotency. But let it be considered, that this impotency is voluntary. Though man is naturally carried out after nothing but evil, yet he pursues it willingly: he chooses his slavery, is pleased with his condition, and therefore stifles every conviction that is not accompanied with a saving power, and does all he can to harden his heart against God, and get above all impressions. This, this is the sad and awful state we are all of us in; these are the dreadful consequences of sin's entrance into the soul. We are all of us bond-slaves and captives, sold under sin, and thereby have given Satan an opportunity of more easily seducing our souls, keeping us from God, and

increasing our bonds. If man converts himself, he must conquer not only flesh and blood but principalities and powers, and spiritual wickednesses in high places. He must enlighten his understanding, turn the bias of his will, the edge of his desires, and choose, pursue, and delight in that which sin and Satan have given him the deepest enmity to, and the strongest prejudices against. This is the doctrine of our Bible, and it is suitable to our experience, and is readily acknowledged by those who have been led by the Spirit of God into a saving acquaintance with their own hearts, however it may be despised by others.

We now come to the use and improvement of this doctrine. I would here shew how much it tends to be useful both to the sinner and to the real Christian.

This doctrine may be of peculiar service to the sinner.

I. *To stir him up to the use of all necessary and appointed means.* Some will conclude, that as man is absolutely unable to convert himself, it is a discouragement to the use of means, and opens a wide door to carnal security, negligence, and sin. Whilst persons entertain this unhappy thought, they are enemies to the doctrine, and lose the advantages that arise from the mind's being impressed with a suitable sense of it. But, though man cannot either justify himself by his own obedience, or turn to God by his own power, but this is the work of God alone, yet he does it in the use of means, and therefore it is the creatures duty to attend upon them. Man is not an unthinking stock or stone : He has his faculties still, though enslaved by sin, and he may do more than he does. None will have it to say, they have done all they could. We may attend public ordinances, we may read the word, we may converse and pray, and exercise our thoughts about things of everlasting importance. These are the various means which God makes use of to begin, and carry on a work of grace in the heart. Might you not have gone to the house of God, my friend, the last Lord's Day, instead of spending it in walking in the fields, or in sloth and idleness at home ? Might you not the other night have spent your time in the exercises of prayer and reading, instead of being at the play-house, or revelling at a tavern ? or could you not have spent that hour lately in religious company for the edification of your soul, which you wantoned away with the sons of Belial ? Do not therefore take encouragement from what you

have heard of this doctrine, and lull your conscience asleep, by saying that you can do nothing : there are many things you can do. When your mind was laid under some convictions, and you found some emotions of soul, under that awakening sermon you heard the other Lord's Day, or under that afflictive providence, God lately exercised you with ; instead of stifling these, as you have done, might you not have gone to God by prayer, and made use of means to cherish and strengthen them ? Oh, remember your pleading your impotency, your inability to work out your own salvation, will stand you in no stead at the great day, whilst you lived in the neglect of those means, which you might have attended. Are you under a necessity of ridiculing the gospel, despising the Saviour, reproaching his people, running into all excess of riot, and neglecting ordinances, and the means of salvation ? For your souls sake, consider what you are doing, how you are deceiving yourself, and how Satan is leading you on to everlasting darkness. Has not conscience often told you, that you were wrong ? Has it not often whispered you in the ear to go to public worship, to read the Bible, to pray, and the like ? Oh, let me beseech you to attend the means of grace. Who knows but the Lord may command a blessing upon them, and make them effectual to your salvation. The * impotent man could not get into the pool himself, but he would be in the way to be put in. Do you be in the way of God's blessing ; for out of the way of it you cannot expect it. What if the judge at the last day should say, because I called, and thou didst refuse, I stretched out my hand, and thou didst not regard ; but hast set at nought all my counsel, and wouldst none of my reproof ; I also will now laugh at thy calamity, and mock now thy fear cometh : What would you say but, Lord it is true. I refused to comply with thy calls. I would not hear. I stifled conscience, neglected means, and despised salvation, and thou art righteous in refusing to succour me, now distress and anguish are come upon me.—Oh, think of these things, and if you have any regard for your souls, attend, carefully attend the means of grace. But,

2 This doctrine is of use to caution the sinner against carnal security and self-dependence. To cry up the dignity of human nature, and represent man as equal to the great work

of conversion and salvation, has a most dangerous tendency. Upon this many a sinner has stifled present convictions, silenced conscience, and presumed to put off the great concerns of eternity to the decline of life, apprehending it is soon enough to think of religion, and promising they will hereafter set about it in good earnest, repent, and turn to God. Is not this the case with thee, thou young, gay, unthinking creature? Did I not see thee the other day under some convictions, some thoughtfulness of soul, and how is it removed? How is it thou canst follow thy pleasures again with so much greediness? The case is plain: Thou hast sucked in that naturally sweet, but really poisonous doctrine of man's sufficiency, and this has lulled thee into a dangerous doze: Thou canst now sin again, because thou hast assured thy conscience that by and by thou wilt certainly leave off thy sins, and give up thyself to God. Methinks I see thy inward struggles to get rid of thy convictions. How didst thou strive before thou didst hit upon the happy method to appease conscience, and quietly pursue thy sins again. But this at once set thee at liberty, and now I hear thee saying calmly and cheerfully to conscience, as Felix did to Paul, Go thy way for this time; "when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." ACTS xxiv. 25. What a dangerous snare is this! That it is really the case, I appeal to the consciences of those, who are so self-sufficient. Thousands have split upon this dangerous rock, and, presuming they could repent when they pleased, put off the things of eternity, till it was absolutely too late to think of them, and their souls were lodged in the bottomless pit. Could you but hear the reflections of poor souls in hell, I dare venture to say, you would hear some crying out with unutterable anguish.—'Oh cursed, soul-ruining doctrine, that of man's ability, &c. I believed it, and was lulled on, thinking I could turn to God, and one day or other would do it, till I sunk into this bottomless gulph where I must lie for ever. I stifled every conviction, by making resolutions of doing something hereafter. I with zeal propagated this destructive notion, and am now ruined for ever by it.' Thus it is dangerous to set up the power of the creature. I am sure I have been representing the sad experience of many poor infatuated sinners. On the other hand, the doctrine of man's impotency tends to stir up the sinner to make no delay, but now to seek the Lord

whilst he may be found, and to call upon him whilst he is near. Permit me to address you then in the language of this doctrine, by which you may judge of its use and importance—‘ Now is the accepted time; behold now is the ‘ day of salvation ;’ do not put off the great concerns of eternity to an hereafter : Remember your impotency, which will increase through sin, and so you become more unfit to ‘ think about your souls, and your hearts grow harder. ‘ Now go to God by prayer, and attend the means. Why, ‘ Oh why do you sleep ? Remember the work is great, and ‘ you are unequal to it. Go to the throne of Grace there- ‘ fore, and endeavour to engage the almighty arm of God ‘ to undertake the work, and do not disregard it, lest you ‘ provoke God to withdraw his Spirit, take his final leave, ‘ and so you perish for ever. Are you under any convictions, ‘ or divine impressions ? Oh consider your weakness and ina- ‘ bility to revive them, if they are once stifled and lost. Be ‘ therefore importunate with God to fasten them deeply ‘ upon your souls, and bring you effectually to himself. ‘ Tell him of your own weakness, the greatness of the ‘ work, the worth of your souls, and your dependence ‘ upon him, and not be careless, and so be eternally ruined.’ This is the language of this doctrine ; thus it calls upon all sinners.

3. *This doctrine is of use to convince the sinner of the folly and danger of depending on his own duties, and of the necessity of going elsewhere for help.* We are naturally ready to think well of our duties, and to place a peculiar confidence in our own righteousness as if it were absolutely pure, and every way such as the law required. The poor pharisaical creature therefore is elated and alive, though he is actually dead, and exposed to everlasting condemnation. Art thou, my friend, this Pharisee ? Art thou thinking favourably of thy righteousness, concluding that thou canst do every thing that is required of thee, and so building thy hopes of heaven upon thy duties ? Come and let us reason a little upon this important head, and see what foundation thou hast for self-confidence. Let me bring thee to the law, and see if thou canst stand thy ground. Read over the commands one by one, and then ask whether thou hast perfectly observed them all. Hast thou worshipped none other but God ? Has not thy heart been often divided, and gold, honour, or some

earthly enjoyment been set up as an idol in thy soul? Thou hast then broken the first command. Hast thou been careful to preserve the worship of God pure and free from all sin? Hast thou never been guilty of a vain thought in religious duties, never found any coldness or formality, or wanderings from God, never been chargeable with any irreverence? Here thou must lay thy hand upon thy mouth, as having broken in numberless instances the second command. Hast thou not often taken the name of God into thy mouth in a thoughtless, careless manner, without that seriousness and awe with which it should have been done? Hast thou been careful to devote thy Sabbaths to God in the duties of the family, the closet, and the sanctuary? Hast thou perfectly watched over thy frame, thy words, thy actions that day, so as not to err in one single point? Here thou must stop, and cry guilty, and so thou hast broken the third and fourth commands. Thus I might run through every other command, and shew how thou hast broke the whole. And where is thy boasted power and sufficiency now? Where are thy hopes of eternal life? Canst thou venture to carry such an obedience to the bar of God, and plead it there? Sure, this is enough to convince thee of thy helpless condition, of the necessity of a better righteousness, and of making thee abundantly thankful for the Gospel, in pointing thee to a righteousness which is absolutely perfect and sufficient to recommend thee to God, and directing thee to an infinite fulness, where every want of the creature may be supplied. Many apprehend they are equal to the whole work of religion, and therefore set forward in their own strength, and soon give up. This is the reason why there have been so many apostates, so many stony ground hearers, who under a sudden flow of affection have made a profession, but having never seen their own hearts, and been sensible of their own weakness, their zeal has soon grown cold, their sins have revived, they have returned again to folly, and walked no more with the people of God. The Lord grant we may not thus appear to begin in the spirit and end in the flesh. This doctrine tends to guard the sinner against such an attempt, by shewing him his utter inability to conquer so many enemies, withstand so much opposition, and go through the whole of the Christian life.

Thus this doctrine of man's impotency may be of use to

the sinner. It tends to empty him of self, to curb his pride, to guard him against a dependence upon his own power, and to stir him up to seek for help in another, finding that he has ruined himself, and that he is absolutely unable in all respects to intitle himself to the divine favour, or restore to his polluted soul that amiable image which he has sadly lost.

But this doctrine is of peculiar service to the Christian, and has a loud and paricular voice in it to him. As,

1. *It tends to fill him with, and calls him to Humility and admiration:* This doctrine takes all boasting from the creature, because it represents him as absolutely weak and helpless in the great busyness of salvation. Thou didst not gain that spiritual discerning of divine things, by any diligence or labour of thy own. Thou didst not give thy will its present submission to God, or conquer that enmity, thou didst find in thy heart once to him, by any art of reasoning, any power of eloquence, or any strength of resolution. Thou didst not give thyself those holy desires, thou now feel-est; that hatred of sin, that delight in Christ, and that readiness to obedience which now appear in thee. It is not by any righteousness of thy own, that thou hast been introduced into the favour of God, and continuest in it. Hadst thou been left to thyself, thy hard heart would never have been softened; thy soul would never have been raised to God, thy affections would never have been freed from the entanglements of sin; thou wouldest never have felt one real desire after Jesus Christ, or ever have had any solid ground of hope for eternal life; but sin and Satan would have kept thee in thy slavery and bondage, till death had ushered thee before the bar of God, and an awful sentence had adjudged thee to regions of everlasting darkness. Keep these things in constant remembrance, and they will bring down every proud lofty thought, preserve thee from an ostentatious spirit, fill thee with deep humility, raise thy thankfulness and admiration, and enable thee to give all the glory where it is most justly due. Be often saying therefore, ‘ who opened my eyes, and dispelled the darkness of my mind? Who removed those deep rooted prejudices I once had against Christ and his ways? Who conquered the power of sin, turned Satan out of his strong holds, and set my poor captive soul at liberty? What is it that has secured to me the favour of God, and given me a title to eternal life, when I was fo-

' unable to do any thing towards it ? O my soul, I was abso-
' lutely without strength, and never should have taken one
' single step towards heaven, if I had been left to myself.
' Learn therefore to be ever humble ; ascribe not the
' change to thy own power, skill, or diligence, but learn
' more of this soul emptying truth, that thou art nothing,
' and admire the work that is done in thee, and give God
' all the glory.'

2. *This doctrine tends to keep the Christian from rash and hasty resolutions, and a dependance upon his own strength.* We are too ready to lose a sense of our weakness, and to act as if our strength lay in ourselves and not in Christ. This is the case pretty much with young Christians. Their zeal puts them often upon hasty resolutions, and so brings them into great difficulties. Peter did not consider his weakness, when he so boldly determined even to face death itself, and not desert his master. It was a noble resolution, had it been made in a proper manner. He is full of himself, and thinks nothing can shake his faith, and stagger his soul, and therefore if all the disciples forsook their Lord, he would stand steadily by him. He was left to fall, that he might be more sensible of his own insufficiency, and guard more against a rash imprudent zeal. Many have made great resolutions without considering their utter inability to execute them, and therefore breaking through them, they have thereby been filled with great distress of soul. To make resolutions is not inconsistent with our duty. But then they must be made under a proper sense and impression of our own inability to perform them if the Lord does not help us, and not in a dependance upon our own strength. The making and breaking of resolutions have wounded many a soul, and made him walk uncomfortably a great part of his days, whereas a due sense of this doctrine would set him right, guide his zeal, guard his resolutions, and keep him from that dependance upon self, which is so dangerous and hurtful. We are never farther from danger than when we see most of our own helplessness. When we are * weak, then we are strong : a paradox this to the sinner, but the Christian knows its meaning. In a word, this doctrine is peculiarly useful to the Christian, to humble him, quicken

him, bring him into an evangelical temper; to keep him from leaning to his own understanding, from being lifted up with his own duties, his progress, and advances in grace, and to lead him to a dependance upon the Lord Jesus Christ, that so he may be safe in a time of danger and temptation, may get the victory over his spiritual enemies, be supported amidst the various difficulties of life, and persevere even unto the end. A proper sense of this doctrine has a tendency to bring about these desirable ends, and so to promote and secure the Christian's comfort and holiness.

Thus we have taken a view of man's natural state, and have considered the use and importance of being properly impressed with a sense of original guilt, pollution, and moral impotency. These doctrines are self-debasng and humbling, but not soul discouraging doctrines. They bring down our pride, but they do not drive us to despair. They happily prepare our minds for receiving the news of the gospel, make us more thankful for it, and when improved, stir us up to seek after an interest in and acquaintance with the Lord Jesus Christ, whom to know is eternal life. They are doctrines, which indeed for these very reasons, nature cannot bear, and therefore are so much ridiculed and despised. To tell man of the dignity of his nature, the noble powers of his soul, and his great sufficiency to do every thing that is required of him: to praise his gifts and abilities, commend his works of charity, and feed him with the hopes of heaven, would be to gain his esteem, and to establish the reputation of an ingenuous preacher; but to tell him that he is guilty, polluted and even worse than the beasts that perish; to represent to him his misery and wretchedness, that he is a child of wrath, and is exposed to everlasting condemnation, and that he can do nothing to merit the favour of God, or procure eternal life, but is absolutely helpless and without strength. To do this would be highly displeasing, and you cannot expect any kinder treatment than that of ridicule and reproach, and no better a title than that of bigot and enthusiast. But I hope better things of you, my dear friends. You will not reproach me for setting these truths before you, and pressing them upon your consciences, but I trust will each be concerned to examine what sense and experience you have of them in your own souls, and to get a greater acquaintance with them.

Ask your souls these important questions.— ‘Do I not only acknowledge man’s impotency and weakness, but have I felt it ? Do I not only see it by the light of God’s word, but have I seen it by the light of his Spirit? Have I found it by my experience to be an infallible truth, that I can do nothing ? Am I no more the proud Pharisee, esteeming myself with Saul to be blameless ; and boasting of and depending upon my own righteousness ; but do I see the imperfections of my best duties, and loath myself and them too ? Am I thoroughly sensible that I cannot fulfil one promise, subdue one corruption, withstand one temptation, exercise one grace, and perform one duty in a spiritual manner of myself ? Have I seen my understanding to be darkness, felt my will to be rebellion, and found my affections polluted, and my soul under the power of sin ?’ These and such like questions are of the utmost importance, as they relate to and point out the work of God in its beginnings, and in its progress in the soul. The more we grow in grace, the more we see of our own emptiness and impotency : But if we are strangers to these things, and have seen and felt nothing of them, we have too much reason to conclude that we are strangers to the grace of God, and that all our religion is no more than an empty form. Be concerned my dear friends, whatever you do, to get a true sense of your own weakness, and endeavour to have your minds constantly impressed with it, for then you will be in least danger of falling ; be most watchful over your own hearts, and depend most upon the Lord Jesus Christ for all strength and righteousness.

S E R M O N IV.

A TRINITY OF PERSONS IN THE UNITY OF
THE DIVINE ESSENCE.

1 JOHN V. 7. LATTER PART.

—*And these Three are One.*

THE doctrine of the Trinity is one of the glories of revelation, and therefore highly deserving our particular consideration and esteem. However it may be treated with ridicule, and viewed as an absurdity by many, because it is mysterious and incomprehensible, it is one of the capital articles of the Christian's creed, it enters into the very essence of his comfort, his holiness, and his salvation, and therefore he receives it with the utmost readiness and cheerfulness.

The apostle in the verse before our text is speaking of the Saviour, and telling us that when he came into the world to execute the important work he had undertaken, he came not by *water only*, when he was publicly baptized, but by *water and blood*, which appeared when he was upon the cross, and which were symbolical representations of that deliverance from the guilt and defilement of sin, which we should have through his death. That Christ is thus a complete and able saviour appears from the Spirit's application of the virtue of his death, to our souls Nay, there are testimonies sufficient to his incarnation and the efficacy of it: for not only one, even the Spirit, but the three glorious persons who inhabit eternity, bear witness to Jesus the

Mediator. The Father not only at his baptism * and transfiguration † gave a public proof of his approbation of him, but ‡ declared him to be his Son, by his resurrection from the dead. The Son often bare witness of himself whilst he was upon earth; and if the people would not believe his own testimony, he appealed to his various works, his many miracles, as incontestable proofs of his divine mission. The third divine witness is the Spirit, who descended upon him at his baptism, and ever since his ascension has come in a glorious manner, in consequence of his satisfaction and purchase, to apply all the blessings of salvation to the elect of God, and will continue to do so till the whole number is completed, and all the purposes of divine grace are fully answered. These three divine witnesses, thus giving their distinct testimony, and personally distinct from each other, are yet but one. It is not said of them as it is of the witnesses on earth, that they agree in one, but that they are one; not one person but one thing, or one essence. The truth then that appears from this part of God's word is this, viz. (which the Assembly's Catechism has fully expressed) *That there are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and Holy Ghost, and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.* I shall consider this in its several parts, so that the whole may appear clear and evident, as,

I. *Prove that there are three in the Godhead,*

II. *That these are three distinct persons.*

III. *That these three persons are the one Supreme God, equally partaking of one common undivided nature or essence.*
And then,

IV. *Consider the use and improvement of this truth.* I would desire to speak of this divine mystery with the greatest caution and with the utmost reverence, knowing how infinitely it transcends all our ideas, and how much seriousness it requires in us, when we are representing the nature, the personal properties, and the perfections of the glorious Jehovah.

I. *We are to shew that there are three in the Godhead, or that there is a plurality in the Godhead.* You will easily

* Mat. iii. 17. † Mat. xvi. 5. ‡ Rom. i. 4.

see that my business is not to attempt to give you clear ideas of the Trinity; that is impossible for man to do: but to prove the various truths from scripture; and where our reason falls short in comprehending the truths, let not this stagger our minds, but let us cheerfully embrace them, so far as we find a divine warrant for it. Take your bibles then into your hands, and examine, whilst I go through the proofs of each doctrine distinctly. We have some intimation of a plurality in the Deity in Gen. i. 1. where the word *God* is put in the original in the plural number, and so it runs throughout the chapter. And when God came to make man, his form of speech upon that occasion, implies a consultation, and signifies that more than one were concerned in man's formation. Gen. i. 26. "And God said, let us make man in our own image, after our likeness." Accordingly, in Job xxxv. 10. the word *maker* is in the plural number, and so should be read, *where is God my makers?* Thus the word *creator* in Eccl. xii. 1. is in the plural, and so it should be, *remember thy creators.* Again, that there is a plurality in the Godhead, appears from Gen. iii. 22. "And the Lord God said, behold the man is become as one of us." Thus the same hint is given, Gen. xi. 7. "Go to, let us go down." The same truth appears in Is. vi. 8. "Who will go for us?" These things are so plain that he that runs may read the doctrine contained in them. Thus the Old Testament shews us there are more than one in the Godhead. The New Testament is more particular in the account of the persons in the Godhead, representing their number, their names, and characters, and the different offices they have undertaken to execute in the redemption and salvation of fallen man. Thus in Matth. xxviii. 19. we are told there are three, and we have an account of their different names, viz. *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghost*. In John xiv. 16. they are again mentioned. Christ speaks of himself under the personal pronoun *I*; he mentions the *Father* too, and represents the *Holy Ghost* under the character of a *Comforter*. So verse twenty-six they are distinctly spoken of: "But the Comforter, which is the *Holy Ghost*, whom the Father will send in my name." You meet with these glorious three again in John xvi. 13, 14, 15. In the doxology mentioned by the apostle, 2 Cor. xiii. 14 you have them distinctly represented. "The grace

"of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all." Here is the Son represented under his office character, the Father called God, which sometimes is a name peculiarly applicable to one of the divine persons, and sometimes includes all, and here is also the third person, or the Holy Ghost. Again, the apostle speaks of them all in Gal. iv. 6. Where he says, "God," that is the Father, "hath sent forth the spirit of his son into your hearts." You meet with them again in Eph. ii. 18. "For through him," that is Christ, "we have an access by one spirit unto the Father." Thus in Hebrews ix. 14. the apostle says, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself without spot to God," &c. And once more we have the sacred Three mentioned in Rev. i. 4, 5. "John to the Seven Churches which are in Asia, Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come, and from the Seven Spirits, which are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness." The Father is here represented by his eternity and immutability, the Spirit by the variety and perfection of his spiritual gifts and operations, and the Son by his mediatorial character. And thus we see from scripture that there is a plurality in the Deity, viz. Three, whose distinct names, characters, and offices are represented. I now come,

2. To shew from the same sacred word of truth, that these are three distinct persons. And here I readily own myself at a loss to entertain suitable conceptions of divine personality. When we apply person to one another, we take in the idea of distinct being, but this must be abstracted from personality when we are considering the sacred Trinity. They are not distinct beings nor distinct Gods; this is the greatest absurdity and impossibility. And yet they are more than different names of the same person; to look upon them in this light would take away a great part of the glory of this doctrine, and introduce the greatest confusion. They have a distinct manner of subsistence, and therefore are distinct from each other. The Father is not the Son, nor the Holy Ghost. The Father did not die, does not intercede, neither is he *that Comforter* who is promised. Here let it be observed, that the distinct personality of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is not the result of the divine will, nor does it

arise from their distinct offices in the work of redemption or scheme of salvation, but is necessary and eternal, and therefore to be considered as laying a foundation for those distinct parts they have undertaken in the gospel œconomy, and not as produced by them. That they are three distinct persons appears from their being spoken of as distinct. The Father is a divine person, so is the Son, and so is the Spirit, else there would have been some marks of distinction put upon them, to let us know that they were only the different names, qualities, or attributes of the Father. But they are mentioned as distinct from him, and in such a manner as to give us the utmost reason to believe that they are persons as well as the Father, distinctly subsisting as such. Thus the Son is spoken of as distinct from the Father. 1 John i. 1. "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God." As he was with God, he must be distinct from him, and not that person with whom he was. Thus in the form of baptism the Son and Spirit are spoken of as distinct from the Father. And what is said of the Father to denote him to be a divine person, is said of these two. Is the Father spoken of under the personal pronouns, *I, thou; and he*, so are they. Thus Christ says, "I was set up from everlasting." Prov. viii. 23. Again says the Father to the Son, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee," Ps. ii. 7. And again, John i. 10. "He was in the world, and the world was made by him." Thus it is said also of the Spirit, "When he is come." John xvi. 8. As these pronouns are characters of a real person, so they shew the Son and Holy Ghost to be persons. Again, are works and actions ascribed to the Father, which are peculiar to persons, so they are equally to the Son and Spirit. Thus the Son is said to create not only the natural world, but to create anew to good works, John i. 3. He is our mediator, and stands between God and us. He is our prophet, and therefore a divine teacher. Acts iii. 22. He is our priest, and so made atonement for our sins on earth, and is now making intercession for us in heaven, Heb. x. 12. And chap. vii. 25. He is our king, and as such rules and defends us, restrains and conquers all his and our enemies, Psal. ii. 6. He is our shepherd, and as such watcheth over us as his flock, provides for us, restores us when going astray, gathers the lambs in his arms, and carries them in

his bosom, and gently leads all those that are with young, Ps. xxiii. 1, 2, 3, and Is. xl. 11. Thus I might go through the various characters, works, and offices of Jesus Christ, all which are so many characteristics of a person, and cannot with any manner of propriety be ascribed to a quality or an attribute of the Father. Thus works and acts equally descriptive of a person are ascribed to the Spirit of God, and therefore prove that he is no power of the Father, but a person distinct from him. Thus he is said to *teach*, John xiv. 26. He glorifies Christ, by taking of his things, and shewing them unto his people, John xvi. 14. He brings things to the remembrance of his people, and leads them into all truth, John xiv. 26. and chap. xvi. 13. He renews and sanctifies us; quickens us when dead in trespasses and sins; subdues the power of sin, mortifies our corruptions, and brings us into the image of God, Tit. iii. 5. John iii. 6. He is a spirit of prayer, and helps his people in that duty; makes them sensible of their wants, fills their mouths with arguments, and helps them to plead with God, and to come in the exercise of faith in Jesus Christ, Rom. viii. 26. Zech. xii. 10. He is a comforter, and as such cheers the souls of his people, helps them to claim a covenant relation to God, and fills them with joy and peace in believing, John xiv. 26. Gal. iv. 6. Now are not all these demonstrative proofs of the Spirit's being a divine person? Besides, we have him represented as being tempted, Acts v. 9. as being vexed and grieved, Eph. iv. 30. As being lied unto, Acts v. 3, 4; as speaking to Peter, Acts x. 19, 20; and to others, and sending forth, Acts xiii. 1, 2, 4. These things are all descriptive of a real person. Once more, are personal properties attributed to the Father? So they are to the Son and Holy Ghost. Has he understanding and wisdom? So has the Son, Col. ii. 3. and so has the Spirit, 1 Cor. ii. 10, 12. Has the Father a will? The Son has so too, and also the Holy Ghost, John vi. 38 1 Cor. xii. 11. Does power belong to the Father? It does so to the Son and Spirit, Is. lxiii. 1. Mic ii. 7. Thus from the whole, these three, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are three persons, distinct from each other. If they are not so, how can we understand the distinct characters and offices that are ascribed to them? If they are only different names of one person, then such as these are the consequences, viz: The Father, instead

of sending his Son into the world, sent himself: instead of the Son's praying to the Father, the Father prays to himself: the Father suffered, obeyed, satisfied for sin, and is the great mediator of the new covenant. Instead of the Father's sending the Holy Ghost as the comforter, he sent himself. In a word, when the Father mentions the other persons, he all the while means himself, only represented under different characters, so that to destroy distinct personality would be to introduce inextricable difficulties. I now come

3. To shew that these three persons are the one supreme God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory. I am not here to shew how they are one. It is absolutely impossible for the highest angel in heaven, whose grasp of thought must be vastly superior to ours, to point out or conceive the modus of the Trinity, and therefore it would be vain for a poor weak man to expect it. We readily acknowledge it to be a great mystery, a mystery in which we are entirely lost. However some may esteem it a reproach upon their understandings to believe what they cannot fully comprehend, I desire to esteem it none, and therefore freely own my ignorance, how the sacred three are distinct as to personality, and yet *one* essentially. These are subjects of an infinite nature, and therefore cannot come within the reach of a finite mind. Nothing but infinity can take in infinity, and therefore it discovers the greatest pride and vanity in a short sighted mortal to refuse to give credit to a doctrine so immediately relating to deity, because it is incomprehensible. If we must believe nothing but what we can entirely account for, we must turn absolute sceptics. We must question our own existence, because we know not how we exist; we must deny there are any such things as sun, moon, and stars, though we see them, because we can give no account of their matter and formation: nay, we must deny that there is a God, because we cannot fully know him. We are lost in his eternity, immensity, omniscience, omnipresence, and yet we readily believe these perfections belong to him; because not only all nature gives us some hints of it, but the scriptures particularly and clearly reveal it as an undeniable truth. Why then can we not as easily give credit to revelation, when it represents a Trinity of persons in the Unity of the divine nature? Here we say we cannot

understand it; but in the other case, though we cannot understand it, we yet believe it, because it is so demonstrable from nature and scripture. This doctrine is not *contrary* to reason, though *above* it. We do not say that three persons are one person, or that they are three distinct Beings or Gods, but that the three persons are one God. The Father is almighty, the Son is almighty, and the Holy Ghost is almighty, and yet there are not three almighty, but one Almighty. The Father is eternal, the Son is eternal, and the Holy Ghost is eternal, and yet there are not three eternals, but one Eternal.

That this is the doctrine of Scripture, appears plain both from the Old and New Testament. Some have thought that it appears in Psal. xxxiii. 6. where it is said, that "by the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." By the word some suppose is meant Christ, who is called *the word*, John i. 1. By the Lord is the Father, and by the breath of his mouth is meant the Spirit, which signifies breath. Some likewise think that the blessing which Aaron and his sons were to pronounce upon the children of Israel, signified the Trinity and Unity, Numb. vi. 24, 25, 26. "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee; the Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." It is apprehended that the Lord in the twenty-fourth verse, signifies the Father, in the twenty-fifth verse the Son, and in the twenty-sixth verse the Holy Spirit. But however suitable this explication of the words may be to this doctrine, as contained in other parts of Scripture, I would not produce these passages as direct proofs of it. What we have in Is. vi. 3. seems more peculiarly designed to speak this great truth. "And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory." There is no impropriety in saying that this thrice holy refers to the Trinity. This glorious Lord of hosts Isaiah saw in his vision, is in one place referred to the Son, and in another to the Holy Ghost, John xii. 41. and Act. xxviii. 25. And the same Lord, in verse eight, says, "who will go for us? So that it appears as if the Prophet had a vision of the sacred Three, and heard the Spirits surrounding the throne celebrating the praises of each; and if so, it evidently shews that they are the One

Supreme God, equal in all divine glories, and therefore demanding equal praises from all creatures. But this appears more particularly in the New Testament. Thus it is a truth evidently contained in the order of baptism. In this form the Son and Holy Ghost are equally mentioned with the Father, without the least appearance of inferiority. If they are not one in essence, it is strange that those who are baptized should be as much given up to the Son and Spirit as to the Father; that they should thereby be brought under an equal obligation to pay religious honours to all, and that by a divine appointment, when all revelation is against it: so if the opinion of one supreme and two subordinate Gods were true, we cannot, therefore, from hence but conclude a Trinity of persons in the Unity of the divine nature. This I apprehend the apostle plainly shows in the above-mentioned doxology, 2 Cor. xiii. 14. It evidently points out an equality, as well as a distinction of person. But this truth will be more fully proved, when we come to consider the Deity of the Son and the Holy Ghost; for if all that belongs to God the Father belongs equally to them, then they are the same in substance, equal in power and glory. I shall therefore now proceed to consider.

Lastly, *The particular use and improvement of this doctrine.* It is not a mere matter of speculation, and therefore not a point of indifference; it is useful, though mysterious, and however above the reach of our limited understandings, it cannot but be of great advantage, when we are enabled to attend to, and to apply it aright. Too many throw all mysteries out of religion, representing them not only as absurd, but as no way tending to be useful; as if it were absolutely necessary to an improvement of a doctrine that we should fully comprehend it. Wherein does the necessity of our perfectly taking in this doctrine lie? Does our happiness depend upon the thing itself, or upon the modus of it? Does its remaining a mystery lessen our comfort? Or cease to promote our holiness? Whilst we believe the glorious Three to be equal in all divine perfections, we are satisfied the foundation upon which we build is safe; we know our salvation is hereby secured: we see the motives, how powerful to all obedience, all which would be no way increased by knowing how these Three are distinct as to personality and

yet one God. Therefore it is vain curiosity for any to pry into those things which are unsearchable ; and great arrogance for any to say this glorious mystery can answer no valuable purpose, because it is a mystery, when it appears evident that the mysteriousness of it is no way essential to our comfort and happiness, any more than our comprehending the eternity, and other perfections of God is. Let us then consider what this doctrine teacheth us. And,

1. *It teacheth us thankfulness for a divine revelation.* The light of nature would never have instructed us in so important a truth. There are no hints of it to be met with in the creation. None of the ancient philosophers could ever find any foot-steps of the Trinity, even if they ransacked all nature. A God the whole creation proclaims, nay the most minute part of it clearly speaks this great truth : but a Trinity, where is it to be found, but in the book of God ? You had never heard of this important doctrine, if you had been born, and had lived where the gospel has never come ! See how it is with the poor heathen. Look into those countries where there is nothing but Pagan darkness, and from thence learn your obligations to bleſs God for the scriptures, and be concerned to prize and esteem this sacred volume. This word is a *light unto our feet, and a lamp unto our paths*, Ps. cxix. In it the great mysteries of Christianity are revealed ; the object of divine worship is clearly represented, every thing relating to God, ourselves, and eternity that is necessary is mentioned, and therefore a foundation laid for peculiar thankfulness and praise. Is it not then a privilege to have a revelation ? Is it not desirable to be rescued from a state of darkness and wretched ignorance, such as poor heathens are in ? Is not the Bible to be valued because of the glorious views it gives us of God ? Shall we not be thankful that he has revealed himself in his personal properties, characters, and perfections, with which our comfort, our happiness is so much connected ? Is it not an instance of infinite grace and condescension in God to make himself thus known to us ? Shall we despise this revelation, represent it as unnecessary, or ridicule it for those sacred mysteries it contains ? How ungrateful would this be, how insolent, how unsuitable to our obligations ? What, to esteem our privileges, no privileges, to despise that word, in which so much invaluable treasure is laid up ; surely, Sodom

and Gomorrah will rise up against thee, thou infatuated soul ! Ethiopia and Sheba will condemn thee ; the whole heathen world will upbraid thee with shameful ingratitude ; and the devils themselves will reflect upon thee for thy stupidity. It is exceeding awful that there should be any found in this land of gospel light, who treat the scriptures with contempt, when all our light and knowledge, comfort and holiness are derived from them. O let us bless God for that word which gives us such striking views of those glorious mysteries, we should for ever have remained ignorant of, had we been left to the mere light of nature.

2. *Hence we are taught humbly to adore the unsearchable Jehovah.* When Job had a view of God he abhorred himself, Job xlvi. It is enough to keep us for ever humble under a sense of our weakness, when we consider the infinite glory of the supreme God. Three distinct persons equally partaking of the same incomprehensible essence ; the Father God, the Son God, the Holy Ghost God, and yet not three Gods, but only one God ? Is this the object of our worship, is this the God that supports us, supplies, protects, and saves us ? Glorious Being indeed ! Well may angels adore him ! Well may devils tremble before him ! What a disproportion between him and us ! He is infinite, but we are finite : he is immense and unlimited, but we are confined and contracted : he is eternal, but we are of yesterday. He can easily grasp such creatures as we ; but it is only a little that we know of him. And shall not this curb our pride, and ever keep us low, when we consider how scanty our knowledge, how narrow our understandings ? Some are for explaining this doctrine, and to shew how these three are one, borrow similitudes from nature ; but attempts of this kind shew too great boldness with Deity, and only tend to give us improper ideas of the Trinity. We should ever view it as an inexplicable truth, and therefore a sense of it should fill us with a holy awe and reverence of God, and engage us to adore his infinitely transcending greatness and glory. In fine, this doctrine gives an occasion for such reflections as these.—‘ Oh how glorious is Jehovah, Father, Son, and ‘ Holy Ghost ! This one supreme God, subsisting in three ‘ persons, is absolutely incomprehensible. Who by search- ‘ ing can find out God, who can find out thee the Al- ‘ mighty unto perfection ? Such knowledge, Lord, is too

' wonderful for me, it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Oh
' all ye angels that excel in strength, that do his command-
' ments, hearkening to the voice of his word, adore this
' unsearchable Jehovah! All ye his hosts, ye ministers of
' his that do his pleasure, celebrate his praises. All ye
' creatures in all places of his dominion, according to your
' several capacities, bless your adorable Creator; yea, bless
' him, oh my soul, stand and for ever admire the mysteries
' of his nature; fear, obey, and continually praise him.' Thus
this doctrine tends to keep us in a constant, humble,
and adoring temper.

3. Hence we see the foundation that is laid for distinct communion with the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and for distinct ascriptions of praise and glory to each. As their distinct personality has laid a foundation for their undertaking distinct parts in the salvation of sinners, so likewise for distinct communion with each according to their respective characters, and offices in the economy of the gospel. We read therefore of having fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, 1 John. i. 3. And our Lord tells us of his and the father's coming unto us, and of making their abode with us, John xiv. 23. He speaks of his coming in to us, and supping with us, and we with him, Rev. iii. 20. Now, communion with God lies in carrying on a sweet, free, and intimate converse with him, as with a friend, and is maintained in the exercise of faith, love, hope, joy, and in the duties of prayer, meditation, praise, and in public ordinances. In these duties and exercises there is a happy meeting of God and the soul, and the sweetest intercourse is often maintained, even with each person. Thus the Father is mentioned as the object of faith. John xiv. 1. *Ye believe in God.* Honour is paid to him in particular. Eph. iii. 14, 15. Blessing is ascribed to him. Eph. i. 3, 4. The Son is likewise represented as the object of faith, John xiv. 1. *Believe also in me.* As the object of love, 1 Pet. i. 8. *Whom having not seen ye love.* Praises are particularly ascribed to him, Rev. i. 5, 6. We read of the communion of the Holy Ghost too, 2 Cor. xiii. 14. This communion with one person distinctly, does not exclude the others. For instance when I have distinct communion with the Father, I do not exclude the Son, for it is through the Son that I have communion with the Father. When again, I

have distinct communion with the Son, I do not neglect, or reflect upon the Father; for the exercise of all faith and joy in Christ is the effect of the Father's free, everlasting love. So my communion with the Spirit is the effect of the Father's love, and the Son's purchase. Thus distinct communion with each is to the glory of all. When with the Father, it is to the honour of the Son and Spirit: when with the Son, it is to the glory of the Father and Spirit: and when with the Spirit, it is to the glory of Father and Son. In this communion lies the very essence of our comfort, the sweetness and power of religion. The Christian would be much more happy did he converse more with the sacred Three. The scheme of salvation is all the life and joy of our souls, and to view the various characters and offices of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which their distinct personality lays a foundation for, would fill our souls with unspeakable pleasure. This communion, were it more maintained, would bring heaven into the soul, sweeten every difficulty, and give that joy which the world knows nothing of. O happy saint that is got above to hold everlasting communion with God, and to view the distinct glories of each divine person! Happy Christian that lives much with God here! Let us view the intercourse he has with each person. See him then through Christ, and by the Spirit approaching the Father, and viewing his personal characters, and relations, and the wonders of his love. See, the Father is pleased to come down and commune with him, and to reveal his love to him. He shews him how free, how rich, how matchless this love; that it was everlasting, and that it is immutable. He reveals the secrets of his covenant to him; tells him that his name was written in the book of life. This lays a foundation for the Christian's joy. He feeds upon it; he loves the Father again, and rejoices in him. Father, thou hast won all my heart, and I give up my all to thee. The Father rejoices in him as his chosen vessel. The Christian rejoices in him as his Father, his rest. What a sweet complacency, what admiration! "O why did the Father fix upon me, why was I chose to eternal life! Dear Father, who am I that thou shouldst love me so as to give me to thy Son, to pardon, to justify me, to heal my backslidings, and to be a Father unto me! Amazing love! Lord enable me to give my whole self to thee, and to live to thy glory."

Again, what sweet communion has the soul with the Son of God? What satisfaction in viewing the glories of his person, the characters he sustains, the work he has already done, and that in which he is eternally employed! The Son rejoices in the Christian as his purchase, tells him how he loved him, how he bled and died, how he engaged principalities and powers, and triumphed over them all, and how he is now engaged above for his salvation. The soul rejoices in Christ as his bridegroom, his husband, his portion, finds his heart captivated and drawn to him, feels the warmest affection for him, and the strongest desires after him. O how amiable is the Redeemer! What endearing expressions does the soul make use of, what meltings of heart, what sweet confidence and holy joy, what admiration, love, and praise at a view of the dear, the blessed mediator! Thus likewise the Christian has the highest pleasure in communion with the Holy Ghost. He is a comforter, and therefore fills the soul with his divine consolations. He seals the children of God, sheds abroad the love of God in their hearts, opens to them the glory of the promises, shines upon his own work in the soul, and lets him see that he bears the image of his heavenly Father, that a saving change is made, that he is sanctified and set apart for God, and is an heir of eternal life. The spirit helps him in prayer, to plead with God, to exercise a cheerful confidence in him, and to call him Father. And these things fill the soul with joy, he views every character of the Spirit and rejoices, he feels the refreshment, and admires. ‘ Shall I grieve this good Spirit? Shall I quench his sacred motions? No, this would be the greatest ingratitude. Lord, I would admire thy grace in all thy works in me, and live to thy praise.’ I need not say how your souls would be animated and enlivened, were you but to converse more with these sacred persons, as they are represented in the gospel. Let us then be seeking after communion with God, be often viewing the various glories, works, and characters of these three divine persons, as this will be a happy means of preparing us more for the work and enjoyments of heaven, and contribute much to our comfort and joy, whilst we are here upon earth.

4. Hence we learn that there must be a constant harmony between these three persons in all their designs, acts, and operations. As they are one in essence, they must be

harmonious: they must have the same will, and act in the whole scheme of salvation with the utmost union. What the Father has done, and does, must be perfectly agreeable to the Son and Spirit; and what the Son and Spirit do, must have the entire approbation of the Father. Thus the forming the plan from eternity, and the execution of it in time, must be agreeable to all the three persons. The same things are often attributed to each divine person. Creation is ascribed to all the three. So likewise is the new-creation. The Father teaches. John vi. 46. 'The Son, and the holy Spirit too. The Father quickens, and so the second and third divine persons. John v. 21. Röm. viii. 10. Now this is a very important circumstance, that the sacred three should be thus one in will, design, and operation. This contributes much to the comfort of a poor awakened sinner, and to the satisfaction of the believer as he passes through life. With what pleasure may a poor soul view, depend upon, and plead with the Father the sacrifice of Christ for pardon and acceptance. 'Lord this sacrifice was of thine own appointment, thou didst approve of it, thou hast accepted it, and set it forth as the only refuge for a poor guilty soul to fly to; Lord I would fly to it and plead it for those very purposes which thou hast designed should be answered by it. And wilt thou not look upon it? Wilt thou refuse me acceptance?' Thus we may comfortably depend upon the intercession of Christ, and conclude that the Father will always hear him. We may now be satisfied that the work which the Spirit has begun in our hearts is agreeable to the Father and the Son and that it will therefore be carried on, all our backslidings be healed, all our corruptions be subdued, all our enemies be conquered, and we at last be brought safe to God in the heavenly Zion. I might here add, that this doctrine *tends to fill the Believer with admiration.* Is this God my God? Is the Father mine? Is the Son mine? Is the Holy Ghost mine? O my happiness! O distinguishing Grace! What amazing condescension, for such a God to look upon me, for each glorious person to undertake for my Salvation! Admire, O my soul, and long to get above, where I shall be sweetly engaged, in adoring the sacred three, and in crying Grace, Grace, for ever.

This doctrine commands an awe from the sinner. And it shews the dreadful state he is in to have no interest in the

Father, Son and Spirit, nay, to have the Father his enemy, the Son and Holy Ghost his enemies. Melancholy condition ! How canst thou eat and drink, and sleep in quiet ? What can give thee peace, when God is against thee ? Thou wilt not embrace the Son, therefore thou canst expect no pity from the Father, no kindness from the Spirit. Thou art despising the operation, and quenching the motions of the Spirit, and therefore thou canst not look for any mercy from the Father and the Son. They are all united, and if one is despised, they are all despised. O consider this ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.

Lastly, *We should all enquire whether this God is our God*. Is the Father my Father ? Is the Son my Saviour ? Is the Holy Ghost my Sanctifier and Comforter ? Is this God mine in all his relations, persons, characters, offices, and perfections ? These are important questions, and which we should all be concerned to put closely and faithfully to our souls.

Thus we see how this doctrine may be improved, how it enters into our comfort, and is useful to us in our way to a better world, though never so mysterious and incomprehensible. The particular improvement of the Deity of the Son and Holy Ghost will be left till we come to a consideration of those distinct subjects ; what have already been offered are only a few general hints upon the doctrine of the Trinity.

S E R M O N V.

ROM. ix. 5. LATTER PART.

—Who is over all, God blessed for ever.

WE have already considered and proved from scripture, a Trinity of persons in the Unity of the divine essence: a glorious doctrine indeed. The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God. That the Father is God, all will readily acknowledge; but many absolutely deny Deity to the Son. This therefore is a point of such moment, that it will be highly necessary to take it into a particular consideration, that so we may be satisfied whether the Saviour we trust in is God or not. For this purpose I have chosen the words I have mentioned as the subject of our present meditations. In the whole verse we have a distinct account of the two natures of Christ, his human and divine. As to his human nature, he derived it from the Jews. He was the offspring of David, and the seed of Abraham. As to his divine nature, he was un-created, and is infinitely exalted above all creatures, and possessed of all possible blessedness; *he is over all God blessed for ever.* This, this is the Saviour of poor sinners: a fit person therefore to go through the great work he has undertaken, and a suitable object of our religious trust, reverence, and adoration. That these words prove Christ to be true and proper God, appears very plain. He that is over, or above all, he that is infinitely and eternally blessed in himself, and is the object of everlasting blessing and adoration, must be the supreme God. You therefore find the Father represented under these characters. Eph. iv. 6. *One God and Father of all, who is above all,* And Rom. i. 25. *Who is blessed for ever.* and 2 Cor. xi. 31. *The God and Father of*

our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore. As these are descriptions of the supreme God, and as Christ is represented by them, we must necessarily conclude that Jesus Christ is God equal with the Father. But this is not the only text upon which this glorious truth is built; we find it both in the Old and New Testament. I would therefore,

I. Consider these parts of scripture, which evidently prove this great truth. And then,

II. Shew the importance of this great article of our faith.

That we may receive this truth upon good evidence, let us;

I. Examine the proofs we have of it in scripture. And here, it would be impossible for me to go through all the texts of scripture that prove this doctrine in a single discourse, there is such a fulness and variety. I hope what I may consider will be sufficiently convincing. And here let us look into scripture, and see how it proves the Father to be God, and we shall find that the very same things are attributed to Christ, and consequently he must be God. Thus incomunicable titles and attributes, as well as those works and branches of worship which are all incontestable proofs of deity, are all ascribed to Christ in Scripture.

I. Incommunicable titles are given him by a divine authority. Thus the name *Jehovah* is given to Christ: a name that must be peculiar to the supreme God, as it implies eternity, independency, necessary existence, immutability, infinity, and the like. Therefore the great God takes it to himself as his own proper name. If. xlvi. 8. *I am the Lord, or Jehovah, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another.* The prophet Amos describing the great God, that formed and fashioned all things, says, that *Jehovah is his name.* Rom. v. 8. and ix. 6, and the Psalmist speaking of him says, *that men may know, that thou whose name alone is Jehovah, art the most high over all the earth.* Thus we see that the name *Jehovah* belongs to none but the true God. This name is in a variety of places given to Christ. He was *that Jehovah* that sent fiery serpents amongst the people to wound and destroy many. Num. xxi. 5, 9. compared with 1 Cor. x. 9. We meet with this name again. If. xl. 3, *Prepare ye the way of Jehovah.* That this was

Christ, appears from Mat. iii. 3. In that fortioth of Isaiah, how is that Jehovah set forth? What striking descriptions, what grand representations, suitable to none but to the great God? Christ was that *Jehovah*, which Isaiah saw in his vision sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up. Is. vi. 1, and 2, compared with John xii. 41. He is again called by this name, Is. viii. 13. *Sanctify the Lord, or Jehovah of Hosts.*

This Jehovah in the 14th verse is called a *Sanctuary*; but a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to some; which exactly answers the description of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Pet. ii. 6, 8. We have the name *Jehovah* given to Christ in Is. xlvi, 18, 25. It is very plain from a view of the Saviour that all this is meant of him, and you have full satisfaction concerning it, if you consult Rom. xiv. 10, 11. and Phil. ii. 10, 11. Thus we are thoroughly satisfied that Jesus Christ is plainly pointed to in Jer. xxviii. 6. *The Lord or Jehovah our righteousness.* Who deserves that significant and most emphatical title but the redeemer? He is again called *Jehovah* in Hag. ii. 6, 7. That this is the mediator appears from Heb. xii. 26. And lastly, you find him called by the same glorious name in Mal. iii. 1. He who is called *Jehovah*, is the messenger of the covenant, which is none else but our adorable Immanuel. Thus then, if Jesus Christ in a variety of places bears the title of *Jehovah*, which is a name the great God has himself assumed, and which he will not give to any beneath him, it gives us sufficient reason to conclude that he is *God equal with the Father.*

Again, we find that Christ has other titles given him which are evident proofs of his deity, as they belong only to the supreme God. Thus he is called *the great God*, Tit. ii. 13. It is Christ who is meant, for it is he that will appear and not the Father; it is he who is the hope of his people. Under the same characters of deity he is represented, Ps. xcvi. 3. *The Lord is a great God, and a great King above all Gods.* From what the Apostle observes, Heb. iii. 7. It is plain that this is the second person. He is called the *mighty God*, Is. ix. 6, the *true God*, 1 John v. 20. The apostle had just been speaking of Jesus Christ, and them immediately adds, *this is the great God.* He is called the *highest*, Luke i. 76. *Lord of Glory*, 1 Cor. ii. 8. He is styled the *King eternal, immortal, and invisible, the only wise God*, 1 Tim. i. 17. *The blessed and only potentate, King of Kings*.

and Lord of Lords, 1 Tim. vi. 15. Now are not all these glorious and pompous titles expressive of deity? Can they with any manner of propriety be given to Christ, if he is only a creature? How must we then distinguish the creator from the creature; If Christ has all the distinguishing names of the supreme God, I apprehend we may readily conclude that he is really God, equal with the Father, for God will not part with those titles which set him infinitely above the highest angels, or give that which is his glory to another. But,

2. *There are perfections given to Christ, which are peculiar to the supreme God.* There are some perfections which are called communicable; that is, they are ascribed in a lower degree to creatures. Thus is God called *wise?* so is man. Is he merciful? so are his people. Is he holy, just, faithful and the like? so are they. There are other perfections which belong to God alone, and cannot be found even in the highest creature, and these are said to be incommunicable: such as eternity, immutability, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence. Whoever possesseth these perfections must be God; and therefore Christ is so, because we find them ascribed to him.

1. *He is eternal.* Thus "his goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting," Mic. v. 2. compared with Matth. ii. 6. He is represented as the "Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last," Rev. i. 8. ii. 17 Chap. ii. 17. chap. ii. 8. He is said to be "before all things," Col. i. 17. And to be in the "beginning with God," John i. 1. An expression which doubtless denotes eternity. Thus he was "set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was;" and it appears that he was present with the Father when this appointment was made, "Then was I by him as one brought up with him." Prov. viii. 23—31. Thus if Christ was from eternity he can be no creature, but must be true God, for none else inhabits eternity.

2. *He is immutable.* His being called the Alpha and Omega, beginning and end, the first and the last, not only proves his eternity but his immutability. He is unchangeable in his purposes and perfections, and therefore answers the description of the great God. Hear what the Father says to him, Heb. i. 10, 11, 12. "Thou Lord, in the be-

"ginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the
"heavens are the works of thine hands. They shall perish;
"but thou remainest; they shall all wax old as doth a garment;
"and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they
"shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy Years
"shall not fail." What are all these but characters of deity?
He is said to be "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."
Heb. xiii. 8. Thus he is immutable.

3. *He is almighty.* He has an omnipotent arm, by which he is able to subdue all things unto himself. He is called the *mighty God*, If. ix. 6.; and is therefore *mighty to save*, If. lxiii. 1. The Psalmist styles him the *most mighty*, Psal. xlvi. 3. In Rev. i. 8. He is called *the almighty*. And chap. xv. 3. In that song of Moses and the Lamb, sung by the saints above, and especially at the final conquest of every enemy, they cry—*Great and marvellous are thy works Lord God Almighty!* That this is Jesus Christ appears, from its being called the *Song of the Lamb*, from his being called *King of Saints*, a title peculiar to the Son of God.—But,

4. *He is omniscient.* His understanding is infinite, there is nothing but what he knows. He searches the heart of man. Now this is peculiar to God, Jer. xvii. 10. "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins. And, 1 Kings viii. 39. "Thou, even thou only knowest the hearts of all the children of men." This is ascribed to Christ, Rev. ii. 23. "I am he, which searcheth the reins and hearts." You therefore read in the four Evangelists, in many places, how Christ knew the thoughts of his enemies, and the secret reasonings of his disciples. But the apostle Peter puts this point out of dispute in his appeal to our Lord for the reality of his love to him. "Lord thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." John xxi. 17. Nothing can possibly be concealed from thine eye, thou knowest every transaction, yea, the very thoughts of the heart, and therefore I can with the more cheerfulness appeal to thee for my love, thou knowest that I love thee. But,

5. *He is omnipresent.* It is an undeniable truth, that no creature can be in various places at the same time, this is peculiar to God. But Christ is in ten thousand places at the same time. Therefore he tells us, that "where two or three are gathered together in his name, he is in the midst of them," Matth. xviii. 20. This holds good now, as

well as then when the words were spoken, and therefore supposes Christ present in all the assemblies of his people, in what part of the world soever they may be gathered together. He has also promised to be with his ministers to the end of the world, in the regular administration of gospel ordinances. Matth. xxviii. 20. Consequently he must be in numberless places, even of the greatest distance from each other at the same moment of time, and therefore must be omnipresent. Thus then as Christ possesseth eternity, immutability, almighty power, omniscience and omnipresence, he must be true God, as those are perfections, that cannot possibly be communicated to any creature, but belong to God alone. But,

3. Such works are ascribed to Christ as none but the great God is equal to—Here I shall not mention what I might, but confine myself to creation work. He that created all things must be God. If we consider what creation was, viz. to bring all things out of nothing. What a variety in the creation, the heavens and the earth, with their respective inhabitants; what a beautiful and exact arrangement of creatures and things, each keeping their proper places: if we consider the sun that rules by day, and the moon which governs the night, we cannot but conclude that he that was equal to all this work must be God, as he must have infinite wisdom, omnipotence, eternity, and uncontrollable sovereignty. You therefore find that creation work is ascribed to God, and to him alone. Neh. ix. 6. *Thou, even thou art Lord alone, thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens with all their host, the earth and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein.* He is distinguished upon this account from all other Gods. Jer. x. 10, 11, 12, 15, 16 *. Now creation is ascribed to Christ. Thus John i. 3. *Without him was not any thing made, that was made.* Now if he was a creature, he must be concerned in making himself, and so must be supposed to have a being even before he existed, which is an absurdity. It clearly appears from Col. i. 16. *For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth visible and invisible: whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: nay, the apostle goes yet further and says, that all things were not only*

• See other places that prove this truth.

created by him, but for him, to manifest his Glory. I might mention other parts * of Scripture that speak this truth, but these are enough, they are so express. Thus by the eternal word were the heavens made. He only spoke and it was done, he commanded and it stood fast †. He said, let there be light, and behold there was light ‡, all which are such proofs of infinite power, and sovereignty, as evidently declare Jesus Christ to be God —But,

4 *That worship which only belongs to the supreme God is given to Christ.* Divine worship is internal and external. Internal worship consists in the various acts of the mind, faith, love, reverence, and the like, external worship lies in prayer and praise, and is performed by suitable gestures, of standing, kneeling, and prostration. This worship supposes infinite excellencies in the object, and every thing that lays a foundation for it. Now this worship in its most extensive view is given to Christ. He is the object of faith, John xiv. 1. Of love Matt. x. 37. Of Prayer. Acts vii. 59. Of praise Rev. i. 5, 6, and Chap. v. 13. All these acts of worship are given him in the Lord's supper. Here he is set forth as a fit object of faith, of love, of praise: here the Christian dedicates himself to him, soul, and body, and all; and resolves to live to that redeemer who died for him, and rose again. If then religious worship is given to Christ, he must certainly be God. There is no distinction made between him and the Father, but the same praises are ascribed to him as to the Father; prayer is made equally to him, and the poor guilty sinner flies to him, and lays all the stress of his salvation upon him, he then must be equal with the Father, as there is not the least appearance of inferiority — Besides there are two things, a consideration of which should determine us in this great point, viz. Christ himself has received all religious worship, and the Father has commanded it to be given him. — Christ himself received it when on earth. Thus the woman of Canaan came and worshipped him, Mat. xv. 25. And his disciples worshipped him after his resurrection, Mat. xxviii. 17. Now had he been only a creature, even though of the highest rank, he would not have received divine worship, but would have forbid it as Peter did

* 1 Cor. viii. 6. Heb. i. 2. Rom. xi. 36. Psal. cii. 25. If. xl. 12, 25, 26. H. xl. 18. † Psal. xxxiii. 9. ‡ Gen. i. 3.

Cornelius, Acts x. 26. And as the angel did John, Rev. xix. 10. It would not have been consistent with his faithfulness to his Father to have taken that, which was due to God alone; nor can we suppose his Father would have supported him in it, nay commanded that he should be worshipped. Yet, when he came into the world the Father gave command, that all the Angels should worship him. Heb i. 6. And in another place it is said, *he has committed all judgement to the Son, that all men should honour him even as they honour the Father*, John v. 22, 23. Which cannot be, unless they give the Son the same divine honour they do the Father. To sum up all, as divine worship in all its parts and branches is given to our Lord Jesus Christ; as he has readily received it without the least objection; as it is by the Father's command that he is worshipped, and as no creature, though ever so exalted, can be the object of divine worship, so we must conclude that Christ is God equal with the Father—

These I apprehend to be sufficient proofs of this great doctrine. If these are the distinguishing characters of deity, and they are applied to Christ, then he must be God. If they are not, I ask what are so, and how we must know the true God from the highest of his creatures? However the infidel may sneer at these hints, I hope they are enough to satisfy your minds, and to confirm you in the truth. I shall therefore proceed,

II. *To the improvement of this great article of our faith.* And we shall now see the great importance of this doctrine, as for instance,

1. *It was absolutely necessary that Christ should be God, to fit him for executing that work, which he graciously undertook.* His work we may consider in a threefold view; that which he was to do on earth—That which he daily does in heaven—And that which he will do at the great day—

2. *He had a work to do on earth, which he never could have gone through, had he not been God.* This was to make satisfaction to infinite justice for the sins of his people, to purchase grace and glory for them, and to gain a complete conquest over every enemy. And who could do all this but the mighty God? *He could not possibly have bore up under that load of guilt, which lay upon him, if he had not had deity to*

support him. All the sins of his people lay upon him, and met in him, and were enough to sink him absolutely down, if he had only been a creature. He must be in the utmost distress from his agony in the garden, yea such distress as no being inferior to God could have grappled with; all his body was in a bloody sweat, and the blood dropped upon the ground in clods, being forced through the pores by his extreme torture.—*Besides, he would not have been able to have made atonement for the sins he bore, if no more than a creature.* As sin has an infinite evil in it, so it requires an infinite satisfaction. What was the reason that the blood of beasts could not make this satisfaction, but because there was no proportion between this and sin. And to look upon the sacrifice of Christ as only that of a man, a creature, is only going a few steps higher; still the proportion would not be equal, and therefore it would not declare the glory of God in the pardon of sin, on the account of such a sacrifice.—*If he had not been God, he never could have purchased grace and glory.* Considered as a creature, there could have been no merit in what he did and suffered, especially for others. All a creature can do, he owes to God, in every capacity and relation, and therefore heaven could never have been styled a *purchased possession.* *He could never have gained a complete conquest over our spiritual enemies if any thing below God.* Principalities and powers were not easily spoiled. Death and hell required an almighty arm to conquer them. When he looked, and there was none to help, he must have yielded the victory, and sunk in despair; his own arm would never have brought salvation to him, if it had only been the feeble arm of a creature. And thus our redemption never would have been obtained, the price would never have been paid, and therefore the everlasting gates never have been opened. But, considering him as God, he was equal to the whole arduous work, he finished it in a little time, and had no occasion to lie an eternity under torment; he triumphed over every enemy, and led captivity captive. But,

3. If he was not God he would not be equal to the work he is daily executing above. He is gone into heaven, to appear in the presence of God for us, Heb. ix. 24. He there makes intercession for transgressors, Is. lxi. 12. He sits as the exalted king and head of his church, to conquer all our enemies for us, to apply salvation, and bring all his people in, to see that the work is

carried on, that all our wants are supplied, that none he undertook for are lost, and therefore to order and direct all the steps in providence so that his enemies may be disappointed, and the good of his people promoted. Now you will easily see to answer these ends he must have infinite knowledge and wisdom, know all his people, with all their wants and various circumstances : to know his enemies with all their schemes ; and to know what methods are best for him to pursue. He must be present every where, that he may be a help in every time of need. He must have almighty power, to crush our enemies, to support, supply and keep us. He must have infinite love and pity, to pass by so many backslidings, and exercise suitable compassion to those that are in distress. In fine, you will easily see, how necessary it is that he possesses every divine perfection — Lastly, *He must be God to be equal to the work of the great day* He will raise the dead, both small and great, assemble the world, sit upon his exalted throne, pass an equal and decisive sentence upon all, and execute this sentence in the everlasting destruction of some, and in the complete happiness of others. And who but a God can do all this ? Can a creature know where the scattered dust of millions lies, raise it and form it into a body fitted for immortality ? Can any less than God pass a just and suitable sentence upon all, distinguish the righteous from the wicked, know and remember the secret springs and principles of every action, and produce so many millions upon the stage ? Can any but the great sovereign of the world be the judge of it, doom the wicked to everlasting darkness, and immediately execute the sentence upon them, and with uncontrollable authority open the everlasting gates to all his people, and place them at his own right hand ? — Thus if Christ had not been more than a creature, he never would have been able to have gone through the work, the execution of which was of so much importance to the glory of God, and to our salvation. Blessed be God we have such a Saviour.—

4. *This doctrine of Christ's deity lays a foundation for, and is a powerful motive to admiration, love and obedience.* How does it magnify the grace and love of the Redeemer in all his works for us ! What ! did the mighty God undertake our salvation ? Did he who was infinitely blessed for evermore, veil his glory in the form of a servant, and ap-

pear in fashion as a man? How amazing the stoop! How inconceivable the love! Had it been a creature's love, it would have appeared great, could he have gone through the work: but it was the infinitely glorious Creator, that gave his life a ransom for us. *Behold the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; who though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich,* 2 Cor. viii. 9. Behold it ye angels and wonder and adore. Yea, ye do admire, ye do view this amazing mystery of godliness, and find matter for entertainment and praise. Behold it O my soul, thou art more immediately concerned in it. Behold the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths of the love of the Son of God: keep it ever in view, it will warm thee when cold and lifeless; it will humble thee under a sense of thy feeble attempts to love; it will enliven thy services; make thee hate sin, and be a quickening motive to all obedience: it will kindle a secret fire in thy soul, and make thee long to be with thy Redeemer above, to love and praise him for ever without coldness or interruption. Do the saints praise him in heaven? yes, that sacred temple resounds with hallelujahs to God, and to the Lamb. They have the highest, the clearest views of the love of Jehovah the second person. This is the theme they for ever dwell upon, and tune their harps, and touch the loudest string to praise the great mediator. Thou adorable Emanuel, didst thou leave thine exalted throne to come down, and purchase our salvation? Can we make thee more happy than thou really art, hast been from all eternity, and wilt be to all eternity? No, it was thine own free, rich, matchless love, that did incline thee to do all this for us. ‘ Oh love unfathomable! ‘ All glory, honour and praise be to him that thus loved us. ‘ Here we are the fruits of thy purchase, reaping the effects ‘ of thine infinite merit, and we will spend an eternity to ‘ thy praise.’ This love is the strongest and most powerful motive to obedience we have in all the gospel. Come hither, ye slothful souls, who complain that you are like the door upon its hinges, come hither, and view the love of the mighty God, and, if any thing will quicken you, this will, and make you move swiftly on in your Redeemer's service. Come ye, in whom the sacred fire seems faint and low, bring your cold hearts hither, and the love of the everlasting Father will kindle it afresh. Bring your hard rocky hearts hither,

and see if this love will not soften them. Attend ye back-sliders; behold the Son of God in the likeness of sinful flesh, and if any thing will melt your souls, and fill you with contrition, this will. Look upon the mighty God becoming a prince of peace, when you are under any temptations to be led into sin, and this will tend to guard you against a compliance, convince you of your obligations to him, and stir you up to all holy circumspection and diligence in the divine life. ‘ Oh, did God undertake for me? Is God himself become my Saviour? What love is this! What means this coldness O my soul, to this divine Saviour? Why so dull, and insensible of thy obligations to him? Why so worldly, so earthly and sensual? What means this carelessness in thy walk, thy frame, thy conversation! Come, let me view the person of my Saviour: See, my soul, who is it that has loved thee? It is the high and lofty one that inhabits eternity. Oh what motives to praise, to obedience! Have this ever in thine eye, that it may keep thee from security, endear the mediator more and more to thee, and make thee daily active in his service, and for his glory, till thou shalt be translated to the world above, where thou wilt love and praise for ever.’

5. *What a fund of consolation is there in this doctrine.* It administers relief in every case, and is an inexhaustible fountain and spring of comfort to all in distress. Is the sinner under a deep sense of sin? Does the load of guilt he has contracted lie heavy on his soul? Do his numberless transgressions appear before him with all their aggravations? Does he see his unworthiness of the favours of God, and in his own apprehensions is he upon the brink of hell? It is a melancholy case indeed; but awful as it is, this doctrine affords relief, and opens a door of hope to him at once. “ Shall I despair when I hear of such a favourer? He is not a creature, then should I despair; but he is the supreme God, and sure he can help me, though never so miserable and helpless. He can stand between offended justice and my poor guilty soul, therefore will I venture, and cast myself upon this glorious, this all-sufficient mediator, not doubting but he can pluck me out of the fire, and make me, though never so unworthy, an heir of eternal life.” Is the Christian distressed with a sense of his numerous enemies, and his own weakness to withstand them? Is he

afraid therefore that he shall not hold out and persevere to the end? Is he distressed from day to day through fear of giving up the conquest to his enemies? There is enough in this doctrine to set him at liberty, to cheer his soul, and revive his hopes of an everlasting triumph over all opposition. "Why should I be distressed, O my soul, and walk in perpetual bondage through fear of my enemies? "It is true they are too powerful for me; and was I therefore left to myself I must inevitably fall, and never finish my course; but look up and see who is on thy side. God himself is for thee, it matters not then who are against thee. Thou leanest not upon an arm of flesh, but upon everlasting strength. Away then all ye disquieting fears; though I am weak, yet my redeemer is strong; and I am abundantly more secure than Jerusalem itself, though surrounded with mountains, for the Lord himself is round about me. I will go on my way rejoicing therefore in the midst of every discouragement, and not question my reaching to my journey's end, and getting safe to Zion." Oh, it is a glorious truth? It is upon this that the church * is built, as upon an immovable rock, and not upon Peter; and therefore the gates of hell shall not be able to prevail against it. Here is something for the Christian under all his fears; something that tends to fill him with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Whatever his circumstances are; whether he is discouraged with a sense of his backslidings, or struggling with some corruption, or distressed with his unworthiness: whatever his difficulties are, a view of the mighty God is enough to remove them all, and give him boldness and courage in life and death, and under the prospect of the great day He is now become a fit Saviour. He is a suitable object of a poor sinner's trust and dependence, and we may cheerfully leave our souls with him, as being able to keep them against the judgement day. Upon the whole, take this doctrine out of the Bible, and what is it? This is the glory of the Christian scheme, that God stands at the head of it. It is this that gives life and efficacy to every other doctrine. This makes Christ appear glorious in all his mediatorial characters. This is the foundation of the Christian's comfort. Remove this, and his hopes of

pardon and eternal life cease at once ; therefore it is a doctrine of the utmost importance.

6. *Christ's being God should render him infinitely amiable to all, and does so to his people.* How blind those eyes, that can see no beauty in Jesus Christ ! How hard that heart, that feels no love to him ! Is he God ? He then possesseth infinite glory. Are the angels beings of peculiar excellency ; how much more is the Son of God ? Come and view him, and see if there is nothing you can perceive that is captivating in him. How ignorant were the daughters of Jerusalem, when they asked the spouse, what her beloved was more than another's beloved, that her heart was so much set upon him ? She answers them by representing the innumerable qualifications and excellencies of our Lord Jesus Christ. ‘ What is my beloved, says the Christian ? He is ‘ all I want, all I can desire. He is the Son of God ; the ‘ brightness of the Father’s glory and the express image of ‘ his person. See, how glorious his person, how bright his ‘ excellencies. How can I but love him, and esteem him ‘ fairer than all the children of men ? Lord, whom have I ‘ in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth I desire ‘ besides thee. Should I be insensible of such excellencies, or ‘ not love thee, thou glorious Emmanuel, all might esteem ‘ me sunk and lost in the utmost stupidity.’ How insensible, and how stupid must you be, poor hardened sinners, that you can pass by so much glory, and fix your hearts upon things that are unworthy of your esteem ? Have you yet seen no beauty in Jesus, that you should desire him as your friend, your husband ? To prefer the poor enjoyments before the Lord of Lords ! This intimates as if you thought there was nothing in him that could render him a fit object of your esteem. What a reflection this upon that Jesus, whom angels adore ! Stupid creatures, that the glorious mediator has not yet won your hearts. Let me recommend him to thee as one worthy of thy choice, one worthy of thine esteem ; one that can make thee unspeakably happy, and in whose friendship, whose favour, thou wilt find the greatest pleasure.

Lastly, *How awful the state and condition of those who refuse divine honours to our Lord Jesus Christ, and cast contempt upon his glorious person !*

S E R M O N VI.

ON JUSTIFICATION.



GAL. ii. 16:

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ; that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

THE great doctrine of justification by the righteousness of Jesus Christ imputed, though of the utmost importance, is become too much the object of contempt; it is no wonder indeed, if we consider, that it is inconsistent with that way of happiness which reason knew in a state of innocence, and which corrupt nature now, only approves; it is in vain to attempt to accommodate the gospel, to the common conceptions of corrupted reason, for reason, when in its highest and purest state, was unacquainted with it; the words *Grace* and *Christ* were unknown, in the state of innocence; no way to eternal life was then revealed but by a personal obedience, to the law. There was no necessity of a mediator, till sin was introduced into the world, therefore there was no revelation of Christ till after the fall; when man had exposed himself to the awful curse of the law, and was absolutely unable to prevent the execution of it. As man was acquainted with no other language when in his perfect rectitude, but *do this and live*, no wonder that the way of justification by the righteousness of Christ should

now appear new and mysterious, and be represented as the effect of enthusiasm? Have we received any peculiar advantage by the fall? Have we gained any considerable light by it? Or are we more inclined to receive the mysteries God has revealed? No, behold, we have the utmost reason to bewail our apostacy! having felt the sad effects of it, in the blindness of our minds, and hardness of our hearts! The fall has placed us at the utmost distance from God, and filled our minds with the strongest prejudices against the glorious mysteries of the kingdom of God. Thus in all ages, the great and important truths of the gospel have been ridiculed and despised; not only in the darker days of the Old Testament, but under the present dispensation, when life and immortality are brought to life by the gospel. The preaching of the cross of Christ was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness.

1 Cor. i. 23. The Jews, though favoured with the various prophecies of the Old Testament, which speak of Christ, and his righteousness, yet discovered the utmost aversion to this way of justification, as directly contrary to those high thoughts they had entertained of themselves, and their services, and as absolutely destroying all their favourite principles which they had imbibed, and which they were determined to maintain against all the opposition that should be made to them. Hence we find them uniting their endeavours against Christ and his disciples, to put a stop, if possible to the spreading of a doctrine so repugnant to the sentiments of corrupt nature, and so destructive of those elevated hopes which were built on the apprehended worthiness of their imperfect services. On this account we find the apostles, with a noble zeal, maintaining the great doctrines of the gospel, and particularly this of justification; this glorious truth, however opposite to the dictates of degenerate reason, is of the utmost importance; some have called it the grand prop and bulwark of the Christian religion; it certainly enters into the very essence of Christianity, and is necessary for us to know, as it is the foundation of our hopes of eternal life, is our greatest support in life, and our comfort in a dying hour. Is it not of the utmost importance for the sinner to know how it is he shall be justified before God? How is it, that this is not a more general subject of inquiry? Do you consider that a mistake here may be of the most dreadful consequence? Will it not be inexpressibly awful to live

in expectation of a discharge at the bar of God, and an entrance into the everlasting mansions, and to meet with a disappointment? to hear the dreadful sound, Depart, and be sentenced to the bottomless pit! The shame and confusion that must attend such a disappointment cannot possibly come within the reach of human conception: it is no wonder then, that we find the apostle Paul so zealously maintaining the way of justification by the righteousness of Christ, and that he is so large, and so particular, upon this subject. He was well acquainted with the opposition that nature made to this great doctrine, for he was once an enemy to it himself, he was a distinguished Pharisee, was remarkable for his zeal for the law, and for his enmity against Christ and his glorious cause: he was alive in his own apprehensions, and was far from suspecting his title to heaven, till the spirit came and enlightened his understanding, conquered his aversion to the gospel, convinced him of his guilt, and led him to a view of his wretched state and condition without a better righteousness than that he had depended upon. Now he becomes a zealous advocate for Christ, he is unwearied in his endeavours to spread the knowledge of Christ, he labours to convince his countrymen of their ignorance and obstinacy, represents to them the vanity of their hopes, the way, the true way of justification, and presseth them to come to that Jesus, to whom he had committed all his concerns, and on whom he depended for eternal life. In his epistle to the Galatians he particularly enters on the doctrine of justification by faith in Jesus Christ, reproves those to whom he wrote for their departing in some measure from the purity of the truth, and their adherence to the law in this great article; and asserts that neither the works of the ceremonial, nor the moral law, have any hand in the justification of a sinner, it being only by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. *We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.* These words naturally lead us to consider this great and important doctrine of justification, so essential to the being and comfort of a real Christian. In hopes that some may be instructed in this glorious truth, and others confirmed and

established in their belief of it, let us consider the following things.

- I. Let us inquire into the meaning of being justified, or what are the privileges of justification.
- II. Show that our personal righteousness is absolutely unable to justify us before God.
- III. That it is the righteousness of Christ alone that is the matter of our justification, and the ground of our acceptance with God.
- IV. How the righteousness of Christ is made ours, so that we may be really justified by it. And,
- V. Make a practical improvement of the subject.

I We are to inquire into the meaning of being justified, or shew what the privileges of justification are. There have been great disputes about the word *justify*; it being evidently taken in different senses in the word of God. Sometimes it signifies our celebrating the justice or righteousness of God, or our vindicating his perfections from any charge that may be brought against them, Psa. li. 4. But in the matter of the sinner's justification before God, the word *justify* is to be taken in a forensic sense; the papists plead that it is to be taken in a physical, or moral sense, for the infusion of righteousness, and therefore pointing out that as the matter of our justification: but it is evident we are to take it in a law sense; in several places of scripture, where a judicial process is represented, mention is made of a law accusing of persons guilty, of divine justice requiring punishment or satisfaction given, and sinners absolved and cleared; justification then is a judicial act, an act of justice, as well as of mercy; *who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?* (says the apostle.) *It is God that justifieth, who shall condemn?* *It is Christ that died.* Rom. viii. 33. Who shall entitle them in course of law, or judgement? Who can proceed against them legally? Let him come forth. There is enough indeed, to be charged against God's elect, but who shall condemn them for it? Christ has made satisfaction for them, and God has justified them. They have sinned and violated the law of God, but Christ has made satisfaction for them, on which account God has discharged and freed them from the sentence of condemnation. Thus justification is a judicial act. This being considered, leads

us to take notice of the blessings contained in justification, or what is meant by a sinner's being justified. And these two things are signified thereby :

1. That the sins of those who are justified are pardoned ; and,

2. That they are received into the favour of God, and have a right and title given them to eternal life.

1. To be justified, signifies that our sins are all pardoned. This supposes that we are naturally under a law, that we have violated this law, have forfeited the favour of God hereby, and rendered ourselves obnoxious to the curse denounced by the law-giver upon transgression.

This is a truth of the utmost importance, every where so represented in the word of God. God gave man a law in innocency, to which he annexed an awful threatening of everlasting death, to be executed upon us if we violated and broke this law. The first transgression being an act of a public representation, all mankind are concluded under sin, and become guilty before God (to this we may add numberless actual transgressions) ; we are hereby naturally under the curse of the law, liable to the execution of its condemning sentence. In such awful circumstances does God find us, when he comes and actually justifies us, by which he pardons all our sins, original and actual, blots out the hand-writing against us, cancels the indictment, stops the prosecution, and gives us a discharge from punishment. In justifying us, God gives us a full pardon of all our sins, so that we shall never be brought into condemnation. Hence it is said, *there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.* Rom. viii. 1. We have the pardon of sin represented in such strong expressions in the word of God as sufficiently shews its certainty and fulness, so that it is impossible for sin ever to condemn the justified soul. Thus it is said, our sins are covered. Psal. xxxii. 1. *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.* They are so covered that they shall never appear before the judicial eye of God to procure our condemnation. Again, in the second verse pardon is represented by a not imputing sin, *Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity.* He reckons it not to him, places it not to his account, and consequently it cannot procure his condemnation. It is again set forth by *a not remembering our sins any more,* Jer. xxxi.

34. God is said to *cast our sins behind his back*, Isa. xxxviii.
17. *To cast them into the depths of the sea*, Mic. vii, 19. Signifying the impossibility of their ever appearing against the believer more ; they shall be forgotten never to be remembered, they shall be lost, so as never to be found. Again, pardon is set forth by blotting out, and cleansing, Psal. li. 1, 2. Acts iii. 19. Alluding to a creditor, who crosses out a debt in his book of accompts, that it may never more stand in force against the person who contracted it. These and various other expressions in the word of God, are designed to express the fulness of pardon, and the happiness of those who receive it. Thus we find God represented as " seeing no iniquity in Jacob, neither any perverseness in " Israel," Num xxiii. 21. The meaning of which words cannot be, that the sins of his people are not known to him ; nothing can be concealed from his all comprehensive view. He sees the sins his people commit, but not as their judge to condemn them ; he deals with them as if they had never transgressed the law, by dissolving their obligation to punishment, and treating them as children. The sins of God's people are not so taken away, as to destroy the demerit of sin. Though they are delivered from condemnation, yet there is enough in them that is matter of condemnation. The sins which they daily commit deserve everlasting punishment, and appear in themselves infinitely odious in the eyes of God who cannot behold iniquity but with the utmost detestation and abhorrence. This therefore lays a foundation for continual deep humiliation of soul, and admiration at the infinite grace of God, in the pardon of sins so often repeated, and attended with such aggravating circumstances. Nor does the blotting out of sin, and the like, signify that sin does not cleave to the soul ; sin still remains, and exerciseth too much power in the soul ; remission of sin considers it with relation to punishment, and not as a quality inherent in the subject, therefore the stain remains till it is fully washed away by the sanctifying influences of the Spirit of God, which will not be, till body and soul are separated : yet there is a full, and absolute remission of sin, both as to the guilt and as to the punishment : so that all the proceedings of God with his justified people are in a way of mercy. Here it may be asked, whether the sins of the believer, past, present, and to come, are all pardoned when the soul is justified ? If we consider remission as to the purpose and de-

cree of God, or as to the promise of God in the Covenant of Grace, or as to the merit of Christ, who gave full satisfaction to infinite justice for all the sins of his people, their sins past, present, and to come, are all pardoned. But if we consider remission as actually given to the soul, his past and present sins may be said to be forgiven, but not his future sins; for they cannot be considered as being actually committed, and a debt cannot be blotted out before it is contracted. No more can our sins be said to be all at once, and explicitly forgiven, before they are actually committed. However upon the whole, Christ's righteousness being imputed to us, lays a foundation for the remission of all sins; our future sins shall not be laid to our charge, nor iniquity prove our ruin: and here God has wisely made it our duty, to beg daily for the forgiveness of our sins, and to bring forth fruits meet for repentance; to shew his hatred to sin, the character of those on whom he bestows forgiveness, and to evidence to the soul that his sins are forgiven. Thus we see how important a blessing justification is; whilst we are strangers to Christ we have no reason to conclude that our sins are forgiven, the sentence of the law stands open against us, we are exposed to the wrath of God, and have the utmost reason to fear the dreadful execution of it, according to the awful demerit of sin. Blessed therefore is the man whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered; blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity; but there is a further blessing contained in justification: for,

2. Those who are justified are received into the favour of God, accepted as righteous, and have a title given them to eternal life. To justify is more than to pardon: a king may pardon a rebel, but not take him into favour. Adam was under no obligation to punishment when he was in a state of innocence, yet he was not justified, *i.e.* he was not declared righteous so as to have a title given him to eternal life, that depended on his continuance in obedience. As justification is a declaring righteous, so it supposes a righteousness in us, or in another, by which we are declared righteous. There is certainly a positive righteousness required by which we must be declared righteous; because the law requires obedience, as well as suffering: the one to free from punishment in case of offence, the other to entitle

to life. Those who cannot be declared righteous, cannot be entitled to eternal life. In justification therefore the righteousness of Jesus Christ being imputed to the believer, he is pronounced righteous, accepted as such, and entitled to a glorious immortality, for that righteousness by which he is justified is perfectly answerable to the demands of the law and justice. If therefore this righteousness be properly reckoned to the believer, he must be necessarily acquitted, be introduced actually, into the divine favour, and have a just and indisputable right to eternal life. And that this righteousness which Christ has wrought out, may be reckoned to the believer so as to secure to him these important blessings, will be considered more particularly when we come to inquire how the righteousness of Christ becomes ours. Some there are who apprehend that justification is imperfect in this life, as depending upon our continuance in obedience; according to them when we first believe, we have all our past iniquities forgiven, are at present delivered from condemnation, and have a title to eternal life, provided we continue in the performance of obedience, to the end of life. This makes our right to life not immutable and perfect, but changeable, as it depends upon the personal performance of certain conditions, the fulfilment of which must be precarious; our title therefore may be lost, and we deprived of the glorious inheritance above. Justification, according to this uncomfortable scheme, only makes our salvation possible, not certain; it does not in this sense suppose the law to be fulfilled, therefore it does not include a proper title to eternal glory; for if we consider justification as giving an immutable title to life (as certainly it does) it necessarily supposes the law to be fulfilled, which threatened death; consequently there remains nothing now, but (as man is declared righteous) that he be put into the possession of that glorious inheritance, to which God hath given him a title. In justification then the sinner not only receives the pardon and forgiveness of his sins, but a right and title to eternal life; these two are distinct blessings, though inseparably connected; where there is one, there is likewise the other. Every one who has his iniquities forgiven, has likewise a right to all the blessings of the everlasting covenant; they were both purchased by Jesus Christ, and are consequently given to all those to whom he imputes his

perfect righteousness. Adoption is a part of justification ; and “as many as received him to them gave he power to ‘become the sons of God, even to as many as believed on ‘his name.’ John i. 12 Christ came not only to redeem us from the curse of the law, but to favour us with the adoption of sons, Gal. iv. 4, 5. He covers our guilt with the robe of his righteousness, and he makes our persons accepted of God ; he renders all the awful threatenings of the law absolutely void, gives us a discharge from eternal death, and presents us with the glorious prospect of an heavenly inheritance ; he gives a right to all the promises in the word of God, gives us an interest in all the divine perfections, and makes us heirs of God and joint heirs with himself.

Such are the blessings of justification, blessings of the greatest importance To be freed from the obligation to everlasting punishment, to be made heirs of eternal life. Who can represent the excellency of such blessings ? they are more than all the honours of the present life.

To close the present discourse with some useful instructions deducible from the point : as,

1. Hence we learn how necessary it is for us stedfastly to believe *Original Sin*, with all its consequences. To deny this important truth, is to open a door for that latitude of thought, which has had so dreadful a spread to the ruin of immortal souls. Many who have fallen off from the gospel, have begun here : it is well to have our hearts established in those divine truths which have so strict a connection with our salvation, and which have such an influence upon it. It is a disagreeable thought to proud man, ‘that ‘we are all under the guilt of sin, and have our souls tainted ‘with its pollution, as we come into the world,’ though it really is the cause of that condemnation the law placeth us under, as well as those many actual transgressions with which we are chargeable, which are all pardoned in justification. This truth, of all mankind’s being in a state of sin and condemnation, hath a near concern with justification in a gospel sense. The apostle Paul therefore, in treating of that great doctrine, mentions this first, as what is necessary to be first considered ; as you may see, in the first, second, and third chapters, of the epistle to the Romans. And in the fifth chapter of the same epistle, ver. 12, &c. he proves this truth, by a regular course of most conclusive arguments.

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin ; and so death passeth upon all men, for that, or in as much as all have sinned. Experience likewise adds its testimony to put the matter beyond all doubt. There are early discoveries given of the loss of original rectitude, and of the guilt we are under ; and whilst we believe steadfastly this important truth, we are led to adore infinite wisdom and grace in the method of salvation revealed in the gospel ; to value the great blessings included in justification, and cheerfully and thankfully to depend upon that righteousness which Jesus has provided, and by which alone we can be justified in the sight of God.

2. Hence we learn to adore the infinite grace of God, in bestowing upon creatures so unworthy, such an invaluable and important blessing. When we consider our apostacy from God, and how justly we have deserved his everlasting indignation, we have just reason to cry out, Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him !

Does God justify the ungodly ? Lord, says the sensible humbled sinner, what astonishing grace ! Is there forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared ! May such a guilty creature as I draw near unto thee ! Rejoice, O my soul and wonder at sovereign grace : there is room for me to hope ; behold God justifies guilty sinners who lie naturally under the condemnation of the law, and might have been made the everlasting monuments of infinite wrath ! See the blessings he confers, he pardons, freely and fully pardons every transgression, and gives a glorious and sure title to eternal life ; he makes sinners heirs of an inheritance to come, an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, an inheritance that far exceeds all the glory of this lower world. Oh surprising grace ! When God gives, he gives like himself He is himself far above our comprehension, and so are his dealings towards his people. Do not your hearts burn within you ? Are not your souls filled with unspeakable wonder, to hear of God justifying the guilty ? God, who has been offended in innumerable instances ; that God who, for an act of rebellion, cast the sinning angels down from their exalted happiness to everlasting misery ? Does this God pardon guilty man, receive him into favour, and make him an heir

of everlasting blessings? Who can be silent under such glorious views of divine grace and mercy! Were we to be insensible of such grace, the very stones would cry out against us, and upbraid us with ingratitude. Oh may we unite in ascribing everlasting praises to him, who passed by the fallen angels, but determined to exalt his grace and mercy in the justification and salvation of fallen man, and fulfills his gracious designs by making the heirs of wrath to be heirs of heaven. It is the Lord's doing, may it ever be marvellous in our eyes! Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be all the glory.

3. Hence we see the difference, between justification and sanctification. They are both blessings of the everlasting covenant, and inseparable. Those who are possessed of the one are also of the other, they cannot possibly be separated, yet they are different: the one is a relative change, the other a physical or moral change. The one frees us from all obligation to punishment, and gives us a title to heaven; the other cleanseth our souls from the pollution of sin, makes us holy, and so fits us for the enjoyment of eternal life. By justification we stand in a different relation to God from what we before did, then we were to be considered as children of wrath, under the curse of the law, and could claim no special interest in the divine favour, but rather had reason to look upon God as offended, and as obliged by his own threatening to execute the sentence of the law against us: now we are related to him as children, he is our father, and we may joyfully expect to enjoy all the happy consequences of such a relation. Thus justification changes our state, sanctification, our tempers, and dispositions. It is justification gives us the title of children, so sanctification gives us the temper of children, and makes us behave ourselves in some measure agreeably to such a relation. In justification we have a righteousness imputed to us; in sanctification we have a righteousness inherent, a righteousness infused; the one is an act of God's free grace through the righteousness of Christ in changing our state, the other is the work of his spirit purifying our hearts. Thus we see they are different, and yet they are both absolutely necessary to our full and complete salvation; and always meet in the soul that gets safe to glory; what God hath thus joined let no man attempt to put asunder. If there are no evidences of the

grace of God changing your hearts, you may conclude that you are still in a state, of condemnation ; you must shew you are justified, by your love to Christ, your hatred of sin by your serious, humble and heavenly conversation, else all your hopes of an interest in the divine favour are vain and deceitful. Sanctification indeed is not perfect in this life as justification is, it is a work that is of a progressive nature, it is gradually carried on in the soul, and not fully perfect till body and soul are separated ; yet as in justification the believer receives a full discharge from the curse of the law, hath a sure title given him to eternal life, and shall never come into condemnation, so likewise, in sanctification where the work is begun in the heart, it shall be carried on till it is perfected ; hence the lowest degree of sanctification is an assurance of the whole, an earnest of heaven. Glory be to God, such provision is made as is every way necessary to secure our everlasting salvation : that we may not be deceived at last, and be deprived of the promised inheritance.

4. Hence we learn that all the afflictions God is pleased to bring upon his people, in the present life, are not curses or punishments for sin, but paternal chastisements and fruits of love. As by justification our sins are all forgiven, and we are taken into the favour of God, so all God's dealings with his justified one's are agreeable to that relation which he stands in to them, and consequently the effects of love and mercy. Sin was indeed the original cause of every affliction ; on the account of sin man gets his bread by the sweat of his brows ; when sin was introduced into the world, immediately man became liable to innumerable afflictions and calamities, and if we view afflictions as they are considered in the covenant of works, we must view them as curses, as parts of that punishment which God threatened, and consequently as the effects of his just wrath and indignation : but let us look into the new covenant and there view them in a different light ; there they are not considered as curses but as fatherly corrections, and real blessings Psa 1xxxix 30, 34. If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgements ; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments : then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. Those

that are justified may look upon all their afflictions as mercy and truth ; they have a right given them, to all the blessings of the covenant of grace, and therefore afflictions are brought upon them as they are considered in this covenant, which are fatherly corrections. Thus David sinned greatly, and God afflicted him for it, but though his afflictions were on the account of sin, yet they were not as curses, but the effects of a father's displeasure ; as such they are likewise designed for our everlasting good, and so are out of love and compassion. As a prudent serious parent not only corrects his disobedient child to shew his displeasure at his sin, but out of love to him to promote his real good and advantage, and to put a stop if possible to that which would prove his ruin : thus God not only shews his detestation of sin when he afflicts his people, but shews his love to their souls, inasmuch as he takes this method to humble them for sin, to quicken them in their way to Zion, and to fit them more and more for a better world. Isaiah xxvii. 9. ‘ By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin.’ What agreeable news must this be to the mourning soul, who is ready to draw rash conclusions from his long and tedious afflictions ! Fear not, your troubles have not the dreadful bitterness of the curse in them, see them sweetened by a consideration of that love that is the cause ; view them as the gentle corrections of your heavenly father, who takes such measures with you, to promote your everlasting advantage ; call not your sonship in question, ‘ for whom the Lord loveth he chastneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth If ye endure chastning. God dealeth with you as with sons : for what son is he whom the Father chastneth not ? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not Sons.’

5. Does God bestow such invaluable blessings upon his people in justification, This should keep them from envying the prosperity of all the worldly great, and reconcile them to every dispensation of providence.

S E R M O N VII.

ON JUSTIFICATION.

GAL. ii. 16.

Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ ; that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law : for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

WHEN we consider the worth of an immortal soul, and the tendency which the glorious mysteries of the gospel have to promote and advance the glory of God, and our everlasting welfare, we have abundant reason to adore infinite grace, for that revelation which he has given us, and readily to receive whatever is contained therein. Had we not been favoured with this, we should have grovelled in perpetual darkness and remained perfectly ignorant of those sublime and exalted truths which are so nearly connected with our present and future comfort. Original sin, justification by the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, and the other great and important truths of the gospel are pure matter of divine revelation ; they lie far above the reach of nature, and would never have entered into the heart of man ; nay, now they are revealed, they appear far beyond our comprehension we are all surprise and astonishment when we view the mysteries of infinite grace, and are lost amidst the glorious scenes that open to us in our salvation by Jesus Christ.

We have entered upon the consideration of the great doctrine of justification, a doctrine of the utmost importance, which lays a foundation for the most glorious expectations, secures the Christian from the awful sting of death, and brings him safe at last to the glorious and everlasting embraces of his exalted redeemer. To set this doctrine in such light as may inform the ignorant, comfort the dejected, and confirm the Christian in his attachment to it, we proposed to consider,

I. What is the meaning of the word justify, and what are the blessing of which justification consists.

II. Shew that our own personal righteousness is absolutely insufficient to justify us, before God.

III. That it is the righteousness of Jesus Christ which is the matter of our Justification and ground of our acceptance with God.

IV. How this righteousness becomes ours so that we may be legally and really justified by it.

We have already considered the first thing, and have shewn the word justify is to be taken in a law, or forensic sense.—When a sinner is said to be justified it signifies,

1. That all his sins are pardoned.

2. That he is introduced actually into the favour of God, accepted as righteous, and has an immutable right and title to eternal life given him. We now come to shew,

II. That our own personal righteousness is absolutely insufficient to justify us before God. This is a truth plainly and expressly contained in our text, in which the apostle asserts, that no flesh can be justified by the works of the law; by which works he means not only those of the ceremonial but also of the moral law; had there been any justification by outward works he must have been justified; but notwithstanding all his boasting whilst he was a Pharisee, yet when the spirit of God came, and enlightened his understanding in the mysteries of the gospel, he immediately renounced all self dependance, and committed his soul to Jesus alone, depending entirely on his righteousness. We, says the apostle, who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles. We are not of the sinful Gentiles who have nothing to boast of, but we are of the race of the Jews, that ancient, and distinguished people of God, who can boast of the greatest privileges; we are of those, to whom the oracles of God, and the means

of grace are committed; we have many duties to produce, many works which we have performed, yet being convinced that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have renounced all our privileges and duties in point of justification, and have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law, for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. This testimony of the apostle, especially when we consider him as directed by the Holy Ghost herein, is sufficient to convince us of the vanity of all dependence upon our own righteousness, and stir us up to seek after justification by the righteousness of Jesus Christ. But as it is so natural to man to go about to establish a righteousness of his own, and as it is a matter of such moment to the soul, so it may not be unprofitable particularly to shew the absolute impossibility of being justified by any righteousness of our own: and I pray God it may be made effectual to convince some self righteous sinner of the vanity of his self dependence, and quicken him to give up himself and his everlasting concerns into the hands of Jesus.

Now in order to make it appear, that our own righteousness, in any state whatever, is unable to justify us before God, I shall shew the necessity of a perfect righteousness, and then consider how far short ours comes, of such a righteousness.

I. Let us consider the necessity of a perfect righteousness to our justification before God—And that a perfect righteousness is absolutely necessary to our justification before God appears, if we consider the infinite justice and holiness of God, and the explanation our Lord himself has given us of the law.

1. Let us consider the infinite justice and holiness of God, and his awful majesty and glory. If we consider the infinite perfections and glory of him who justifies, it will appear that a perfect righteousness is absolutely necessary. The whole creation proclaims the infinite glory of God, and tends to fill us with awe and reverence of him; all the representations we have of God in his word have the same tendency, they forbid every proud exalted thought of ourselves, and fill the most perfect creatures with the most profound humility. Thus the angels who surround the glo-

rious throne of God above, lose, as it were, all sense of their own excellency, when they view the infinite surpassing glories of their great Creator; they therefore in the most admiring and adoring strains cry out, Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty! God is so spotless and holy himself, that the heavens are not clean in his sight, and he charges even his angels with folly, Job. iv. 18. Chron. xv. 15. Who can stand before him without a perfect righteousness? Is it not most agreeable to the infinite holiness and justice of God that the righteousness he accepts of, and on the account of which he introduces creatures into eternal life, should be a perfect righteousness? It is certainly most consistent with those views we have of the infinite purity and glory of God, with the revelation he hath made of his spotless perfections, as well as with the ends and designs he has in view in the salvation of his people, which are to exalt his righteousness and justice as well as his grace and mercy: if we take but these things into our consideration we shall see immediately the necessity of a perfect righteousness to render us accepted of God. It is indeed easy for man when elated with pride, in the time of health and prosperity, to extol the worth and excellency of virtue; to persuade himself and others, that it is perfectly consistent with the justice of God, to accept of the righteousness which man is capable of performing; and below him, to take notice of those trifling excursions of nature which are esteemed and represented as the necessary effects of our constitution; it is easy for the sinner to persuade himself that all is well, when conscience is asleep and death appears at a great distance; but suppose the sinner standing upon the brink of an unchangeable world, with conscience awake, his mind impressed with a sense of the glory and majesty of that God before whom he is going to appear; suppose him taking his everlasting farewell of all mortal converse, and convinced he is going to the tribunal of that God before whom the angels fall down with the most profound reverence, going to receive a sentence that will determine his everlasting condition; will he not start back at the awful view? Will he not suspect the sufficiency of his own righteousness, and be ready to cry out with the great Bellarmine, It is safest to trust in the righteousness of Christ? However light and trifling our thoughts may be of the way of a sinner's justification before God,

an awaking conscience and the views of death will make a great alteration in our sentiments, and fill us with a seriousness and awe, to which we were before in a great measure strangers. Besides, God has brought himself under an express obligation to proceed with man according to the law, either to give eternal life upon perfect obedience, or to punish disobedience with everlasting death. As perfect obedience only is agreeable to the tenour of this law, so if man is saved, consistent with the divine justice and faithfulness, it must be by such an obedience. But,

2. It appears from the explanation which our Lord gives us of the law, that an absolutely perfect righteousness is necessary to our justification before God. That a law by which God may govern his creatures, necessarily flows from the relation in which they stand to each other, from the infinite perfections of the Creator and the capacities of the creature is self evident. That a law was given originally to man made capable of moral government, and that this law required spotless and perfect obedience, is likewise as plain. Hence the law doth eternally and unchangeably oblige man unto the same spotless obedience; for though man has by an act of his own, weakened himself so as to be incapable of paying perfect obedience, yet as there is still the same relation subsisting between God and us, so there is the same obligation upon us, though not the same capacity in us. Our want of capacity to fulfil the law, is no reason why the law must abate of its demands: therefore we find our Lord in the 5th and 6th chapters of Matthew represents the law as not only requiring a constant uniformity of action, but an absolute regularity and perfection, in the thoughts, will, and affections. I need not repeat what Christ says in those chapters, as it must be known to all that attentively read the Scriptures, but we may ask the question, why does Christ himself thus open the law? Does it not signify that the law requires more than an outward obedience, even a perfect conformity of heart and life? and why has he explained the law thus, in our degenerate circumstances, while we are incapable of paying such a sinless obedience? Does it not signify that the law has sustained no alteration, that it is as extensive in its demands as ever, and that nothing but a perfect righteousness will be accepted, as our justifying righteousness? Christ's explanation of the law thus has a

tendency to convince the sinner of his numberless imperfections, to humble him under a sense of them, to make him despair of ever obtaining eternal life by his own righteousness and to stir him up to seek with the utmost earnestness and diligence, after an interest in that perfect righteousness, which alone is commensurate with all the demands of the law, and can give a soul boldness and confidence at the bar of God. Having thus mentioned the necessity of a perfect righteousness to our justification, we may proceed to shew that man's righteousness, in whatever state or capacity we view him, is absolutely insufficient to justify him before God as being imperfect. And,

I. It is evident that the righteousness of the unrenewed sinner must be every way imperfect—or that works before conversion are so—therefore these cannot justify us. If the fountain be corrupt the streams must, if the tree be corrupt the fruit will be so too. You cannot gather grapes of thorns, and figs of thistles. It is as irrational to expect a perfect righteousness from those, who are absolutely under the power and government of sin: none of the works of which the sinner is ready to boast, can be called spiritually good: they flow not from a good principle; hearts must be renewed before we can produce the amiable fruits of righteousness in our lives; we must be first united to Christ and ingrafted into him. Unless the branches are in the vine, they cannot flourish and bring forth fruit, they must receive nourishment from the root by which they become productive of proper fruit. Thus must the soul be in Christ; or he cannot bring forth the fruits of righteousness. None of the sinner's pretended good works are directed to a good end: they have not the glory of God in view in the performance, and therefore they cannot justify: to suppose it, is to reflect upon the infinite purity of God, or his wisdom and knowledge, for either he must not be so holy as he is represented, or he cannot, consistent with his glorious perfections, connive and wink at sin; or else he must be deceived by the appearance of a splendid profession, and not know the springs, principles, and ends from whence the sinner acts: but who dare presume to entertain a thought of God so unbecoming his divine and glorious perfections? Besides, the righteousness of the sinner being imperfect, the law, instead of justifying, condemns him, “Cursed is every one that continueth not

"in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them," Gal. iii. 18. May these awful words be deeply impressed upon the minds of the self-righteous sinner! and be made a happy means of leading him to Jesus, who only has satisfied the law, and is able to deliver the guilty soul from the wrath to come!

2. Our habitual or inherent righteousness is imperfect, and therefore cannot justify a soul. This is the work of the spirit upon the heart, and therefore far exceeds all the works of the unrenewed sinner; this supposes the fountain of sin to be in part cleansed, the dominion of sin to be in part destroyed, and the image of God to be in some measure impressed even on all the powers and faculties of the soul; yet this work being imperfect, lays no foundation for the soul to build his hopes of acceptance with God upon; it is absolutely necessary to fit us for the enjoyment of God, as it gives a suitableness in the heart to heaven, without which there could be no happiness; but we must not put it in the place of a perfect justifying righteousness. Nothing shall meet with the divine approbation that is not agreeable to his appointment, and is fitted to answer the ends for which he has appointed it; it is plain the work of sanctification is imperfect, the word of God sufficiently attests it, and so does the Christian's experience. The apostle Paul makes a melancholy complaint of the remains of sin: he viewed not only with the deepest humility his various backslidings, but the *Body of sin* he still found within him. He went to the root, to the fountain head, and was concerned to have that more and more cleansed and purified. "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Rom. vii. 24. And is not this oftentimes your language, Christians? are not your souls often deeply humbled at the melancholy view of the remains of sin in every faculty, which render your sanctification imperfect? And can you then with a comfortable satisfaction depend upon what God has wrought in you for your acceptance with him? A consideration of that body of sin, that still in part remains, forbids your dependence, and sets you upon an inquiry after a perfect righteousness.

3. Good works, or works after conversion, are imperfect, and therefore cannot be our justifying righteousness. From our habitual and actual righteousness we may be pronounced

just and righteous persons, but not justified. Considering iniquity is in every faculty, there must be iniquity cleaving to every duty. As the works of unrenewed sinners can in no respect be said to be spiritually good, so the good works of real believers are but partly so; how can it be otherwise, when the heart is but partly renewed? if the fountain be not perfectly pure, the streams that flow from thence cannot. Consequently all the good works of the believer cannot justify him before God. The Ephesians were esteemed holy persons when the apostle wrote to them, and yet he tells them they were not saved by works, which must be works after conversion. "For by grace are ye saved; through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Eph. ii, 8, 9. 10. But it is alleged by some that Christ came not to furnish us with a perfect righteousness of his own, but to fulfil certain conditions agreed upon between the Father and him, by which a valuable consideration should be given to God, that he might not execute the law of works, but disannull it, and new terms of acceptance with God be established for man—viz. a new and much easier law of faith, and repentance, and sincere obedience, which, though imperfect, yet should be accepted as our justifying righteousness. If there is a possibility of our being justified by a righteousness of our own, this certainly stands the fairest for it; and as it is so natural, to espouse sentiments prejudicial to our everlasting comfort, and this is an affair of so much moment, it may not be amiss to endeavour to remove this imaginary foundation, lest we should be unwarily led aside from the truth as it is in Jesus, or fluctuate in our minds about things of such great importance. Accordingly, in opposition to this specious allegation we answer, such a way of justification is contrary to the word of God, and the experience of the saints recorded there. It lays an evident foundation for boasting: It opens a door to the greatest discouragements, and our own righteousness is put in direct opposition to that righteousness by which we are justified.

1. This way of justification is contrary to the word of God; and the experience of all the saints recorded there. The

Psalmit was a man really renewed, and in part sanctified; he was doubtless sincere in his obedience, and yet he cries out, Psal. cxxx. 3. "If thou, Lord, should mark iniquities, "O Lord who shall stand?" Intimating that as there are none who are without iniquities, so these are sufficient to render all our righteousness," though never so sincere, unfit to stand the trial of infinite justice, and consequently incapable of justifying us. A consideration of the infinite perfections of the judge, keeps the believer from depending upon any thing he himself has done. David intimates that he was a servant of God, he feared and obeyed him, he was eminent for his zeal in worshipping, and is styled a man after God's own heart, and yet I hear his humble language, and see the sense he had of his own imperfections, and of the infinite purity and rectitude of the divine nature. Psal. cxliii. 2. "Enter not into judgement with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." Behold now he lies humble in his own eyes, and under an awful sense of the glorious perfections of the deity. Does he boast? No, Lord, says he, when I consider thine infinite and spotless excellencies I am lost, my obedience appears every way unworthy of thy acceptance; wast thou to enter into judgement with me, I must give up all hopes of thine everlasting favour, for none can stand before thee when thou art angry. David appears to be absolutely ignorant of a way of justification by faith, repentance, and new obedience; had this been the way, though he could not have pleaded justification by the law, he might by the gospel have pleaded with God his sincerity, &c. Yet see, he intreats that God would not enter into judgement with him; and why? Because in his sight, or before him, no flesh can be justified. We may appeal to God for our sincerity and integrity, and in some cases plead it: thus Hezekiah pleads his integrity for sparing his life; "remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight: and Hezekiah wept sore." Isa. xxxviii. 3. He had been so zealous a reformer of worship, that had he been cut off in the midst of his days, idolaters might have represented it as the judgement of God upon him. Job maintained his sincerity with the utmost confidence before his friends who suspected it, but when God came to call him to an ac-

count, behold with what humility he appears ! he is entirely silent and cannot plead any thing with God which may entitle him to his favour, but lies at his footstool and “ abhors himself and repents in dust and ashes.” Job. xlvi. 6. The apostle gives us his own sentiments in the text and in Phil. iii. 9. And “ be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is “ through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of “ God by faith.” Isaiah personating the church says, lxiv. 6. “ But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and we all do fade as a leaf, and “ our iniquities like the wind have taken us away.” But the apostle James says; that Abraham was justified by works when he offered Isaac his son upon the altar, James ii. 21. : true, but this cannot be meant of justification before God. For the design of this chapter is to shew the excellency of justifying faith, that it is a vital principle in the soul, and is productive of all good works. It could not be meant that Abraham when he offered up his son, was then and by that action justified before God, for he was justified long before, when he believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness. That act of Abraham's was indeed a sufficient evidence of his faith, and thus is faith said to be made perfect by works, James ii. 22. “ Seest thou how faith “ wrought with his works, and by works was faith made “ perfect.” By this act of Abraham's the apostle says the scripture was fulfilled : “ and the scripture was fulfilled “ which saith, Abraham believed God and it was imputed “ to him for righteousness, and he was called the friend of “ God.” James ii. 23. i. e. The scripture before declared Abraham to be justified by faith, and now it evidently appears that the scripture was true, for behold he withholds not his own son when God calls.

2 If we are justified before God either in whole or in part by our own righteousness, it lays a foundation for boasting. Christ is the sole author and finisher of our salvation ; if we are justified by his righteousness in opposition to our works, then he must have all the glory; accordingly, we find the happy spirits above all adoring him that sitteth upon the Throne, and the Lamb, their glorious mediator, who redeemed them by his own blood, and made them kings and priests unto God, Rev. v. 9, &c. But if Christ

came only to procure easier terms of acceptance, if he came to open a way for the acceptance of our faith and sincere obedience as our justifying righteousness, this surprisingly lessens that praise that is his due, while it attributes part to the creature: for so far as respect is had to our righteousness in justification, so far we have a share in the glory, and that no small share if we are indebted to Christ only for *making way* for our justification, while our own righteousness is the immediate cause of it. But this is contrary to the whole tenour of Scripture, which gives all to Christ. It is evidently just what the apostle says, "If Abraham was justified by works, then he would have whereof to glory," Rom iv 2. But the scheme of salvation is so admirably contrived, that it lays no foundation for our boasting, but leads us to give all the praise to God, and to admire the astonishing riches of his grace, in designing and bringing about our salvation, so that no flesh should glory in his presence. "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. That according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord," 1 Cor. i. 29, 30. Pride is very unbecoming in those who are indebted to free grace for all they have. God has effectually put it out of the power of those that are saved, to ascribe any glory to themselves, by undertaking the whole himself. It is the evident design of the gospel scheme to keep the soul humble and to magnify the riches of sovereign grace; whatever therefore does not debase the creature, and exalt God; whatever lays a foundation for men's glorying, is inconsistent with the whole tenour of revelation, dishonours God, and is unworthy of our credit.

3. Justification by faith, repentance, and sincere obedience destroys the Christian's comfort, and lays a foundation for great, and distressing fears. Upon this scheme we can be sure of nothing, because justification depends upon a continuance and perseverance in obedience till death, and this perseverance is not absolutely secured to us, neither by the covenant engagements of God, nor by the purchase of our Lord Jesus Christ; hence arises a great uncertainty of our salvation, for though Christ has purchased eternal life, it is only for those who believe and obey unto the end, and there is no absolute purchase of strength to enable them to

believe, or to continue in faith ; thus the whole mediation of Christ may be rendered fruitless, the end of his death unanswered, and the soul that has believed may fall away and be eternally lost. O uncomfortable doctrine, says the Christian ! What, is this the gospel which God has revealed, is this all the encouraging news it brings ? Is this all the prospect I have of eternal life ? I must then sit down and absolutely despair ; for how can I expect salvation ? It is true this scheme says, if I will believe, and repent, and obey unto the end of life, then I shall be justified ; but how can I believe, says the awakened soul ? How can I conquer those deep rooted prejudices with which my mind has been so long filled against Christ and his gospel ? Or how shall I be able to stem the tide of sin and corruption, and to persevere in the midst of the most powerful temptations ? I am told indeed the terms are easy, that if I will do a part God will do the rest for me, but alas ! I find I can do nothing, if God does not begin the work, and carry it on, I must perish. O melancholy thought ! If I have not sufficient strength purchased for me I am undone, and all my hopes are absolutely vain. If this be the case, I can at best have no certainty of my salvation ; for could I say with the apostle Paul, that Christ loved me and gave himself for me, yet what satisfaction would it give my soul, so long as Christ has not absolutely secured my perseverance in obedience, upon which depends my justification ? I can never say I am justified. Whilst indeed my purposes and resolutions are strong, whilst my sincerity appears clear and evident to me, I may entertain hopes of heaven ; but when I shall backslide, when my lusts prevail over me, how shall it then be ? I must then give up all hopes, till I have again repented, formed fresh resolutions, and turned to God ; then I may venture to entertain a distant hope again. Thus uncomfortable would this scheme be, was it the scheme of the gospel ; but blessed be God ! I have a better foundation to build upon, the everlasting engagements of God, the full and perfect satisfaction, and glorious purchase, and therefore the constant and prevailing intercession of my great Redeemer. Here my soul can sweetly rest, here I find all I want, here is all my salvation and all my desire. Upon the whole, in this scheme, there can be no justification in this life, we cannot with comfort say there is no condemnation, till we have finished

our course and got safe above ; and how must this distress the awakened soul ? What relief can it be to a soul burdened with a sense of sin and sensible of his own weakness ? I shall close this head with a passage out of a worthy author upon this subject .

' This argument, says he, is much used by our first reformers, Luther, Melancthon, Chemnitius, and others, and they thought it unanswerable, viz. That however men insensible of sin might dispute for the influence of their works in justification ; yet when men have sore terrors of conscience neither their works past nor their promises and purposes of what they will be for the future will comfort them ; but only the doctrine of free grace and pardon, by hoping in the mercy of God. Our Martyr Mr. Bilney hearing a rhetorical preacher lay a great stress upon repentance and obedience, as the only ground of hope, was offended, and said how uncomfortable would this doctrine have been to me, when I was in great terrors for my fall.'

4. Our own righteousness is put in direct opposition to that righteousness by which we are justified. The apostle is very explicit in mentioning the works of the law as having no concern in our justification, Rom iii. 28. " Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law," Rom. iv. 5. " But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him, that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." —Rom. xi. 6. " And if by grace then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace ; but if it be of works, then it is no more grace ; otherwise work is no more work." And in our text the apostle positively asserts, that no flesh can be justified by the works of the law. That by the law in general and especially touching justification, is meant the moral law is plain, for after he has told us that he had believed in Christ, that he might not be justified by the works of the law, he says, ver. 19. That " he through the law was dead to the law." Alluding to Rom. vii. 9, which must be the moral law. Again he gives another reason why justification cannot be by the law, because by the " law is the knowledge of sin," Rom iii. 20, which is the moral law, that being the means of the apostle's conviction, Rom. vii. 7. " What shall we say then ? Is the law

" sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law; for I had not known lust, except the law had said, 'Thou shalt not covet.' It is this law that is established by faith, which the apostle excludes, Rom. iii. 31. 'Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea we establish the law.' The law that brings under its curse, Gal. iii. 10. 'For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse,' &c. From all which it is plain, that all the works of the moral law are put in opposition to that righteousness by which we are justified. And surely the apostle says enough to put it out of all dispute, when he says, that he 'desired to win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith,' Phil. iii. 8 Here his own righteousness, and the righteousness by which he was justified, are put in direct opposition; if the righteousness which is said here to be by faith, is that holiness of life, &c. which faith is productive of in the Christian, that would be the same as our own righteousness, which the apostle disclaims. The righteousness of faith then is a righteousness without us, even the righteousness of him, who is God as well as man, and is received by faith, for our justifying righteousness. Thus we have represented the insufficiency of our own righteousness, &c. and shall close with a reflection or two

. We should each be concerned seriously to examine, what is the foundation on which we are building our hopes of eternal life. Is it not a matter of the last importance? Ye negligent souls that never make the important inquiry, whether you are built upon a solid and gospel foundation; but take it for granted that all is well, should you be suddenly removed into an everlasting state, summoned before the bar of God, and meet with an awful disappointment, how melancholy must be your case! to be got at once, in a moment, beyond the reach of mercy and the sound of salvation, to find a mistake, which can never be rectified! Oh! the sad self reflections which the soul must too late make upon his former stupidity! Infatuated creature! I went on in a constant round of duties, and never imagined but I was in the way to a better world, I never examined my heart, and it has now deceived me? Now it is too late to recal past op-

portunities for reflection ! My Sabbaths are concluded ! The gospel has ceased its sound ! and a scene of eternal darkness inexpressibly awful presents itself before my distracted mind, and fills me with the most dreadful anguish and despair ! How inconceivably melancholy must the disappointment be ! May we therefore now seriously ask our souls these important questions, what is my dependence for justification ? Is it the righteousness of Christ or my own ? What have been my thoughts of this important point ? Have I only renounced my own righteousness in judgement, or have I been able actually to do it ? Convinced of its unworthiness, have I actually made application to Jesus Christ ? There are two acts of justifying faith, viz. An act of the understanding, and an act of the will ; or an assent of the mind to the truths concerning Christ, and a real application of soul to him as he is represented. Have we been enabled in reality to look to another righteousness and not our own ? It is certainly time to make an inquiry. You who are in the bloom of life, cannot too soon inquire into this important point, or too early come to a satisfaction that you are justified, and have peace with God. Can we pass our days in busy cares, or in gaiety and pleasure, without a serious reflection upon the state of our souls ! See how the moments fly away, and is there no inquiry made ? May we defer an affair of such moment no longer, but now put the question faithfully and seriously to our souls, looking up to the eternal spirit, to help us in our inquiry, and to give us a view of our state and circumstances.

2. How melancholy is their case, who are going about to establish a righteousness of their own, in opposition to that which God has revealed ! Infatuated souls that fondly think your own imperfect duties sufficient, to entitle you to the favour of God. Did you ever seriously consider the infinite perfections of that God before whom you must appear ? and by whom your righteousness must be strictly tried ? Did you ever consider what the apostle, under the immediate influences of the Holy Ghost, says, that other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ ? 1 Cor. iii. 11. Did you ever seriously weigh the worth of an immortal soul ? and view the awfulness of a disappointment ? It cannot be, if you are depending upon a righteousness of your own. Think well upon the matter, it is of the utmost

importance. Consider the divine authority of that word that says, by the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified. The law cannot justify, it condemns, it is as a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ. Oh may it be made such to our souls, that we seeing the insufficiency of our own obedience to justify us, may fly wholly to that righteousness which alone is perfect, and can alone deliver us from condemnation, and entitle us to eternal life.

S E R M O N VIII.

ON JUSTIFICATION.

PHIL. iii. 9.

And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

THE apostle is evidently in this chapter, representing the way of a sinner's justification, and he gives us his own sentiments while he was a Pharisee, and the different conceptions, frames, and temper of mind he discovered, when he was savingly enlightened by the Spirit of God. If there is a possibility of being justified by works, privileges, or duties, the apostle stood the fairest for it ; he exceeded all his countrymen, in his zeal for outward, moral, and ceremonial duties, and in privileges he exceeded many : if "any other man thinketh," says he, "that he hath whereby of he might trust in the flesh, I more," I can go beyond them all if they come to boasting. "I was circumcised the eighth day;" at the exact time that was appointed of God. "I am of the stock of Israel," that ancient distinguished people, and of a favourite tribe, "the tribe of Benjamin;" both my parents were Hebrews. And thus none exceeded me in privileges, and as to my character, temper, and behaviour, I have in these outshined most of my countrymen ; I was of the strictest sect amongst the Jews, viz. a Pharisee ; I was warmed with the highest zeal

for the law; and was tenacious of the various rights and ceremonites of the Jewish religion; and as to my life it was agreeable to the letter of the law; thus, if any think they may have confidence in outward privileges or duties, I certainly may: and therefore I boasted of these, my heart was lifted up with pride, and filled with a vain expectation of eternal life, apprehending I had done enough to recommend me to God; but oh when God was pleased to enlighten my mind, to set his law before me in all its purity and spirituality, and to reveal his Son in me, how was I astonished to find I was a vile unworthy sinner! I saw myself miserable and wretched, with all my pretended duties and privileges! I found there was no other refuge for a poor guilty sinner but in Jesus Christ; In consequence of which, what I before esteemed gain; what I before prized and fondly thought would recommend me to God, now I renounced, parted with, and counted it loss for Christ. "Yea doubtless, and "I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered "the loss of all things," all my righteousness, my name, and reputation, the esteem of my countrymen, and my worldly prospects. I have suffered the loss of all for Christ, and "do count them but dung that I may win Christ;" I look upon them as mean and contemptible, when compared with Christ, he is all and in all to my soul, I will let go all the world, life, and righteousness, and all, may I but win Christ, and "be found in him not having my own righteousness," &c. Oh what an alteration did grace make in this man! from a persecutor, an enraged enemy, a fiery bigot, he becomes a zealous advocate for, and an affectionate admirer of Jesus Christ, and his righteousness! "and be found in him," &c. He is here evidently shewing the ground of a sinner's acceptance with God, that it is on the account of a righteousness; that this righteousness is not our own, either wrought in us, or performed by us, but it is the righteousness of Jesus Christ received by faith. This is the righteousness on which the apostle had placed all his dependence for justification, the righteousness therefore which he desired to appear in at the bar of God, being sensible that no other righteousness would be accepted and honoured there. The apostle has his eye to some future season of solemnity, either when his soul should appear before God dismissed

from the body, or when body and soul should be united at the morning of the resurrection, and stand before the bar; by which he does not intimate that a person is not justified till then, or that there is a second justification then; no, the soul is justified as soon as he believes, his sins are then forgiven, and he receives a title to eternal life; at judgement his justification is manifested to all the world, he is openly received and publicly acknowledged as the person whom God has clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and so admitted into the full possession of that glory, to which he had before given him a title. It was the apostle's earnest desire to be found thus arrayed, that he might be owned and acknowledged, as one the Redeemer had purchased; and so be introduced into the actual possession of eternal life; and therefore he made the righteousness of Christ his dependence, committed his soul, and his everlasting concerns into his hands; and counted all things but loss for him. Thus then it is evident, that the apostle speaks of that which is the ground of our acceptance with God, and the matter of justification, that is not our own righteousness, but the righteousness of Jesus Christ, here called the righteousness of God; and is said to be by faith, that is received, or apprehended by faith. We have made some small progress in the great doctrine of justification—have considered what is meant by a sinner's being justified, have likewise endeavoured to shew that our own righteousness is absolutely insufficient to justify us before God. This is abundantly evident, because a perfect righteousness is absolutely necessary to our justification, and our own righteousness, in every state and capacity in which man is considered, is imperfect, whether it be works before conversion, habitual or inherent righteousness, or works after conversion. We have likewise shewn, the insufficiency of faith, repentance, and sincere obedience to justify us before God; that this way of justification is directly contrary to the experiences of all the saints, recorded in the word of God—That it lays a foundation for boasting, that it deprives the Christian of all solid comfort, and fills him with distressing fears, and that our own righteousness is put in direct opposition to that righteousness by which we are justified. We might now, according to our proposed method, have proceeded to consider the third thing, viz. That it is the right-

teousness of Christ that is the matter of our justification, and the ground of our acceptance with God. But as there are some parts of Scripture which are brought in as favouring justification by our own righteousness, and which may appear somewhat perplexing, so it may not be altogether amiss to take some notice of them, and especially of these two. The first is Matth. xxv. 34 where we have some general account of the proceedings of the last day, and where Christ the judge is represented as introducing his people into the possession of eternal life, saying, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world, for I was an hungered," &c. Where we find the good works of the believer, and particularly those of charity and beneficence, seem to be introduced as the reason why he inherits the kingdom of God, and consequently good works give a title; but this is only a descriptive account of the persons that are admitted into the kingdom of God, and not a representation of the cause why they are admitted. The word *for*, as a judicious divine remarks upon this passage, does not always point out the cause but sometimes the effect: thus, says he, we say the spring is come, for the trees bud. Good works are the fruits and effects of God's bestowing spiritual blessings, but not the causes or conditions for which he does it. God justifies the sinner freely by the righteousness of Jesus Christ; but in the last judgement, he will proceed according to works, by which it will appear who they are that really believed in Jesus Christ, and were justified by him; by which God will act agreeably to his character as a righteous judge, in bestowing eternal life upon those who have brought forth the fruits of righteousness, and dooming to everlasting darkness all those who are strangers to real holiness.

There is nothing in this passage that is inconsistent with free justification, or the peculiar doctrines of the grace of God. For our Lord intimates that the kingdom of heaven was prepared for his people from everlasting, they were such as had believed; for love to Christ which is mentioned as the principle from whence their works of charity proceeded, is the effect of faith. Upon the whole, the words appear to bear this sense: "Come ye happy objects of my Father's everlasting love, ye heirs of God, come and inherit

the kingdom, for you have made it abundantly manifest that you are the persons for whom it was prepared, by your love to me and to my poor people; come, possess the inheritance which my Father designed for you, the inheritance you were long ago made the heirs of; come, and possess full and everlasting happiness." Thus the transactions of the last day throw no reflection on the grace of God in freely giving eternal life, or on the righteousness of Christ in justification, but are every way consistent therewith, and will show the righteousness of the judge in owning and honouring those, who owned and honoured him, and his people here on earth; and this will lead us into the true meaning of all those passages, where God is said to give to every one according to their works, and the like.

The other passage is in Matth. xix. 16, 17, where we have an account of a young man coming to Christ, and saying, "Good master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" To which our Lord answered, "if thou wilt enter into life keep the commandments." From whence we may observe that the young man had no knowledge of the way of justification by the righteousness of another: he comes not humbled under a sense of the guilt of sin, and his undone condition, but under the apprehension that he could do something, by which he should have eternal life. Our Lord answers according to the general intent of the question, if thou wilt enter into life keep the commandments, which we may either understand to point out the way to eternal life in general, as a way of holiness and obedience to the commands of God; or to signify to him the mistaken apprehensions he was under as to his obtaining eternal life of himself; in order to enter into it, he must keep the commandments: this was enough, one should imagine, had he had any sense of his own weakness, to have convinced him, that he was miserable without a better righteousness than his own. But behold his stupidity! He tells our Lord, that he had kept all these from his youth: to convince him of which mistake, our Lord bids him go sell all that he had, and give to the poor, and come and follow him: but here he falters.—Thus then if we consider the nature of the question, the answer Christ gave to it, and the whole passage, we cannot but see, that it was a way of treating the young man, which, had he seriously attended to, had a tendency to convince him of his

mistake, in apprehending that he could do every thing himself, that was necessary to eternal life, and to lead him to inquire after a better righteousness than his own. Wherefore serves the law now in our state of degeneracy? It is not only to be the directory of our obedience, but by its purity and spirituality to shew us the vanity of our dependence upon it; and to send us to Jesus in whom alone we find a perfect righteousness. Thus the law is called "a school-master to lead us to Christ," Gal. iii. 24. Upon the whole, the young man inquires not how he shall be pardoned; accepted, justified, from a sense of sin; therefore Christ answers him according to the general intent of the question. How different was the question the jailor put! Here is a sinner deeply humbled, convinced of sin, and in great distress, crying out for salvation, therefore the apostles direct him at once to Jesus, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," Acts xvi. 31. From whence we learn, how just the observation of our Lord is, that "the whole have no need of a physician but those that are sick," Matth. ix. 12.

Thus we have shewn the insufficiency of our own righteousness to justify us before God; none will be so weak as to conclude from hence, the uselessness and unprofitableness of sanctification and good works in our salvation. There is a great difference between the necessity of holiness in order to salvation, and depending upon it for acceptance, and eternal life. Good works cannot justify us, but they discover our justification, they are the necessary effects of saving faith, and a means of carrying on and advancing the divine life in the soul. But this will be more particularly considered hereafter. Let us proceed,

III. To shew that it is the righteousness of Jesus Christ alone that is the matter of our justification, and the ground of our acceptance with God. *Not having mine own righteousness.*—Here for our better understanding of this subject we may inquire,

1. What the righteousness of Christ is, or of what it consists.
2. Why it is called the righteousness of God.
3. Why is it that we are justified by the righteousness of Christ only.

I. Let us consider what the righteousness of Christ is, or of what it consists. The righteousness of Christ, which justifies us before God, is that righteousness which he wrought out in his human nature when he was upon earth, consisting of his active and passive obedience, or that obedience which he paid to the commands of the law, and his sufferings and death; some have been for separating these two, and representing the sufferings and death of Christ alone as sufficient for our justification before God, but they are to be joined; and thus united are considered as that righteousness by which we receive the forgiveness of our sins and a title to eternal life; the necessity of both will appear, if we consider the original intent and meaning of the law, and the power which the law has now over us as sinners.

The original and primary design of the law, was a perfect obedience; this appears from the command, "Do this and live." And from the curse which the law pronounces against all those who are guilty of a breach of it. "For it is written 'cursed is every one, that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.' Gal. iii. 10. Had man continued in perfect obedience to the law, he had enjoyed the favour of God, and possessed a happy immortality. This leads us then to conclude that the original design of the law was an active perfect righteousness. The law had no other obligation upon man in a state of innocence. But now the law is broke, it has a fresh power, a power to condemn the sinner for transgressions; in our present guilty circumstances then, two things are necessary to be done in order to our justification. 1. That the power which the law has over us to condemn us should be dissolved: and, 2. That a perfect obedience should be yielded to the commands of the law to entitle to eternal life, and therefore the righteousness of Christ must consist of his active and passive obedience.

1. The sufferings and the death of Christ are a part of that righteousness by which a guilty creature is justified before God. Man having broken the law, and consequently fallen under its condemnatory sentence, the first thing that is to be done towards his justification is to reverse that awful sentence, or to make satisfaction, by which God may, consistent with his justice, pardon the rebellious creature, and not put

the law in execution against him; unless we suppose God can dispense with his law, and set aside his threatening, without taking notice of transgression; but wherefore then did he annex a threatening to the law or covenant which he made with man, if he did not determine to execute it? Is it not opening a way for the sinner to encourage himself in every act of rebellion, upon a presumption that the threatenings of God, however awful, will not be executed against him? Nay, is it not inconsistent with the revelation which God has made of his infinitely glorious perfections, his justice and holiness, which are perfections of his nature, as well as his mercy and goodness? Is it not inconsistent with the obligation God brought himself under to deal with man according to the law? Did he determine that the violation of the law should be punished with death? It must be so then, either in the person of the sinner, or his surety; for God is not mutable like us, but whatever he has said shall be done; satisfaction must be made by suffering and death, that the demerit of sin might plainly appear, and God be honoured in his truth and faithfulness, in the salvation of the guilty: this was signified by shedding of blood in the sacrifices of old, the meaning of which was, that God would not pardon sin without death, without blood; and whose blood was sufficient to expiate sin? Was the blood of beasts? No, the daily repetition of them could not bear any proportion to the demerit of sin, therefore they were only typical of what was to come; man was absolutely incapable of making any satisfaction, for all he can do he owes to God; here then appears evidently the absolute necessity of the sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, to which all the sacrifices of old pointed. We therefore find Christ represented as "the lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." John i. 29. We find him called the *High Priest*, and the like. The sufferings of Christ are part of the righteousness that justifies us, thus it is said, "by his stripes we are healed;" Is. liii. 5. and these sufferings belong not only to his death, but likewise to his life, they include all those afflictions he was exercised withal, those buffetings of devils he was subject to, all the mockings, persecutions, and cruelties, he endured from man, all the shame and ignominy he bore, and in short, all that wrath of God which his people deserved by their sins: all these make up the sufferings of Christ, which were necessary to make atonement for sin.

and open a way for its full pardon. And here, stop a while O my soul, and view the exquisite agonies, the painful sufferings of thy dear Redeemer! Stop and take a view of his love in suffering and dying, and then say if thou canst any longer doubt his willingness to receive thee, or his care to save thee! Bring your fearful unbelieving hearts Christians, to the cross of Christ, and see whether a view of the dying Saviour will not speak peace, and raise your languishing hopes! Bring your hard hearts hither, sinners, and see whether such astonishing love will not mollify and soften them! Look upon a suffering Jesus, ye slothful souls, this may quicken your diligence, convince you of your ingratitude, and fill you with a growing zeal in your Redeemer's service!

2. There must be a perfect obedience paid to the commands of the law to entitle us to eternal life. It appears from the nature of justification, which consists in pardon of sin, and a right to eternal life, that we must have a righteousness perfectly answering all the requirements of the law, else we cannot enjoy both these blessings. When a man suffers the penalty of any law, the law can exact no further punishment of him, but he cannot be said by his suffering the penalty, to deserve the rewards promised by the law to those that obey it. He that suffers the penalty certainly cannot be put upon the same footing with those that have continued in obedience. The sufferings of Christ made satisfaction for the breach of the law, and therefore stopped the execution of its sentence; but eternal life is not promised to the sufferings of Christ, he therefore came and obeyed the law, that by his obedience imputed to us we might have a title to life everlasting. This is plainly intimated to us in various passages of the New Testament. Thus, Rom. v. 19. "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners: so by the obedience of one, shall many be made righteous." What was Adam's disobedience, but an actual transgression of the law? What must that obedience be then, that is put in opposition to it, but an active obedience or fulfilling the commands of the law! Again, Rom. viii. 3, 4. "What the law could not do, being weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be

" fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit," which evidently points to a righteousness answerable to the commands of the law.—Again, Rom. x. 4. " Christ is called the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Here the apostle clearly intimates that the primary end of the law was obedience; in dying, Christ did not answer the primary intent of the law: therefore in the justification of his people it was necessary that he should obey the law, which having done, in the room and stead of his people, and this being imputed to them, and received by faith, the end of the law is answered in their justification, which is a perfect righteousness. Does the law, says the believer, require a perfect righteousness? Will it admit of nothing less? Here it is, in my glorious surety, he has wrought it out for me! Thus Christ is the end of the law, &c. And thus we see his active and passive obedience, or his obedience to the law, and his sufferings and death, both make up that which is our justifying righteousness. We find in some places indeed, a particular stress is laid upon the death of Christ, but this cannot be understood to exclude his obedience; we might with equal propriety say, it excludes likewise all the sufferings of his life: his death may indeed be particularly mentioned, as that was the last act of his obedience, all was consummated in his death. We now proceed,

2. To consider upon what accounts the righteousness of Jesus Christ is called the righteousness of God. The reasons appear to be obvious, and a consideration of them tends greatly to raise the hopes of the believer, and strengthen him in the belief of this way of justification: It is the righteousness of God.

1. As it is of God the Father's appointment. Our Lord tells us, "He came not to do his own will but the will of him that sent him." John vi. 38. And again, "Lo I come to do thy will, O God." Ps. xl. 8. If we consider now the errand Christ came into the world upon, and that he was sent upon this errand by God the Father, we may from hence conclude, that the righteousness which Christ has wrought out for us, is entirely agreeable to the pleasure of the Father; it was by his appointment and it was with his approbation that Christ came to "make an end of sin, to make reconciliation, for iniquity, and bring in ever-

"lasting righteousness." What a glorious circumstance is this in favour of justification by the righteousness of Jesus Christ ! And how much does it tend to fill the souls with the highest hopes of the eternal blessings, which depend upon this righteousness ! Remember whenever you come to plead this righteousness with God, that it is of his appointing, his own free, gracious appointing ! This is enough to fill your souls with holy boldness at the throne of Grace, to ask for all spiritual and eternal blessings : this is enough to encourage your hopes of acceptance with God ; for the righteousness you bring to him by faith, and plead with him, is a righteousness of his own appointing. He has appointed it for those very ends and purposes for which you plead it. This is so important a circumstance, that it should be seriously considered by those, who are depending upon their own righteousness. If God has laid your own righteousness, as the foundation, of your hopes, you are safe ; but remember if it be not of his own appointment, it will not meet with his acceptance. I might add,

2. That it is God that imputes this righteousness to us in justification. This is a further consideration that tends to encourage and strengthen our hopes herein ; God imputes it, therefore he will accept, pardon, and save the soul, to whom he imputes it.—Else why does he impute it ? But,

3. He that wrought out this righteousness is God as well as man. The deity indeed cannot be said to obey or suffer, but there is so strict a union between the divine and human natures of Christ, that the act of the human nature is said to be the act of the whole person, and thus it appears in the sight of God. On this account it is, that the righteousness of Christ has such a peculiar virtue and efficacy in it, so as to be sufficient to satisfy infinite justice, and to be properly meritorious. For had he been no more than a mere creature, the law of creation would have laid him under an obligation to perform all the obedience he was capable of ; and consequently no one act of his life could, have been meritorious for himself, much less could it have been so for others. We hence see then, what matter of thankfulness and admiration it is, that he who is our Saviour is God as well as man ! God and man so closely united, that what he has done and suffered in his human nature, is reckoned to be done and suffered by God himself, and in

every way satisfactory and meritorious ! See you not therefore the excellency of the Christian scheme ? Has not the believer abundantly the advantage of every other person ? How does a sense of Christ's being God as well as man, encourage the soul in his dependence upon his Redeemer's righteousness ? can he doubt of its efficacy ? He may cheerfully venture into eternity, and appear with boldness before the bar of God, being clothed with such a righteousness ! Well might the apostle Paul be so desirous of being found, not having his own righteousness but the righteousness of Jesus Christ, because it is the righteousness of God. A consideration of Christ's being God, fills us with wonder at his infinite love and condescension in appearing in human nature, and obeying and suffering for us, and is a glorious motive to stir us up, and to quicken us to all holy obedience. I now proceed,

3. To shew why it is that we are justified by the righteousness of Jesus Christ only. We need not say much upon this head, it appearing evident from what has been already hinted, why we are justified by the righteousness of Christ only—because it alone is perfect and satisfactory—because it brings most glory to God,—and because it affords most consolation to the soul in life and death, and is of infinite and everlasting virtue and efficacy.

The righteousness of Christ alone is perfect and satisfactory. Those who have been enabled to make the greatest advances in grace, have yet come far short of perfection, and therefore after they have done all they can, must acknowledge themselves to be unprofitable servants. When you take a review of your many duties, and consider the numberless defects that have attended them, you must humbly own them with the church, to be but as filthy garments, and as an unclean thing. But is the righteousness of your Redeemer so ? Can you observe any spot in his obedience ? No, it is all perfectly pure and lovely, it is worthy of God's acceptance, it is fit for your dependence, it is abundantly satisfactory to infinite justice, for all your sins Christians, and therefore only capable of being your justifying righteousness ; a High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners ; and such an High Priest God provided for us ! He was holy in heart and life, he fulfilled all righteousness, he made full atonement for sin,

and shall not such a righteousness be thy justifying righteousness? Oh my soul shall I prefer an imperfect righteousness before it? No; Lord take away mine iniquity, and clothe me with this change of raiment!

The law is honoured by this righteousness, and God is glorified. Is it not a peculiar honour done to the law that he who is God should become man, and be made under the law? Could the law have been so much honoured by the spotless obedience of all the race of Adam? Had they been justified by it the law would have pronounced them righteous, but behold, by what Christ has done the law is magnified, and made honourable, and the end of it abundantly answered, and all the perfections of God glorified. With what lustre does his infinite purity and holiness shine forth in our justification by the righteousness of Jesus Christ! What glorious views have we of infinite faithfulness executing the sentence upon the surety, and requiring a perfect obedience from him, before the guilty offender can be pardoned and accepted to eternal life! how infinitely exceeding all human comprehension does the wisdom of God appear in this method of justification! Behold God is just in punishing sinners, and yet in pardoning; he is just, and yet the justifier of them that believe in Jesus. How glorious are the titles he bears! A just God, and yet, through this righteousness, a justifier, a saviour! And can the love and grace of God more illustriously appear, than in this way of justification—in appointing and furnishing the soul with this righteousness? Suppose God could, consistent with his other perfections, have justified the sinner by his own imperfect righteousness, yet would his infinite mercy, would his grace have been so much exalted, as by this righteousness? No, behold God the Father appointing his Son, to come, and bring in an everlasting righteousness! Behold God the Son, cheerfully undertaking the work! See the mighty God appearing in human nature, obeying the law, and suffering death for guilty, unworthy hell-deserving creatures! See him clothing those who are naturally ungodly with his own righteousness! Pardoning and entitling them to eternal life! And is not this grace beyond the comprehension of men or angels! How glorious is this righteousness! The great end God has in view, in the justification and salvation of his people, is his own glory. And is it

this righteousness that only secures and exalts his glory ? It is enough to engage us, to make it our only dependence. Lord as we would aim at thy glory in the whole of our salvation, so we would gladly and thankfully accept of this righteousness, as that which brings everlasting glory to all thy perfections. But further, this righteousness alone, brings comfort to the soul in life and death. This is the only righteousness that is suited to the wants and necessities of an awakened soul. See the convinced sinner, he is seeking after a righteousness to appear in before God, he goes to duty, apprehending this will allay the fury of an awakened conscience. But the more he looks to duty for justification, the more he is perplexed, and can find no rest till he comes to Jesus. See, no sooner does the Spirit give him a view of the Redeemer's righteousness, but behold he is satisfied ; Lord, says he, it is enough ; I now see where my dependence must be, give me but this righteousness, and I'll rejoice and triumph in life and death ! Oh glorious and all-perfect righteousness ! It is the righteousness of God ! Here am I safe ! Oh my soul, this righteousness will bear the trial of infinite justice, this righteousness will bring me off with honour at the supreme tribunal, this garment of salvation, will hide all my sins and make me appear for ever amiable, in the sight of an infinitely pure and holy God. It is a soul refreshing righteousness, it comforts the soul under a sense of guilt, under all the fears of a miscarriage, a view of this righteousness supports and cheers the believer. Why should you be discouraged, Oh my soul, here is a righteousness answers all the demands of law and justice, here is a righteousness of God ! Art thou afraid of appearing before the bar of God ? Lay aside thy fears, consider he that will be thy judge, has clothed thee with this righteousness, it is his, and will he disown his own righteousness ? In fine, the guilty soul finds the righteousness of Jesus Christ to be the only ground of comfort in life and death, and no wonder then that he makes it his dependence.

To conclude. This righteousness is everlasting in its efficacy and virtue. " Christ the same yesterday, to-day, " and for ever." Heb. iii. 8. And his righteousness, like himself, remaineth for ever, 2 Cor ix. 9. It is an everlasting righteousness which he has brought in, Dan. ix. 24. In the virtue whereof, multitudes of happy souls, have been

already justified, and saved, and are now actually employed, in singing the praises of redeeming love ; and its efficacy is not at all diminished, it is still the same, for the complete and everlasting justification of all that shall believe through grace. For the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children, Psa. ciii. 17. Wherefore comfort one another with these things.

S E R M O N IX.

ON JUSTIFICATION.

PHIL. iii. 9.

And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

WHEN the Prophet Isaiah had a view of the glory and majesty of God, as seated upon his exalted throne, and seraphs and glorified Spirits surrounding him, crying out, *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts*, he was filled with the humblest sense of himself, saying, “ Wo is “ me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean “ lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean “ lips, for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts. *Isaiah vi. 1. 5.* It is well to have our minds impressed with a suitable sense of the infinite majesty and perfections of God, the more we view them and the more humble our souls lie under a sense of the infinite distance there is between God and us, and especially under a sense of our guilt and imperfections the better: as justification is a judicial act, it is necessary for us to consider before, or by whom it is we are to be justified. We are so stupid that we are ready to think God is such an one as ourselves. It is one thing to view him at a distance, when we have ten thousand objects around us to take away the impression, and another thing to view him when we are just ready to appear before

his solemn tribunal, or when our souls are filled with a deep sense of guilt and we feel the terrors of an awakened conscience! some represent him as full of mercy, lenity, and compassion, or as having nothing in him to fill the sinner with the least dread and confusion: but behold our first parents guilty of a breach of the divine command, sensible of the threatening which God denounced, and hearing the voice of the Lord in the garden, were struck with terror; and in the utmost confusion attempt to fly and hide themselves, from the presence of the Lord amongst the trees of the garden. Gen. iii. 8. Or they were afraid that justice would put in execution the dreadful sentence, and punish them with everlasting death, and all the views of mercy would give them no relief until a favour was revealed. How can we form any hopes of the everlasting favour of God from our own services, when we consider how dreadfully they are tainted, how sadly they are polluted! The apostle Paul, when after his conversion, he came to consider the infinite holiness of God, the purity of his law, and so compare his own heart with it, he styles himself *carnal* and *sold under sin*. Rom. vii. 14. In what a strong manner does he express his desire of appearing in Christ and his righteousness? Being taught by the spirit of God that this was the only way of acceptance with him, and of being entitled to eternal life. "And I count all things but dross and dung that I might win Christ," Phil. iii. 8. When a sinner is savinely awakened and convinced of the worth of his soul, and his need of Christ, how earnest and importunate is he after an interest in Jesus! He looks on the glory of the present world, and counts it all but dung and dross, his soul is all taken up with concerns of everlasting moment and importance, and he treats all the affairs of mortal life as trifles; and with an indifference suitable to their vanity. Such was the temper of the apostle Paul, when he breathed forth his soul in the most ardent and heavenly manner. "Yea and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord," Phil. iii. 8. In our treating upon the great doctrine of justification, we have already shewn what it is to be justified. That our own personal righteousness is insufficient to justify us before God. We have likewise from these words shewn that it is the righteousness of Jesus Christ, that is the matter of our justification, and the

ground of our acceptance with God: under which head we considered what the righteousness of Christ is, that it consists of his active and passive obedience, or his obedience to the commands of the law, and his sufferings to death. We have shewn why this righteousness is called the righteousness of God. It is of God the Father's appointment; he that wrought it out is God as well as man; it is God that imputes it. We have likewise shewn, why it is that we are justified by the righteousness of Jesus Christ alone, his righteousness alone is perfect and satisfactory. It alone secures the glory of all the divine perfections. It alone affords consolation to the soul both in life and death, and it has infinite and everlasting virtue and efficacy in it, and therefore is sufficient to justify the most guilty and unworthy in every age and generation. We now come,

IV. To consider how the righteousness of Christ becomes ours, so that we may be really and legally justified by it. This is a point necessary to be considered and to be cleared up to the satisfaction of the humble awakened guilty soul, that he may be thoroughly convinced, that it is not an imaginary foundation he is building his hopes on, but a glorious reality; that so he may rejoice in the prospect of eternal life, which is every way secured to him in believing. That the righteousness of Christ may properly and legally become ours, so as we may be justified by it, two things are necessary.—1st, That God should impute it to us; and 2dly, That we should receive it by faith as our only justifying righteousness, and rest upon it for that purpose. These two things well considered will make it abundantly appear, that the soul is built upon a solid foundation that builds upon Christ, that nothing can deprive him of the expected inheritance, but he shall receive the end of his faith, even his everlasting salvation. These two things are of so much moment and importance, that they deserve each of them a particular consideration.

1. That the righteousness of Christ may become ours, so that we may be really and legally justified by it, it is necessary that God should impute it to us. Unless this is done, unless God has given us some good grounds to believe that he does it to all that believe, our faith will be in vain, and our salvation very uncertain. Blessed be God he has not left us under an uncertainty about this necessary and moment-

tous point, but has given us sufficient intimations of his imputing the righteousness of Christ to all his people, to their everlasting comfort and salvation. To make this point clear, I shall first consider what is meant by imputation, and then secondly, shew that the righteousness of Jesus Christ is made ours by imputation.

1st. Let us consider what is meant by imputation. We have the word *imputed*, occurring various times both in the Old and New Testament, and we find it signifies to esteem, to reckon, to judge, to lay to one's charge, &c. Lev. xvii. 4. Psa. cxi. 31. The great Dr. Owen mentions two sorts of imputation.

1st. To impute that which was our own antecedently to such imputation; this is a reckoning and a passing judgment that the thing is really in us, and a dealing with us according to it, whether good or evil. Thus when we impute learning to a man, he was learned before the imputation, from hence this divine remarks, that when God esteemeth any thing to be ours that was so antecedently, he esteemeth of it just as it is, no more and no less; consequently, says he, this shews the folly and stupidity of those who are for imputation of faith, obedience, &c. for as it is imperfect, so God esteemeth it, and therefore cannot be said to impute it to us for a perfect righteousness. There is, says the same author, an imputation;

2dly, Of that which is not antecedently our own, and of this kind is the imputation of Christ's righteousness, the imputation of our sins to him, and the imputation of Adam's sin to us. In all these imputations what idea does the word impute convey to us but this, to reckon, to esteem, to place to one's account, and to deal with us according to it? We cannot suppose by imputation, is meant that believers are reckoned by God to have done those things which Christ alone performed, or to have suffered those penalties which he endured. Christ and believers are distinct persons, and the actions of one person cannot properly be reckoned the actions of another. The honour of furnishing this glorious and all perfect righteousness belongs to Christ alone, it was he that came and brought it in, and though imputed to us for our justification, yet he is the author of it; but his righteousness is made ours, and that so really, and upon such grounds, as that we are dealt with according to it, so that it

answers all the ends and purposes it would have served had we wrought it out in our own persons. When our sins were laid upon, reckoned, or imputed to Christ, he must not be esteemed actually a sinner, though as he appeared our surety, to answer for us, the law treated him as a sinner, by requiring of him the penalty; and thus he actually made satisfaction for sin, and cancelled the hand-writing which was against us as effectually as if he could have done it, and therefore had done it in our own persons. Thus Adam's sin is justly imputed or reckoned to all his posterity, not that they all sinned personally, and actually, when he did, but he being their federal head and representative, his sin is reckoned to them, so that they are as really liable to condemnation on the account of it, as if they had actually in their own persons each committed it. Thus, in the imputation of Christ's righteousness, God accounteth it to have been wrought by him for all his people, and therefore doth receive them into favour, and give them a title to eternal life upon the account of it. His righteousness is reckoned to their account, so that they have all the benefit of it, and are as effectually justified by it, as if they had perfectly obeyed the law in their own persons. When the debtor is discharged he cannot be said to have paid the money himself, it was his surety that did it for him; yet the money being paid for him in his stead, and accepted for him by the creditor, he may be reckoned a clear person, and the payment be placed to his account as really as if he had paid it with his own hands. Thus Christ's righteousness is made ours, or reckoned to our account, thus it was to Abraham, who is the first person that we read of as being justified by imputed righteousness, though he was not really the first, Gen. x. 6. Rom. iv. 20, 24. Thus God is said "to impute righteousness without works," Rom. iv. 6. This imputation of Christ's righteousness has opened a way, for its being represented as a robe or garment, and our being said to put on Christ and the like; and doubtless the apostle Paul had this in his eye, when he says, "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, &c." He desired to be found clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ, as a garment, that so he might not be found naked at the great day. Thus we see what is meant by imputation, it is a gracious act of God whereby he reckons the

righteousness of Christ to his people, and deals with them according to its infinite and everlasting virtue and efficacy. Our next thing is,

2dly, To shew that this imputation is not imaginary but real, by considering the grounds and foundation upon which it is built. A view of this, through the influence of the Spirit, will free our minds from all doubt and hesitation about it, and fill us with a holy joy at the prospect of everlasting blessings: take what may belong to this head in the following particulars. The law which Christ was subject to, is the same law which man broke.—He obeyed the law and suffered its penalty in our room and stead.—He was constituted our surety by the Father, and all he did and suffered for his people in that character was according to his approbation, and met with his acceptance. And lastly, it was all likewise the effect of his own voluntary choice.

i. The law which Christ was subject to, is the same law which man broke, viz. the moral law. Those that deny that the active righteousness of Christ has any part in our justification, say, that Christ was not under the moral law, but under a law of mediation; a peculiar law established between the Father and the Son, in which it was agreed, what Christ was to suffer to open the way for the acceptance of our faith, repentance, and sincere obedience as our justifying righteousness. If then it can be proved that Christ was made under the moral law, and fulfilled it, it will lead us to conclude that we are justified by his righteousness alone, and that the way in which it was made ours, is by imputation as well as faith. Now if Christ was not subject to the moral law, why was he made man? Does not his being made man, especially when we consider the errand he came upon, suppose that he was to fulfil the law which man had broke, and that satisfaction must be made to infinite justice in the same nature that sinned? This is certainly the easiest, most natural, and obvious construction that can be put upon his appearance in human nature: to accomplish therefore this great and important end he was possessed of absolutely perfect rectitude of nature, and his life was every way agreeable to the divine law, that so, in fulfilling all its demands, he might redeem and save his people. After our Lord had been pressing his disciples to the pursuit of holiness, he says, " Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the

"prophets, I am not come to destroy but to fulfil." Mat. v, 17. Let not the Jews, or any other persons object to my coming, that it is to set aside the law or any part of the Old Testament; 'I am come as the great Antitype to fulfil the ceremonial law, and I am come to pay a perfect obedience to the moral law, and to endure its curse, that I may make satisfaction to infinite justice for my people.' That our Lord had a particular view to the moral law is plain and evident, for he immediately proceeds to the explanation of it, which must be the same law he came to fulfil, and is as much as to say that he came to fulfil all righteousness. That Christ was subject to the moral law appears evident from Gal. iv. 4, 5. "When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of Sons." Now here we find there is no distinction made between the law which Christ was made under, and the law his people were under whom he came to redeem, therefore we may ask,—What law is that we are naturally under? Is it not the moral law as a covenant of works? If so Christ also was made under the same, &c. This truth again clearly appears from Gal. iii. 10, 13. "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse, for it is written, cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." In this verse it is plain the apostle is shewing, that all those that are seeking justification by the works of the moral law are so far from gaining their purpose, that they are rather under the curse of it, because the law will admit of nothing but a perfect obedience; cursing and condemning all that come in any respect short. From whence it is evident that this can be no other than the moral law. In the 13th verse therefore the apostle says, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, for it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." The way we find by which Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, is by being made a curse for us; now that law from the curse of which Christ came to redeem us is the moral law: and if so it is evident, Christ himself was under it, for no other law could make him a curse. Thus then we see, that the great design of Christ's taking human nature was, that he might be subject to the law, he came and fulfilled all righteousness, by

perfectly answering all the precepts of the law, and he bore the penalty of the law; he endured its dreadful curse by hanging on the cross, by dying the death which God had threatened. This point being determined, therefore the next thing we have to advance to clear the way for imputation is,

2. That Christ obeyed the law, and suffered the penalty as his people's surety, in their room and stead. We have already observed, that our Lord came into the world "to fulfil all righteousness." Mat. v. 17. He came to put an end to sin, to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness. Dan. ix. 24. But could this be for himself? Dare any one presume to say that he stood in need of it? Was he not infinitely happy and glorious, before he appeared in human nature, or was this necessary to make any addition to his blessedness? No; It was not, therefore, for himself, it must be for his people on whose account he came into the world: he came to furnish his people with a righteousness in which they may appear before God and find acceptance. Therefore he obeyed the law in their room and stead, that so his righteousness might be imputed unto them. This does by no means make our obedience unnecessary, it is an unfair and unnatural conclusion that is drawn from hence and is absolutely inconsistent with the whole gospel. The gospel lays us under peculiar obligations to obedience, though we are not to obey the law for the same ends and purposes that Christ did. The law remains as a perpetual directory and rule of life to us, though we are not to look to it as a covenant of works: all those who are justified by the imputed righteousness of Christ pay the greatest regard to the law, and are labouring after an internal as well as an external conformity to it. Christ suffered in our room and stead. It is evident from a close view of his many sufferings, that he was considered not as an innocent person but as guilty. Where there is no guilt there can be no punishment; to say otherwise would be to reflect upon the infinite justice and righteousness of God. Nor can the afflictions and sufferings of Christ appear only as common, view his agony in the garden, when he sweated great drops of blood, through the anguish he was in; view his cruel, cursed, and ignominious death; and are these tokens of his innocence, do they not plainly point out pun-

isement and guilt? But what guilt had Christ the son of God? "Was he not holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners?" Heb vii. 26. Must it not therefore be guilt imputed, even his people's guilt? view his sufferings, and you must be convinced, that he had the sins of his people laid upon him, and suffered and died in their room and stead! This is also perfectly agreeable to the Scripture account of the matter. Thus the prophet Isaiah is very particular and express in delivering this great and important truth. Isaiah liii. 5: "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities," &c. And verse 6. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all," and verse 8. "For the transgression of my people was he stricken." What stronger expressions could the prophet make use of to assert this truth, what more direct proofs? Agreeable to this, the apostle Peter, under the influences of the holy Spirit, says, 1 Pet. ii. 24. "Who his ownself bare our sins in his own body on the tree." And the apostle Paul by the same spirit speaks the same truth. 2 Cor. v. 21. "He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Now how was Christ made sin? Sin could not cleave to him, he was not a sinner by inhesion; the meaning then can only be, that our sins were imputed to him, and that he suffered the punishment due to us for them. Hence we find him called a *ransom*. Mat. xx. 28. "The Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many," and 1 Tim. ii. 6. "Who gave himself a ransom for all." Thus he is likewise said to "lay down his life for the sheep," John x. 15. and 1 Pet. iii. 18. He is said to *suffer for sin*, the *just* for the *unjust*. All which expressions clearly shew, that he came to obey the law, and endure its penalty in our room and stead. We accordingly find him represented under the character of a surety, Heb. vii. 22. Now a surety is one that receiveth the obligation upon himself when the debtor for whom he undertakes is not able to pay, so that the surety becomes bound to discharge the debt. Christ then by taking this character has taken the obligation of having the debt of perfect obedience, and making satisfaction to justice upon himself, and has actually done it in our room and stead, which the character of a surety necessarily signifies. His being God gave an infinite virtue to his suf-

ferings, whereby they came fully satisfactory though they were but short; for eternity is only accidental to punishment arising from the inability of the creature's sufferings to make satisfaction. And thus Christ, acting as surety, has laid a glorious foundation for the imputation of his righteousness. What did the apostle Paul mean but this, when he opposed the death of Christ to all the accusations that could be brought in against him? What could be the ground of his triumphing, but the suretyship of Christ? Had not Christ died in his room and stead, it would have been but to little purpose to have triumphed so boldly. It is Christ that died, Rom. viii. 33. This transferring of guilt to Christ, and the doctrine of his suretyship was held forth by the sacrifices of the Old Testament: what was the meaning of the offender's putting his hand upon the head of the burnt offering? Did it not signify the transferring of guilt from the offender to the victim? Lev. i. 4. ch. iii. 2. Was it not as much as to say, 'Lord I have transgressed and accordingly deserve to die, but I here bring a sacrifice to die for me in my stead, accept thereof and spare me.' Such sacrifices as were of old could not indeed expiate sin; but they were typical of Christ the great sacrifice, and shew us how he was to take away sin, viz. by bearing the sins of his people, and dying in their room and stead. What could be more expressive of this doctrine, than the confessing the sins of the people over the head of the scape goat? Lev. xvi. 20, 21, 22. Here is plainly a transferring of guilt; by which we are taught that our sins were transferred to Christ; that he died in our room and stead; and consequently the way for the imputation of his righteousness to us is clear. This will still more evidently appear if we consider,

3. That Christ was constituted surety by the Father, and accepted and approved of by him in all he did in that character. Thus the Father calls Christ "his elect, in whom his soul delighteth, Isaiah xlii. 1. pointing out his being chosen to the office of a mediator by him; for the following verses treat of the work he was to do, and his furniture for it. He is said in another place "to be set up from everlasting," Prov. viii. 23. referring to those eternal transactions between the Father and the Son, in which the Father appointed him as mediator and surety. God is said, "to set him forth, as a propitiation through faith in his blood to de-

clare his righteousness for the remission of sins; &c. Rom. iii. 25. It is again said by Isaiah, "that it pleased the Lord to bruise him, to put him to grief, and to lay upon him the iniquities of us all." Isaiah. lxx. 6, 10. Which signify to us, that God the Father constituted him surety, was pleased with his undertaking, laid the sins of his people, whom he represented, upon him and therefore inflicted upon him all that wrath which their sins deserved! Our Lord himself tells us that he came in obedience to his Father's will. John vi. 38. "I came down from heaven not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. In various other places he is said to be sent by the Father, and to do the will of the Father, and his laying down his life, was a fulfilling his Father's will. John x. 17, 18. These things manifestly shew, that the great work of Redemption and Salvation which Christ came to accomplish, was in every respect agreeable to the Father's will. He therefore has given the most public and undoubted evidences of his acceptance and approbation of the work which Christ came into the world upon. At the baptism of Jesus, the Spirit descended upon him, and a voice was heard, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Mat. iii. 16. The same was repeated at his transfiguration. Mat. xvii. 5. Thus whilst our Lord was upon earth, he had this public testimony that he pleased the Father. And what was his resurrection? What was his ascension? What his reception into heaven? What his exaltation there? What his perpetual and prevailing intercession? What are all these, but so many undoubted evidences of the Father's perfect approbation of the work which Christ has done, the acceptableness of his sacrifice, and the fulness of that satisfaction which he has made for his people? Now then we see Christ appointed by the Father, accepted of and approved by him, and so far we see a way is open for the imputation of his righteousness. We have only one thing more to consider, and that is,

4. All that Christ has done in the character of a surety, is the effect of his own free, voluntary choice. He gives us the plainest indications of his being free and voluntary, and that it was not a task imposed upon him; "his delights are said from all eternity to be with the sons of men," Prov. viii. 31. Intimating how much he approved of the work he had undertaken. When no creature could help us, he tells

us how voluntarily he offered himself, and "came to do the pleasure of his Father," Heb x. 5, 6, 7. In fine, he is said, "to pour out his soul unto death," Isa. liii. 12. Which signifies a voluntary and spontaneous act. Thus then, if we consider that Christ was subject to the moral law; that he performed obedience to it, and bore its penalty, in our room and stead; that all this was agreeable to the Father's appointment, and was the effect of his own free, and voluntary choice; we may from hence see how justly the righteousness of Christ is really and actually imputed to us for justification; and that it is not an enthusiastic fancy, there being a glorious and sufficient foundation laid for it. If a person is willing to pay all the debt which his friend has contracted; if he and the creditor are agreed, shall the debtor make any objection to it? Or is there not a real foundation laid for his legal discharge? If the Son was willing to become a surety, and the Father approved of it. If Christ has paid the whole debt, and the Father has accepted of it, shall we object to an imputation of his righteousness? There can be nothing to prevent or hinder such an imputation. God does not dispense with his law by admitting the suretyship of Christ, the law is rather honoured and magnified by it. He was under no obligation of obeying the law for himself, as some have asserted, for it was his own free voluntary act that he was made man; it was by a stipulation with his Father, and it was entirely with this view that he might redeem his people, and furnish them with a perfect and everlasting righteousness: therefore his righteousness is made legally ours by imputation, and is sufficient to free us from the guilt and punishment of sin, to introduce us into the divine favour, and to give us a right and title to eternal life. But, lastly,

This truth appears clear from various parts of scripture, which cannot be so well understood, as by allowing imputation. We find these occurring, both in the Old and in the New Testament; thus the church is represented as saying, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." Righteousness and strength are two distinct things; how does God communicate strength or grace? Not by imputation; there is no making us inherently righteous and strong to resist temptations this way; it must be infusion or implantation; but is this righteousness made ours the same

way? Then it would be no longer distinct from grace and strength, Isa. xlvi. 24. Therefore it is made ours some other way, even by imputation, agreeable to the general sense of scripture. To this purpose Jeremiah speaks when mentioning Christ, he says, "He shall be called the Lord our "righteousness," Jer. xxiii. 6. The apostle evidently points to this, when he says, "As by the disobedience of one," &c. Rom. v. 19. As the guilt of Adam's sin was imputed to his posterity, whereby they are reckoned sinners, and are under condemnation; so the righteousness of the second Adam is imputed to his people, whereby they are esteemed righteous, and are entitled to eternal life. Were not the words to be taken in this sense, the parallel would be destroyed between Christ and Adam. This truth appears with yet greater light if possible, 1 Cor. i. 30. "Christ is "made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness," &c. And 2 Cor. v. 21. "Christ was made sin for us who knew no "sin," &c. Now Christ is not made wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification in the same way and manner, for these are blessings so distinct, that it is impossible he should: Christ is made sanctification to us as he has purchased it for us, and sends his Spirit to implant his image in us, and so carries it on in our souls. But is he made righteousness to us in the same way? Then righteousness is the same with sanctification, whereas they are here brought in as distinct blessings; distinct in their nature, though never to be separated. As to the other place already mentioned, the natural and obvious meaning is, that as Christ was made sin by imputation, or as our sins were reckoned to him, so his righteousness is made ours by imputation also; therefore, as he really suffered for our sins, though he did not commit them, we shall as really be justified, and enjoy eternal life, through the virtue of his righteousness, though we did not perform it. Thus then we see how this righteousness becomes ours; we may likewise be satisfied that imputation is not a mere imagination, there is the highest reason for it, it is built upon a solid foundation; for if Christ came, and perfectly obeyed the law we had broke, and bore its penalty, if he did this voluntarily, and in our room and stead, to furnish us with a righteousness for our justification, and if this was accepted by the Father for his people, then who shall forbid the imputation of Christ's righteousness?

Is it not every way just and righteous? Shall the traitor, who stands in need of such a righteousness, object to it? God forbid! Blessed be God this imputation is his own act, it is God that justifieth: this is the Christian's comfort. If God justifies, who shall condemn? All the cavils of the most subtle reasoners signify nothing. It is not a mere imagination O humble soul! What ever some may say of it, it has a solid, and as real a foundation as that upon which the heavens and the earth are built. Christ has obeyed and suffered all that was required, and thy heavenly Father has accepted it; fear not then, thy faith is not in vain, thou shalt receive the forgiveness of thy sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified through faith that is in him.

S E R M O N X.

ON JUSTIFICATION,

R O M. v. 1.

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

WHATEVER hatred and aversion the apostle Paul discovered to Christ and his cause, whilst he was a Pharisee, yet when he was savingly enlightened, his thoughts were peculiarly turned upon, and his affections strongly drawn to the person and righteousness of the glorious Redeemer; and it was his great concern to make known Jesus Christ, and him crucified amongst the poor Gentiles, that they might be led into an acquaintance with the true way of salvation, and be no longer strangers to him, whom to know is life eternal. The great doctrine of justification by the righteousness of Jesus Christ, is what he was directed by the Holy Ghost strongly to maintain, and open; we find him therefore in every epistle, and almost in every chapter, either answering some objection to this glorious truth, or representing its reality and importance, its happy influences upon the heart and life, and its tendency to advance and promote the glory of all the divine perfections.

This doctrine the apostle sets forth particularly and clearly in the third and fourth chapters of this epistle to the Romans, and in the beginning of this fifth chapter shews the happy effects of it, in peace with God, perseverance in his

favour, hope of his glory, and a holy rejoicing in every dispensation of providence.

Therefore being justified by faith, &c. We have been some time upon the doctrine of justification; and the importance of the doctrine, its influence upon our present and everlasting peace, and our natural readiness to mistake it; all shew the necessity there is of being particular upon it; and therefore I need not make any apology for my enlarging. In our last discourse you may remember we considered the imputation of Christ's righteousness which we supported by the following considerations;

1. The law which Christ was subject to, was the same which man broke.
2. That Christ obeyed the law and suffered death as his people's surety, in their room and stead.
3. That Christ was constituted surety by the Father, and accepted and approved of by him in that character.
4. All that Christ has done in the character of a surety, is the effect of his own free, and voluntary choice. From all which considerations it is plain there is a sufficient foundation laid for the imputation of Christ's righteousness: and this is one way by which it becomes ours. This is God's act; but there is also an act of ours that is necessary to our having this righteousness so as to enjoy the benefits of it, and that is faith, or believing, by which we receive this righteousness for all the ends and purposes for which it was provided. We receive it as our justifying righteousness; we plead it with God and rest upon it entirely for justification; and thus it becomes legally and properly ours: God makes us willing to receive it as our justifying righteousness, and he is graciously pleased to impute it to us as such. Who then shall say we shall not be justified by it? Who shall dispute our real interest in it? Or say it is not legally ours? "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" &c. Rom. viii. 33, &c. As faith is turned from its proper end, and out of its place by many, and as we are every where in scripture said to be justified by faith, so it will be necessary to endeavour to set this weighty and important affair in a true gospel light; that God may be glorified and our souls directed, encouraged, and quickened. To do this it may be proper,

I. To consider the nature of that faith that justifies.
And,

II. How, or in what manner it justifies. These two heads will lead us to say all that is necessary concerning justifying faith.

I. Let us consider what that faith is which justifies. And to make this the more clear and distinct let us consider, 1st. The author of it. And 2d. What it implies.

i. Let us consider who is the author of justifying faith. It is necessary to consider this, that we may know to whom we must look and be indebted for it; that we may guard against self-dependence, and be filled with constant and deep humility. And the author of justifying faith is God; it is not a common gift as the blessings of providence are, but the effect of God's special distinguishing grace, and wrought in the soul by an almighty hand: it is not the effect of natural strength, nor is it produced by the mere power of moral arguments; all the eloquence and rhetoric of man cannot persuade the guilty soul to put forth one act of faith in Jesus Christ. How often have our best endeavours been rendered fruitless, and the most ingenuous and elaborate discourses been only as water spilt upon the ground, that cannot be gathered! whilst the gospel, preached in its naked simplicity without human ornaments, has found its way into the hearts of the most obstinate and ignorant and caused a saving alteration, to shew us, that we are not to boast of, or depend on our own apprehended strength, or abilities, but to look to an almighty arm, to make our attempts effectual to bring sinners by faith to Jesus Christ. God generally works by means, and the means which he has appointed, and which he makes use of to produce faith, are suited to answer such an end, and shew that God deals with us as rational creatures whilst he addresses our understandings in his word and offers a variety of arguments, which, when accompanied with an almighty power, convince us of our need of Christ, and are a means to quicken and engage us to believe on him. Believing is our act, but the power that enables us to put forth that act comes from God. Faith, we find therefore is called his gift; Eph. ii. 8: And the same apostle mentions "the exceeding great power of God," that is manifested in producing faith; even "that glorious power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead." Eph. i. 19. Until the day of God's

power comes we continue in a state of unbelief, and all the loud calls of providence, all the arguments that are made use of, make no saving impression. It is a sign we know but little of our own hearts, when we exalt the power of the creature, and make him equal to the great duties of the Christian life. What was the reason that our Lord's preaching was not attended with greater success? upon the supposition of man's ability to believe, who but must have yielded to his importunity? who could have refused obedience who considered, that this was he that came from heaven, upon the most glorious and important errand, the salvation of sinners? Was not this consideration enough to have melted their souls, captivated their affections, and engaged them immediately to believe! Who could resist such arguments? And yet we see how few believed! What is to be expected from creatures who are alienated from the life of God; whose minds are blinded and whose hearts are hardened; who have the utmost aversion to faith, and are absolutely under the dominion of sin! It is easy to talk of believing, but it is a matter of the greatest difficulty to believe! To commit our souls into the hands of Jesus, under a sense of our guilt and misery, requires an almighty power! Christ is therefore represented as the "Author and the finisher of our faith." Heb. xii. 2. "And the gospel is the power of God to salvation, to every one that believeth." Rom. i. 16. "The word is mighty through God, to the pulling down the strong holds of sin and Satan, and the bringing us into obedience unto Christ," 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. The treasure of the gospel is committed to *earthen vessels*, weak imperfect creatures, that in the salvation of those that hear it, "the excellency of the power may be of God and not of man," 2 Cor. iv. 7. Thus we see the author of justifying faith is God; this is agreeable to the current of scripture, and to the experience of those that believe. Was it not an almighty power that conquered your natural aversion to Jesus? Removed your rooted prejudices, and enabled you to trust your everlasting concerns with him? Was it not the Spirit that convinced you of sin, of the unworthiness of your own righteousness, gave you a view of Christ, and led you to him? Give him therefore all the glory and look up to him to help you in the constant exercise of this faith, that you may continue unto the end. The confi-

ration of God's being the author of faith does not at all discourage the use of means, or open a door for indolence, as some would insinuate; it rather is necessary to keep us from self dependence, a dangerous and destructive sin, and to quicken us to look up to him, who commands us to believe, to give us that faith which he requires, and display his glorious and almighty power in leading us to Christ, for the salvation of our souls. In fine, if we consider the natural enmity and aversion we all have to the way of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ; if we view the tendency which a sense of guilt, and the apprehension of an angry God have to fill us with absolute despair; and at the same time take notice of the nature of saving and justifying faith, we cannot but be convinced of the absolute necessity of a divine and almighty power to enable us to believe, and that God is the author of this important grace. We proceed therefore now to consider,

2. What faith implies— or what is signified by believing in Christ. We may consider saving justifying faith as necessarily implying three things. 1. As including an assent of the mind to the gospel way of salvation, upon a conviction of its excellency and importance. 2. A hearty approbation of the way of salvation by Christ, and a receiving and resting upon Christ alone for it. And 3. As a vital principle of all obedience. These three things are necessary to make up that faith which is required in the gospel.

1. It includes in it an assent of the mind to the gospel way of salvation, upon a conviction of its excellency and importance, made in the mind by the Spirit of God. The real Christian believes in Jesus Christ upon the highest and best evidence; upon a full persuasion of the truth and importance of what is believed. There must be an assent of the mind to Christ, or else there can be no real faith, this assent of the mind to Christ must pre-suppose some knowledge of him, and consequently convictions. How can we believe in an unknown object? "I know," says the apostle "in whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep," &c. 2 Tim i. 12. I am not ignorant of the person to whom I have committed my soul; I know who he is, I am satisfied of his suitableness and ability to save me, and to do all that for me which I trust him for. Many may believe the gospel and be convinced of its truth by a

careful examination into the evidences of its authority : so a real believer may be sensible of the truth of the Christian religion by viewing its outward evidences ; but the assent which he gives, and the profession which he makes do not arise merely from such a conviction, but likewise from a conviction made by the Spirit of God, upon the mind, whereby he is fully sensible of the guilty condition he is in, that he is lost without Christ, and sees a real excellency and suitableness in the gospel method of salvation. Such a spiritual saving conviction as this, does not properly belong to a temporary faith; though there may be some appearances of it; there being oftentimes convictions to be found in persons, and yet no saving faith. Simon Magus saw the miracles which Philip performed, and was convinced of the truth of his doctrine, and therefore gave his assent to it, Acts viii. 13. but he soon fell off. The sinner sometimes by the word, and sometimes by a providence, appears under convictions, talks of his guilt, of his being lost and undone, seems to have the most alarming views of everlasting wrath, and calls upon God for a time, and wishes for an interest in Christ; but he has not those peculiar convictions of the imperfection of his own righteousness, his inability to help himself, the suitableness, excellency, and all-sufficiency of Jesus Christ, as are to be found in those that really believe; all convictions therefore end not in conversion. Yet convictions, even convictions wrought by the Spirit of God upon the mind, are absolutely necessary to saving justifying faith, being always previous to it, and being necessarily implied in it. This is evident both from the nature, from the end, and design of faith. What is the peculiar business the soul has with Christ when he comes to him by faith ? Is it not to be delivered from sin and hell, and to be put into the possession of all purchased blessings ? And must not the soul be really sensible that he is guilty and deserves hell, and that none but Jesus can save him ? must he not be sensible of this before he comes ? Our Lord plainly intimates this, when he says, the " whole have no need of a physician, but " those that are sick," Matth. ix. 12. The apostle Paul was made to despair of obtaining salvation by his own righteousness, before he came to Jesus Christ for it, Rom. vii. 9. These convictions are different in different persons, as to continuance, degrees, &c. Sometimes we shall find the

sinner under great legal convictions ; for a long time under awful terrors of soul, before he is made sensible of his own weakness, and of the suitableness and all-sufficiency of Jesus Christ ; while others, as soon as they are wounded are led to the glorious remedy. But though they are not exactly alike in all, nor do they always regularly succeed one another in the mind, yet they are for substance the same, and are always previous to real faith. Being the means of prevailing upon the sinner to give his ready assent to Christ, as the only way to salvation, and of his being willing to receive him, whatever contempt he cast upon him before. It will not follow from what has been said concerning these convictions as necessarily connected with justification, that they have any merit in them, or have any causal influence on it. There are often legal convictions, or convictions of guilt, fear of wrath, &c. where there is no justification, nor can these convictions properly be called preparations to it ; for the sinner who is convinced of guilt, at first generally goes to duty, apprehending that will render his condition the better, so that he is not prepared to receive Jesus Christ, till the Spirit comes and convinces him of his need of Christ, and his suitableness ; then there is immediately an assent to him, and a willingness to receive him.

2. Faith implies a consent of the will, and is a direct application of the soul to Christ, in which act he receives him, and rests upon him for justification—To explain and illustrate this, we may take notice of the object of justifying faith, and then consider the essential acts of it.

1. We may take notice of the object of justifying faith. Now true faving faith hath for its subject matter the whole word of God, all divine revelation : he who believes not the word of God, believes not in Jesus, who is the subject matter of gospel revelation. God is the proper object of faith ; he who comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder, &c. Heb. xi. 6. All the perfections of God are the objects of faith. Thus the Old Testament saints trusted in the mercy of God, Psa. xxxiii.

18. They pleaded his mercy, as David, Psa. li. 1. And the penitent publican flies to the mercy of God for relief. Luke xviii. 13. “God be merciful,” &c. But we must not look upon this as the uncovenanted general mercy of God ; God, considered in himself, out of Christ is a con-

suming fire, and not a proper object of our faith and hope ; considering the awful demerit of sin, the threatening of the law, and infinite holiness and justice of God, we have rather reason to fly from him, as our first parents attempted to do, than hope and trust in him, unless we view him in Christ. In whom alone he is merciful, gracious, and long suffering, &c. It was the mercy of God therefore as it had a relation to our redemption by Jesus Christ, that the Old Testament saints trusted in. This mercy and grace of God, is the grand spring and cause of justification, redemption, and all spiritual and eternal blessings. “ We are justified freely by grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,” Rom. iii. 24. In Christ we “ have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace.” Eph. i. 7. The mercy of God in Christ is expressed in the promises, and the substance of all the promises is Jesus Christ, so that Christ, and Christ alone is the immediate object of faith, for pardon and life. It is Christ contained in the promise, that the sinner is to look to for all ; “ Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved,” Acts xvi. 31. From the whole it plainly appears, that Christ as sent, and ordained of God, for the salvation of sinners, is the proper immediate object of justifying faith. But as Christ himself is represented under various characters, and discharges various offices, in bringing about the redemption and salvation of sinners ; and as only some of these characters and offices have an immediate relation to justification, so we may inquire, what is the object of faith in that act of it, that relates immediately to justification. Now that act of faith that justifies, relates only to the priestly office of Christ ; this appears from the nature of justification, and the end and design of faith : justification is to be delivered from the guilt and punishment of sin, to be introduced actually into the favour of God, and to have a right to eternal life ; and the end of faith is our justification, Gal. ii. 16. What the business is, the soul has with Christ, when he first comes, our Lord tells us himself, Jo v. 40. “ Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.” The soul comes for life ; he sees himself guilty, and he is seeking after pardon, after deliverance, from the wrath of God which he has deserved ; after acceptance with him, and a righteousness to stand in before him ; this shews

that the immediate object of faith, as justifying is the priestly office of Christ; that only answering the sinner's want as to justification. The prophetical, and kingly offices of Christ, are equally necessary with his priestly, as by them we have spiritual light, grace, and sanctification, are preserved, and brought off victorious over all our enemies; Christ considered in every capacity, in every character, is the object of that faith that is saving, though considered in his priestly office he furnishes a righteousness for our justification: it is this that gives sovereign comfort to the soul sensible of guilt, and wounded with sin, thus it is represented in scripture, and thus it was plainly intimated to the church of old, by the sacrifices which God appointed; a crucified Christ is all the sinner's comfort and hope, and all his dependence for justification. Thus we see what is the object of justifying faith. Now,

2. What is the essential act of it? Believing in Christ is an humble application of the soul to him, in which he receives him and rests upon him alone for salvation. There is a great difference between believing that Christ is the saviour, and believing on him; the one is only the assent of the mind, the other is the approbation and consent of the will, and the application of the soul to him. The first, considered abstracted as an act of the mind, may be found in many, who are spiritually strangers to Jesus Christ. In the other lies the essence of faith, and therefore we generally find saving faith represented as a believing on Christ, Rom. iv. 5. and 9, 10, 11, &c. In true saving faith the assent of the mind is accompanied with a hearty approbation of the method of salvation by Christ, a direct application of the soul to him, and resting on him; in which act the soul freely renounces his own righteousness, and every other way of salvation, and betakes himself sincerely and cordially to the way which God has appointed, acquiesces in it, as the best and most suitable way, and trusts absolutely and entirely in Jesus Christ for justification and salvation. We find faith, saving faith, represented and illustrated under various metaphors in the word of God, which tend to shew its nature, and point out its actings. We find faith represented "by coming to Christ." Thus our Lord called the burdened and heavy laden, to come to him, that is to believe on him, Matth. xi. 28. John vi. 35. "I am the bread of life, he

" who cometh to me shall never hunger," ver. 37. " All that the father giveth me shall come," &c. ver. 45. " Every man that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me," ver. 65. " No man can come unto me, except it were given to him of the Father." To the same purpose our Lord speaks, John vii. 37. " In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst let him come unto me and drink." In all these places what must we understand by coming to Christ but believing on him? Is it not a spiritual act that is meant? An act of the soul, under a sense of guilt? And does it not imply a renouncing self-dependence, and a betaking ourselves entirely to Jesus Christ for pardon and justification? The exercise of no other grace can be called a coming to Christ; faith alone must be meant, which has Christ for its object, to whom we go, and on whom alone we cast our souls, and all our concerns. Again, faith is called a receiving Christ, John i. 12. " To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." Col. ii. 6. " As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him." And unbelief is often represented by a not receiving of Christ.

Again, faith is represented as a flying for refuge. Heb. vi. 18. " That we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us." This has a manifest allusion to the cities of refuge, which God appointed of old; where those that had been undesignedly the cause of the death of any, might fly, and be safe from the wrath of the pursuer, and avenger of blood; there he was out of the reach of those he had injured, and might live secure: thus Christ is appointed as a sanctuary, whither poor distressed souls are to fly, and where they will be safe from the sword of infinite justice; this flying for refuge signifies a soul in distress, not able to do any thing himself, he stands exposed to everlasting death, he therefore betakes himself to Christ, to free him from the wrath to come.

Again, faith is represented by looking. Isa. xlvi. 22. " Look unto me and be ye saved," &c. Zech. xii. 10. John iii. 14, 15. Num. xvi. 8, 9. A brazen serpent was made and fixed upon a pole, that whoever among the Jews were stung, and looked upon this serpent might be healed. Christ, in

allusion to this, is said to be lifted up; he is appointed, set forth, and held out, as the spiritual physician and saviour, that whosoever looketh to, or believeth on him shall be saved. This looking to, or believing on Christ, therefore signifies a sinner wounded under a sense of sin, and points out a real application of soul to him. Faith excludes all our righteousness from justification, and gives all the glory, and ascribes all the healing efficacy to Christ alone.

Again, faith is represented by trusting in Christ. Thus says the apostle, "I know whom I have believed," or trusted. 2 Tim. i. 12. In trusting the soul commits himself and his concerns into the hands of Christ, and leaves all with him. As Potiphar left all with Joseph, and trusted him with all. Gen. xxxix. 6. This is a noble act of faith, which the soul is enabled to put forth, he trusts in Christ though he sees him not; in the midst of the greatest discouragements and difficulties, he trusts himself with, cleaves to, and depends upon a glorious Redeemer; and this trusting shews that Christ is the chief, the only object of a guilty soul's dependence for justification.

Thus by these and various other metaphors is faith set forth in the word of God, all which give us so many convincing proofs of justification by the righteousness of Christ alone, as well as point out to us the true notion of faith. In fine, we see the object and the nature of faith: considered in general as saving faith, it hath for its object Christ in all his characters, God in his nature and perfections, as revealed in the whole of his word, but considered as justifying, it looks to Christ in his priestly character alone, and is not only a crediting the report concerning him, but a direct application to him, in which the soul sensible of sin, renounces all his own righteousness, trusts in Christ, receives him, and rests upon him alone for justification.

(3.) True justifying saving faith is a vital principle in the soul, of all obedience—Saving faith is not a dead, inactive, fruitless faith. "Faith without works is dead," says the apostle. That is not the faith which God requires; a barren, unprofitable faith is only dishonourable to God and injurious to the soul. "Show me thy faith without thy works, " and I will shew thee my faith by my works." James ii. 18. We are justified by faith alone, but faith is not alone in the soul, it is accompanied with every other grace, it cannot be

separated from a principle of life and universal obedience; it virtually and radically contains in it all obedience, as the effect is in the cause, it is a “ faith that purifies the heart ” Acts xv. 9. “ it works by love.” Gal. v. 6. It is the grand spring that sets every wheel in motion, it is an active, an enlivening, and quickening grace, it puts the Christian upon the pursuit and practice of every duty; it discovers its reality and excellency, by curbing the power of sin in the soul, by mortifying every lust, by promoting love to Christ, by freeing the soul from every sensual confinement, and by conforming us more and more to the image of Christ. This faith will not suffer the Christian to live a life of indolence and profaneness; it is a living principle, the more it is in exercise, the more the Christian flourishes and prospers in the divine life. See the Christian, when faith is in lively exercise, he not only rejoices in the prospect of eternal life, but he presses forward towards holiness; see how he mourns for sin! How humble in his own eyes! See how warm his desires after Christ, how strong his love to him! how lively in duty! See how spiritual and heavenly in his frame! How patient in tribulation! How active in duty! The more he looks by faith to his Redeemer, the more he is changed into his likeness, grows in grace, and makes advances in sanctification. But we shall speak more particularly to this, when we come to consider the influence which faith has upon holiness, and good works, or the inseparable connection there is between justification and sanctification. Thus we see the nature of justifying faith.

Inf. i. Hence learn, that assurance is not of the essence of saving justifying faith. We may really believe in Christ, though we cannot see our interest in him. There is a persuasion or assurance that is essential to faith, but that is a persuasion or assurance of the object, *i.e.* of the truth of those promises in which Christ is held forth. Thus we are exhorted to come in full assurance of faith to God. Heb. x. 22. “ And we are to ask in faith, nothing wavering.” James i. 6. The meaning of which cannot be, that we must believe that we shall receive what we ask, or that this is essential to acceptable prayer; but that we come with a steadfast belief of the truth of these promises which God has made, and that he would fulfil them, according to the intention of them. And this persuasion satisfies the mind, and

gives the believer a comfortable hope, that God will give him the blessings he comes for, if infinite wisdom see them necessary for him ; there must be a persuasion of the reality of the declarations made of Christ, there must be a persuasion of the suitableness and all-sufficiency of Jesus Christ, or else where is faith ! Nay, there must be some peradventure Christ will save us, or else there can be no reliance ; for how can we conceive of any medium between hope and absolute despair ? But there may be true faith in Christ, where there is no assurance of a personal interest in him. If we are justified by the faith of assurance, then a mere proposition that Christ is ours, would be the object of faith and not Christ himself ; and so the principal act of faith would be an act of the understanding, whereas the principal, the uniting act of faith, we have seen, lies in the will ; therefore it is called receiving Christ, and being drawn to him ; would you therefore know whether you have saving justifying faith, inquire not whether you can say Christ is yours, but whether you are made willing to receive Christ, whether you have been enabled to give up yourselves to him, to make him your dependence ; inquire into the fruits and effects of faith, whether you love Christ in all his characters, for he is precious to none but those who believe.

Inf. 2. Is saving, justifying faith of such a nature and from such an origin as has been represented ? Then learn the obligation believers are under to bless God for such a favour ! O bless God that he has given you faith in Christ ! That you have been enabled to look to him for healing, to fly to him for refuge, to see his excellencies, and receive him in all his fulness ! Look up to him daily, to enable you to live more in the exercise of this precious grace. Oh may the life we live in the flesh be by the faith of the Son of God, who has loved us and given himself for us !

S E R M O N XI.

ON JUSTIFICATION.

R O M. v. 1.

Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

THE way of justification and salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, is so contrary to our natural conceptions, that we should have ever remained in the dark, had it not been for a divine revelation: and till the Spirit of God enlightens our understanding, and leads us by faith to Jesus Christ; we remain perfect strangers to him, notwithstanding the revelation we enjoy. We are naturally flying to a course of duties, to make our peace with God, and gain us an interest in his favour, a melancholy evidence this, of the dreadful ignorance and corruption of human nature! As well as a clear intimation of the obligation we are under, to adore the infinite riches of distinguishing grace, if we are brought to believe in Jesus Christ:

We have under our consideration justification by faith in Christ—And to set this subject in a clear light. We proposed,

1. To consider the nature of that faith that justifies. And, 2. How it justifies. We have already considered the nature of that faith that justifies. We have considered, 1. its author, and 2, what it implies,

1. It implies an assent of the mind to the gospel way of

salvation, upon a conviction of its excellency and importance, made in the mind, by the Spirit of God.

2. Faith implies a consent of the will, and is a direct application of the soul to Christ, in which he receives him, and rests upon him alone for justification. Here we considered the object of justifying faith, and the essential act of it. We now come,

III. To inquire how faith justifies. Now, 1. Faith does not justify without relation to its object. The scripture limits faith to its object. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, " and thou shalt be saved," Acts xvi. 31. It may be indeed objected in the case of Abraham, for it is said, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted unto him for righteousness," Rom iv. 3. i. e. *The act of believing.* And therefore faith itself is our justifying righteousness. To which we may answer, it is a contradiction to say, that faith itself justifies: faith, though the gift of God, yet is an act of ours. To say then, that faith justifies, is to say we are justified by an act of our own, and therefore that we are justified by works. In the forementioned, Rom. iii. 4, 5, 6, verses, there is a manifest opposition between faith and works. "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." It must be the object that was counted, and not the act, for the next verse proves it. "Now to him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace but of debt;" this plainly shews, that Abraham was not justified by works but by grace. To him that worketh, i. e. for justification, if he can be justified by his works, then grace has no hand in it, eternal life becomes his just due. Whereas it is represented as a free gift.—But, says the apostle, "To him that worketh not, i. e. (for justification) but believeth on him, that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Thus we see the apostle mentions justification by works, and by Christ; from what different causes they arise, one of debt, the other of grace; consequently as there is this opposition made between faith and works, our being justified by faith, is not by the act of faith, but the object which we receive by faith: for were we justified by the act, we should then be justified by works and of debt; but we are justified by grace. It is common in scripture to attribute that to the act or habit which belongs to the object. It was not the woman's

touching Christ that healed her, but the virtue that came from him, Mark v. 25, &c. It was not faith that made persons whole, but the power and strength of Christ apprehended by faith. Thus it is not faith that justifies us, but the righteousness of Christ received and apprehended by it. But what is that faith which is said to be imputed to Abraham; It was a faith in the promise of God Faith that had an eye to Christ, Gal. iii. 16. "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made, he faith not, and to seeds as of many, but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ." For though Abraham lived at such a distance of time from the days of Christ, yet he "saw this day by faith, and he rejoiced, and was glad." John viii. 56. Thus Abraham was an example for us, in this way of justification, as appears from Rom iv. 23, 24. "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him, but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus from the dead." To say that faith itself justifies, is to destroy the nature of faith. What does faith do, but present the righteousness of Christ to God for acceptance? Does faith plead works? No, it pleads what Christ hath done, which makes it evidently appear, that the righteousness of Christ, and not the act of believing is our justifying righteousness.

2. Faith does not justify as accompanied with works. There is indeed a great difference between an empty, dead faith, and justifying faith: justifying faith is a faith that produces works, but yet it does not justify with its works. We must separate works and faith in the act of justifying; though faith in the soul is accompanied with every other grace, and leads on to virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly-kindness, and charity, yet it doth not justify the soul, on account of this beautiful train attending it.

3. Faith justifies as an instrument, by trusting in Christ. Sanctification is a progressive work, and is absolutely necessary to our complete salvation: for which we must look to Christ in all his offices; but in justification we must look to his priestly office alone, and therefore justifying faith, is represented by trusting in, depending upon, receiving him, &c. to signify that faith is only an instrument in justification, and not the cause, or condition of it. The righteous-

ness of Christ is a gift bestowed upon us, and received by us: and how is it received by us? By faith: therefore faith in justification is no more than the hand or instrument by which we receive the benefit of the Redeemer's righteousness. When we bid a poor creature in distress hold out his hand, and we will give him some supply; the holding out his hand is not the condition of our giving alms; though it is the means by which our charity is conveyed, and he becomes possessed of it. In fine, though without faith there is no justification, yet faith itself does not justify; all that is meant by these expressions of being justified by faith is this, viz. That the blessing of justification is conveyed to us in a way of believing, and was not enjoyed before. Thus we see how the righteousness of Christ becomes ours, by the gracious imputation of God, and by our faith, he reckoning it to us on the one hand, and we receiving it, pleading its virtue with God for the pardon of our sins, and a title to glory, and entirely resting upon it for justification on the other. By this means it becomes ours really and legally, and we are justified by it, and shall receive the everlasting blessings and benefits of it in a better world.

We have now gone through what we proposed,—Have shewn wherein justification consists,—That our own personal righteousness is absolutely unable to justify us before God: that it is the righteousness of Jesus Christ alone, that is the matter of our justification, and the ground of our acceptance with God: and how it is, that this righteousness is made ours, that we may be really and legally justified by it. Let us now attend to a particular improvement of so great a subject, and,

Use 1. From what has been said upon this important subject we learn, that the three glorious persons in the trinity, are jointly concerned in the justification of a sinner, and therefore are to be equally glorified. The Father is represented, as purposing the salvation of his people; as contriving the glorious scheme, which has been pursued; as calling Christ to the important office of a mediator; as sending him into the world, to bring in an everlasting righteousness; as accepting of this righteousness, and, in consequence thereof, as imputing it to his people, pardoning them, and accepting them as righteous upon the account of it. The Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, voluntarily accepted of the office his Fa-

ther had appointed for him, came into the world, veiled his glory in the humble form of a servant, obeyed the law, and suffered the penalty, by which he furnished us with that righteousness we stand in before God: he is our great High Priest, who, after he had offered himself a sacrifice to God, went into the heavens, and sits down at the right hand of God, pleading the virtue of his righteousness for his people. And the Holy Spirit applies the redemption purchased by Christ, and particularly in justification he works faith in the sinner, he convinces him of sin, of his lost and undone condition, and of the imperfection of his own righteousness, that it is but as filthy rags, and an unclean thing, and not worthy of God's acceptance; he leads him to Christ, and he takes of his things, and shews them to the soul; he, in fine, enables him to believe, helps him to go out of himself, to renounce all his own mean, worthless services, and to cast himself upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and trust in him alone for justification. Thus the Spirit implants faith in the soul, and enables him to exercise it, and so has a concern in the justification of a sinner. He, as the comforter likewise, gives the soul a view of his justification, introduces sweet peace into his mind, removes the pangs of an awakened conscience, and cheers the soul with a view of a reconciled God. Thus equal honours are due to the three glorious persons in the Trinity, as being concerned in the justification of a sinner. Whilst you are adoring the Lord Jesus Christ, for the wonders of his love, in providing such a perfect righteousness for your justification, and introducing you by it into the divine favour; forget not to admire the grace of the Father, who called his only begotten Son to the important office of a mediator, and who sent him into the world upon this glorious errand, and who accepts and justifies you through him; nor neglect to ascribe equal praises to the eternal Spirit, who brought you to a sense of your need of Christ, and enabled you to believe on him. Oh! what honours has God put upon a poor sinner, that the three glorious persons in the Godhead should be all concerned in his justification! and Oh how truly is he justified! Need I, Oh my soul, fear to appear before the tribunal of God? Will not each glorious person own me? Will not the Father view me, as the person he has justified and pardoned? Will not the Son receive me as one for whom he furnished a

glorious righteousness? And will not the Holy Spirit own that faith in me, which is of his own implanting? Will he not see the marks and traces of his own work in my soul? How happy, how secure am I therefore, and Oh, what honours are due to the glorious three! The saints above, sensible of their obligations, are offering their united and unwearyed praises to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Glory be to thee, Oh Father, for thine everlasting love, thine eternal appointment, thy pardoning mercy. Glory be to thee, Oh thou lamb of God, for thy sweet smelling sacrifice, thy perfect and everlasting righteousness. And glory be to thee, Oh holy and blessed spirit, for thy quickening and enlivening operations, thy sacred productions, thine almighty energy. This, this is the delightful employment of the saints above: Oh may we join these heavenly inhabitants at last, and spend an eternity in praising and adoring the grace, the distinct acts and operations of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in the whole of our salvation.

Use 2. From what has been said upon this subject, we learn that the notion of an eternal justification is without foundation. Justification we have considered as a relative change, actually made when we become personally absolved, pardoned, pronounced righteous, and entitled to eternal life. This justification is said to be by faith, now faith we know is something wrought in us, it presupposes conviction in the mind, and consequently the actual existence of the person who believes. This consideration therefore effectually destroys eternal justification, unless we can suppose an impossibility, viz. That believers existed from all eternity, and believed from all eternity. We acknowledge that all believers were represented in Christ their head, when he made the glorious agreement with the Father from eternity, he undertook to do and suffer for them all that was necessary, he took all their sins upon him, and the Father, well knowing that the debt would be paid, promised eternal life to Christ their head. Titus i. 2. "In hopes of eternal life, "which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world "began." Thus their salvation was insured and rendered certain; but how different is this from actual personal justification? The blessings of salvation were given to Christ, and received by him for us, but we could not be said to be personally possessed of them. Believers were in some mea-

sure justified in Christ when he was raised from the dead, for he arose as a public person, they were justified in their head: but there is a great difference between being justified in our head, and justified personally and actually through him: we all sinned in Adam, but we are not actually under the condemning power of the law, till we appear personally on earth. In fine, what is justification but the removing of sin, and giving us a title to eternal life? This necessarily presupposes a state of guilt, condemnation, and death, and a real, actual change from one state to the other; agreeable to the word of God, which styles even believers themselves, before they believe, "children of wrath even as others." Eph. ii. 3. And the believing Corinthians had experienced a change of state as well as of heart. 1 Cor. vi. 11. "And such were some of you, but ye are washed," &c. In another place we are said to be concluded under sin, and become guilty before God. Rom. iii. 9. "What then are we better than they, &c. For we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin." 19 verse, "Now we know, &c. and all the world become guilty before God." Now, are these meaning or unmeaning phrases? Do they not contain an awful reality in them, viz. That we are naturally under the condemning sentence of the law? What is justification then, but a personal discharge? &c. If then there is a time when the people of God are under the condemning sentence of the law, then there is a time when they are not justified: unless we can suppose that to be under condemnation and to be justified are consistent at the same time, which cannot be. The word of God, and not his secret will is to be the rule of our judgement; and whatever the word of God says is perfect truth. Now, as it represents us at one time children of wrath, under the wrath of God, and at another time justified, and the children of God; we learn that justification, personal, actual, gospel justification, was not, cannot be from eternity, but is in time when the sinner actually believes, and no sooner.

Use 3. From what has been said, we learn the dreadful malignity and demerit of sin! Sin never appears more odious, than when we view the sufferings and humiliation of Jesus Christ. Was man unable to make satisfaction for it? Were all the Old Testament sacrifices insufficient to make atonement? Must the Son of God become man? Must he

bear the wrath of God? Must he pour out his precious blood before sin could be pardoned and the guilty creature restored to favour? Oh what a dreadful evil is sin, it is impossible to set forth its real malignity; it is inconceivably odious and dreadful in its nature and tendency. Would you entertain some suitable conceptions of the awful demerit of sin, look upon the mighty God becoming man; view him a man of sorrows, &c. Follow him to the garden, and see him in inexpressible agonies of soul, sweating great drops of blood; go from the garden to the cross, see him feeling the cruelty of man, the wrath of God, crying out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" All this was necessary to the pardon of sin, to the enjoyment of the divine favour, and eternal life. Oh what an evil and bitter thing is it then to sin against God! And can you roll sin as a sweet morsel under your tongues, ye careless souls, who are strangers and enemies to Christ! Can you love sin, which filled the Saviour with such amazing agony! Oh think, if you can, how inconceivably dreadful those torments must be which your soul will feel on the account of sin in the bottomless pit, if it is not forgiven. And can you sport with sin? Ye followers of Jesus, who have given your souls up to him, Oh stand at the utmost distance from sin. See what Christ has done for you! And Oh be not negligent, be not careless, be upon your guard; and be concerned to have your souls filled with the utmost detestation of sin! Was it a light thing for Christ to sweat great drops of blood; was it a trifling matter for the Son of God to bear infinite wrath! To hang upon the cross and make himself a sacrifice for you! Oh when you are tempted at any time to sin; when opportunity presents, and sinners, or your own hearts, would tempt you to sin; say, how can I do this wickedness, Oh my soul? It is the blood of Christ, how can I love it? It cost him his life, how can I trifle with it? Oh let me start even at sinful thought!

Use 4. We learn further, the exceeding great love of our Redeemer, and the obligation we are under, to love, honour, and serve him. When we consider that Jesus Christ has furnished us with that righteousness by which we are justified, and what he did, and suffered to bring in this righteousness, we cannot but be convinced of our obligations, to love, honour, and serve him; especially if we consider the

dignity of his person and our unworthiness of such infinite kindness : when we consider the blessings of justification; which we receive through our Redeemer's righteousness, we cannot but be sensible how much we ought to love him, and call upon our souls, and all that is within us to bless his holy name. Hast thou any hope, Oh my soul, of pardon and salvation ? It is owing to thy kind Redeemer : I might have dwelt in the bottomless pit forever, had it not been for his infinite compassion, and the virtue of his righteousness ! Can I view God reconciled to me ? Have I any prospect of deliverance from the wrath to come ? Oh unspeakable love of my glorious Redeemer ! It is owing to thee, dearest Jesus, that I have a prospect of such exalted blessings ! And, Oh my soul, shall I not love so glorious a friend ? Am I not under the greatest obligations to him ? Has he saved my poor soul ? Made me an heir of eternal life, when I might have perished forever ? Oh what wonderful and astonishing love ! And why then all this coldness to my dear Redeemer ! Why is his name no more precious ? Why am I so indifferent, so lifeless in his service, why have I no more boldness, no more zeal for his name and his cause ! Oh my ungrateful heart, to be no more warmed with love to Jesus ! To be no more sensible of my obligations ! Lord shed abroad thy love in my soul, that it may kindle mine to thee, that the fire may burn with greater fervour in my cold heart, and my soul be more lively and vigorous in thy service !

Use 5. From what has been said we learn the perseverance of the saints. If we are once justified, we shall never fall into condemnation. Christ, as our surety, made satisfaction for all our sins. Now this satisfaction was either imperfect or full and perfect ; if the satisfaction which Christ made to infinite justice for his people's sins was imperfect, if he only partly satisfied, and left part for us, then indeed our circumstances are melancholy, then may the soul be afraid of a miscarriage, and our salvation would be precarious and uncertain : but this satisfaction was full and perfect, all that justice required was paid down ; this appears by his discharge from death, his ascension into heaven, his exaltation and intercession there. Christ therefore making full satisfaction for all his people's sins, they must be discharged from hell and wrath, and be put into the possession

of life everlasting; consequently the soul that believes on Jesus shall persevere finally, and never be deprived of the purchased inheritance, unless we suppose God to be mutable or unfaithful, which cannot be. He that is once justified then shall never fall into condemnation. Justification is an act wherein God absolves the soul from punishment, cancels and removes the obligation, and gives him a title to eternal life; the believer may fall into sin, but he shall not fall finally from God. There is room for daily repentance by our backslidings, room to plead with God for pardon, room for humiliation; but the soul that is once justified shall stand in the favour of God. Thus says the apostle, "By whom we have access through faith, into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God," Rom. v. 2. Once access into the favour of God, and we shall continue in it, we may rejoice in hope of full and everlasting glory; for all whom God justifies, he glorifies. O glorious, O comfortable truth! Once actually in Christ by faith, and you shall never, never, never fall into condemnation! Have you believed in Jesus Christ? You shall receive the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls: the title which God has given you is good, it will stand the trial, and God will never recal it for the gifts, &c. Rom. xi. 29. This by no means sets aside the use of means, it does not lead to sin; it animates the soul with greater courage, enlivens him more in his way, and fills him with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

S E R M O N XII.

ON JUSTIFICATION.

ROM. v. 1.

Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

WE are upon the improvement of this great and precious doctrine of a sinner's justification in the sight of God, viz. By faith in the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. We proceed to,

Use 6. From what has been said, we learn that there are not different degrees in justification. If justification arose from faith and obedience then it must be imperfect, because our obedience is so; but the apostle says, "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit," Rom. viii. 1. Either a person is pardoned, or he is not, either he has a title to heaven, or he has not, there is no such thing as half a title, or part of a title; there is a full title or none at all. Justification is not a gradual work, though it would be so, were it to arise from our own obedience; upon this foundation there would be no certainty: according to the measure of our faith and obedience, such would be the measure of our justification: an uncomfortable doctrine! But such is not the consequence of justification by imputed righteousness. "The righteousness of God by faith in Christ Jesus," the apostle tells us, is unto, and upon all

" them that believe ; for there is no difference," Rom. iii. 22. The weak believer is justified equally with the strongest, the same righteousness is imputed unto them; therefore they must be justified alike. Their faith is the same, though not in degrees yet in nature : believing more strongly or more weakly, makes no difference in the state of believers, though it does in their frames. The weak believer is not so lively, not so well fitted for bearing difficulties, and withstanding temptations, as the strong believer ; he is sooner foiled by the enemy, sooner oppressed with doubts and fears, sooner loaded with anxious cares, but his title to glory is as good as that of the most triumphant saint, they shall both be glorified. You that are weak in faith, rejoice, your strength, your righteousness, your all is in Christ, so long as his righteousness has any virtue in it, so long will you stand in the favour of God ; you cannot rejoice perhaps as others do, but remember you have the same righteousness to trust to, the same Jesus to guide you and keep you safe to glory as they have, and you shall reach safe to Zion at last as well as they.

Use 7. From what has been said we learn how exceeding foolish all those are, who will not submit to this way of justification. And here give me leave to address you, who are strangers and enemies to Jesus Christ, and are building all your hopes upon the sandy foundation of your own services : let me seriously ask you this question, why is it you reject this way of salvation by the righteousness of Jesus Christ? Is it a doctrine that is any ways dishonourable to God? Let us bring it to the trial, and see which of the divine perfections it sullies. Is it the mercy of God? This cannot be, for mercy is glorified, yea highly glorified in the humiliation and sufferings of Jesus Christ: here is such grace and such mercy as can appear in no other way. Is it the wisdom of God that is lessened? No, behold this is likewise greatly exalted. Angels admire the way, and glorify infinite wisdom in its contrivance, Eph. iii. 10. Is the justice of God then dishonoured? Oh no! The justice of God appears in all its infinite lustre and glory, whilst we see God punishing sin in the surety, Rom. iii. 26. " To declare, I say at this time his righteousness, that he may be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." In fine, here every divine perfection appears in its utmost ra-

diancy and glory, to fill our minds with the greatest awe and reverence, to engage our adorations and praises, and to encourage our faith and hope. And is God honoured by this doctrine? This is enough to engage us heartily to believe it, and earnestly to seek after an interest in imputed righteousness. Why then do you dislike this amiable truth? Does it injure the law? Search and see. The righteousness of Jesus Christ is perfectly agreeable to all the commands of the law, he suffered its penalty, and was made a curse for us, he has laid us under the greatest obligations to obey it, how then is it injured? It is rather honoured, yea greatly honoured, by the infinite stoop of the Son of God, found in fashion of a man, and made under the law, that he might magnify it and make it honourable. Wherefore then do you despise this truth, is it an uncomfortable doctrine? Does it distress the mind, and fill the soul with a melancholy gloom? Ask the awakened sinner, and you will find nothing is more effectual to remove his fears, to quiet his conscience, to raise his hopes, and fill him with a sweet peace and tranquillity. Oh, says he, it is the most comfortable news I have ever heard, it suits my soul, it opens a door of hope before me. Ask the believer that has walked in the truth some years; he has tried it, and can certainly form a judgement of it. You that twenty or thirty years ago, were led to take hold of this truth, what sort of a doctrine have you found it to your souls? Can you recommend it to the sinner as a soul comforting truth? Have you been enlivened, comforted, and encouraged by it? How has it appeared, when conscience has stung you with a sense of guilt? When death has presented itself before you, and eternity has been in view? Some of you no doubt have met with such opportunities to try the excellency of this truth, and have you any thing to say in its favour? Has it not been your greatest cordial, your chief support? Yes, says the believer, I have tried it for a long course of years, nay, I have tried the poor self righteous man's refuge; I have tried every foundation which the sinner is endeavouring to establish, and find *that* of an imputed righteousness the only one to cheer and support a wounded spirit, to brighten my views, support me in the moment of trial, and to fill me with solid consolation. Hearest thou this sinner? Permit me then again to repeat the question: why do you disap-

prove of this doctrine? Is it an unsafe way, is there any uncertainty in it, do you run any risk of your immortal soul? If so, we will all discard it, and renounce it at once, as not fit for our dependence; bring it to the trial then, and give it a fair hearing. And if we take a review of what we have already said upon this subject, if we consider the Father's approbation of Christ as our surety and righteousness; the fulness of his satisfaction, and his answering all the demands, the ends and purposes of the law; that he did all this voluntarily in the room and stead of his people; if we consider all this, we cannot but conclude, that there is the most solid foundation laid for our trust and dependence, and the utmost certainty of our salvation. The representations we have of Christ in the word of God, as the only foundation, the sure foundation, a tried stone, &c. are enough to convince us, that it is the most safe and secure way. Christ is a tried stone he has been proved, God the Father tried him, when he laid our sins upon him and he bore them all. The devils tried him, and he conquered and spoiled principalities, &c. And his people have tried him above five thousand years, and have found him an able saviour. The thousands and ten thousand times ten thousand, who are at the right hand of God singing victory and salvation, and giving glory to the lamb; all these are living evidences of his perfect, and all-sufficient righteousness; nay, not one soul, that trusted in him, ever met with a disappointment. And Oh, what can you now object? Will you not believe in, and rejoice in this way of salvation yet? Think seriously, whether you can answer satisfactorily these questions. ‘Why is Christ represented as our righteousness? Why as the lamb of God, &c. Why as the High-Priest! Why is all the glory of our salvation ascribed unto him?’ Have these things any meaning? Do they not plainly shew the reality of that doctrine we have been vindicating? Think further, how you will appear before God. You may go about to establish a righteousness of your own, and please yourselves that it will do, but sit, and, with the utmost seriousness, think upon the subject for a few moments, labouring to call off your thoughts from all sublunary things; and now suppose all earthly things vanishing, that you are going to leave converse with mortals, and to appear before God, and to receive a sentence which will

determine your everlasting condition ! Suppose you were just going to be examined by him, by that God who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, that God in whose sight the heavens are not clean, that God before whom the angels fall down with humble reverence ! Is not this an awful thought ? Is it not enough in such a serious moment to make you distrust your own righteousness ? Oh, how will you appear before God ! That God whose presence our first parents would have fled, and hid themselves amongst the trees of the garden ! Can you venture boldly before his bar, when you come in that critical moment to look back upon so many omissions of duty, so many commissions of sin ; Will not your hearts shrink with fear of the consequences ? Oh may these considerations be rendered effectual to engage you to come naked and guilty to Jesus Christ for righteousness and peace ! and,

What blessed encouragement does this way of justification give the sinner ! God is just, yet there is the greatest encouragement to apply to him, he has acted agreeable to his infinite purity and justice, those glorious perfections of his nature ; agreeable to his character as the supreme law-giver and governor, in punishing sin in the surety. Oh blessed news to awaken sinners ! Let none despair ; if their sins are never so great, here is a perfect, a glorious righteousness “ Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes.” Rom. x. 4.

Use 8. The last use I would make of this great subject is to point out the freeness of grace in our justification, “ being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus ” Rom. iii. 24. Our redemption is by a price paid, and our justification is in virtue of a righteousness Christ has wrought out, nevertheless to us it is all gratuitous and free : free, distinguishing, sovereign grace is what the believer is indebted to for every blessing he enjoys here, for all that he lives in the expectation of hereafter. This is a truth of no small importance in the Christian life, as it tends to slay all self-dependence, to keep us truly humble under a becoming sense of our own weakness and vileness, and to fill us with the most adoring thoughts of that grace whereby we are saved. Permit me then to conclude the whole subject by the mention of two or three

things in support of this point. This will fully appear if we consider,

1. The fixing and appointing this way of justification was the effect of the free, distinguishing, and everlasting love of God. The scheme was laid in eternity, it was contrived by infinite wisdom, it was the effect of everlasting love; there was none to plead for us, the scheme was formed, and the affair settled, before the mountains were brought forth; or ever the earth or the sea were made, even from everlasting: it was the mere effect of God's sovereign pleasure, and sprung from his free undeserved pity, grace, and compassion. Who was it that laid the grand platform of our salvation; in which the way of our justification, and the bestowment of every blessing was settled? Who was it that appointed the blessed Son of God to be the mediator, to come in the likeness of sinful flesh, and bring in a righteousness for his people to appear in? Was it not God the Father, and did it not spring from his eternal love, his free unmerited grace? Who was there with God when he fixed the glorious scheme, when he called his Son to the important office, and settled the grand affair with him? There was no creature formed to plead his pity; he saw us, in his all-comprehensive view, lost, fallen, wretched, and miserable; and nothing but his own will determined him to have mercy upon us. Our justification, though by the righteousness of Christ, yet was first laid in the love, the eternal love of God the Father; here was the grand spring of all God's future acts, his free grace; this was the foundation, and this will be the top-stone. *Grace, grace* will be all the song of the redeemed of the Lord. Grace began and finished their salvation, formed the plan and put it in execution: Christ's righteousness was the way in which the free grace of God discovered itself! Had not God been from eternity gracious, we must have been forever miserable and wretched, for there is no change in him, he is without any variableness, or the least shadow of turning. He was the same from eternity as he is now, and he will continue so to eternity: Christ did not render God gracious by undertaking the work of our redemption; what Christ has done is the effect of divine grace, and was necessary to open a way for the actual conveyance of this grace to the soul of the sinner. See then, we

are justified freely by the grace of God in this instance, the Father was free, without any obligation in fixing upon, and determining this way of justification: it was because he loved us that he ordained this righteousness for us. And why did he love us? because he would do it! He was perfectly free without compulsion; alas! who should constrain him, who should oblige him to make such provision for us? All were lost, had forfeited his favour, and deserved his everlasting indignation; in this condition he viewed us when he loved us, and gave his only begotten Son for us: in this wretched condition he viewed us when he made the settlement concerning our justification and salvation, his love then was free as it was great. Rom. v. 8. "But God comendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," Jer. xxxi. 3. "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee."

1. Christ was absolutely free, and discovered the riches of his grace in furnishing us with that righteousness by which we are justified. The righteousness by which we are justified, is not of our preparing: as it was of God's appointing so it was of God's preparing; God the Father determined and fixed it, God the Son wrought it out and both were entirely free. Was the second person in the trinity constrained to provide for us such a righteousness! He had no obligation upon him but what he freely and voluntarily brought himself under; he was not influenced to do it by a view of advantage, or from a consideration of any merit or worthiness in us; we lay ruined, helpless, and miserable; it was free, it was generous love, in the Son of God to come and furnish us with a righteousness to stand before God. As it was free, so it was rich grace, abundant astonishing grace, such as entertains angels and raises their admiration: the Son of God must lay aside his glory and appear in human nature, he must stoop so low as to be made under the law, be obedient to all its commands, and, what is more, endure its penalty, be liable to all manner of sufferings, offer himself a sacrifice, bear the wrath of God, and die a bitter, ignominious, and cursed death, even the death of the cross! This is the way in which justice was to be satisfied, and heaven purchased, this was the righteousness which we are

to be justified by ; and is not the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ abundant in providing this righteousness, when we consider that he who was rich must become poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich ? 2 Cor. viii. 9. It is an act of uncommon kindness and generosity amongst men, for a person to lay down his life for his friend ; but we were not to be considered in that amiable character when Jesus undertook to provide this righteousness for us ; we were enemies, traitors, and rebels, and yet behold he loved us, he loved us so as to fulfil all righteousness for us ! Oh amazing grace, is not all this the effect of his free and sovereign pleasure ! he might have viewed us with contempt ; but behold he undertakes for us, and he furnisheth us with a righteousness. It is not your own righteousness, Christians, that will justify you before God, you are indebted to your glorious Redeemer for it ; he wrought it out, he has brought it in, he provided it himself, he came voluntarily and did it—He did it all freely without any consideration of reward or advantage. What did the mighty God stand in need of, that he should be found in fashion as a man ? Needed he our poor worthless services ? No, it was all to shew how much he loved us ! It was to shew the riches of his grace in the justification and salvation of his people. Oh that our souls were more deeply impressed with a sense of it, &c.

Thus we see the appointing this way of justification and the providing that righteousness whereby we are justified are both freely from the grace of God.

3. God's actually making this righteousness ours by imputation is freely by the grace of God. We have shewn that one way in which this righteousness becomes ours, is by imputation, which is an act of God's by which he reckons it to us, and deals with us according to its infinite and everlasting virtue and efficacy. In this act of imputation God displays both his justice and his grace, he is just to Christ, just in the fulfilment of his promises, in imputing this righteousness to the believer, yet he is merciful and gracious to us ; can we plead a right a personal right to this righteousness, from any qualification in us, or any service done by us ? We have rather reason, the utmost reason to acknowledge our unworthiness of the least mercy. Look upon the poor sinner, see what he is by nature, view him in his filthy rags, in his spotted garments all over polluted, from

the crown of his head to the sole of his feet, see him a transgressor of the law, an open rebel, and consequently worthy of eternal damnation ; such is the soul before he has actually an interest in this righteousness, such does God find us when he comes by his spirit to enlighten our understandings and lead us to Christ, such does he find us, when he comes by his grace to renew us, to implant faith in us, and to impute his righteousness to us ; therefore we read, Rom. iv. 5. " But to him that worketh not but believeth on him " that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." — Not that they remain ungodly, those whom God justifies he likewise sanctifies, but he finds them ungodly, when he comes to them, to give them an actual personal interest in the blessings of the everlasting covenant. Such were you Christians ! You were strangers and enemies to God, guilty and included under sin, exposed to the execution of the sentence of the law, and children of wrath. In these circumstances were you when God came and led you to Jesus.

From this view of the sinner then, let any one judge whether God, in imputing the righteousness of Christ to him, is not entirely free !

Oh, says the believer, hast thou, Lord, imputed to me the righteousness of my Redeemer ? What an act of grace, free grace and mercy, to such an unworthy polluted guilty creature ! All the glory be to thee O Lord. Thus God freely imputes this righteousness to us and we receive it as a free gift. And thus are we justified freely by the grace of God through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

4. If we consider that faith, by which we are said to be justified, we shall see that we are justified freely by the grace of God. We need only here mention two things. 1st, The author of faith. 2d, The nature of it.

(1.) How came we to have that faith that justifies ? Here we find we have no claim to merit, for faith is wrought in us by the almighty power of God, and is the gift of his special grace ; " by grace are ye saved through faith ; and that not of yourselves : it is the gift of God," Eph. ii. 8. It is God that helps us to believe, or else we should remain for ever under the power of unbelief ; we have done nothing to entitle us to this faith, nor is it given on the account of the amiable fruits and effects of it foreseen ; but it is given

freely, it is a free promise of the everlasting covenant, and is the purchase of our Lord Jesus Christ. And the spirit comes at the time appointed, and implants it in the soul, without paying any regard to the character or temper of the person, or expecting any assistance from him; he comes with his almighty power, sets the poor prisoner at liberty, leads him to Christ, and enables him to believe: thus that faith which justifies, is given to us freely, we have nothing to boast of upon that point, but have reason to say that we are justified freely by the grace of God, &c. After the sinner is laid under the strongest conviction, he yet deserves nothing, the giving of faith is an act of his sovereign grace.

2. It appears from the nature, and actings of faith that our justification is free. Faith receives salvation as the purchase of Christ, as a free gift: Faith does not plead the merit of the creature, it pleads nothing but the rich mercy, the free promise of God, and the righteousness of Jesus Christ; the language of faith stands at the utmost distance from pride, and is full of the deepest humility. Lord I am nothing, I am absolutely vile and despicable, I am unworthy of thy favour, it is rich grace to take notice of so guilty polluted a creature, all my dependence is upon thee, for I am altogether helpless, and miserable; I trust therefore entirely in thee, and receive the blessings of salvation as freely coming from thee, Oh what have I which I have not received! Oh what is my righteousness? Nothing but filthy rags, and an unclean thing! Not worthy to be mentioned! It is not for my righteousness sake, God is pleased to pardon my sins, to accept me into favour, and give me a title to eternal life! It is entirely on the account of the righteousness of my dear Redeemer, which he freely wrought out for his people and which God has graciously imputed unto me; to what am I indebted for all my spiritual enjoyments, but to free grace! All my hopes of eternal blessings, all that is done in me, all that is put upon me, is all the effect of free distinguishing grace, and God therefore shall have all the glory. This is the language of genuine faith. No other way so much exalts free, rich, and sovereign grace as the way of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ; no other grace is capable of the office which is assigned to faith in justification; faith receives Christ and his righteousness, leans, depends upon him, and gives him all the glory, which cannot be said of any

other grace ; therefore we see the beauty of the way of salvation by faith, and its perfect consistency with the grace of God. Rom. iv. 16. "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace ; to the end that the promise might be sure to all the seed : not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the Father of us all. Justification is in every respect free, from the laying of the plan to the execution of it ; it is by the righteousness of Christ, and therefore free ; we are wholly indebted to free grace for it, and can plead no worthiness of our own to it. "To him therefore who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father ; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen, Rev. i. 5, 6.

S E R M O N XIII.

THE CONQUERING CHRISTIAN.

2 TIM. iv. 7, 8.

I have fought a good fight.

THESE words were spoken by the apostle Paul, that able minister of the New Testament, a little before he took his final leave of earthly things, and entered into his master's joy. They give us a view of the character, duty, and conduct of every real Christian; present us with an example worthy our constant imitation; and encourage our faith and hope; our steadfastness and perseverance in the service of our Redeemer, by the prospects of the noblest triumphs at death, and a glorious immortality, after a life of pain, difficulty, and sorrow here. The apostle, knowing that the time of his departure, drew nigh, was willing to give his beloved *Timothy* his last and solemn Charge, before he left him; in which he exhorts him to take heed to his ministry, to maintain, with a noble boldness, and becoming zeal, that cause he had espoused; to contend for the glorious truths he had heard and learned, and to take care of the flock over which God had set him: and then he turned his eyes from inferior comforts, viewed with pleasure that world he was hastening to, and rejoiced in the prospect of that crown he was just going to possess. "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand."—I am going

to fall a victim to the rage of my persecutors, to shed my blood for my dear Redeemer ; and yet the thought sits easy upon my mind. I am not startled at the apprehensions of my approaching dissolution : no, my glorious master has not left me in this critical and important hour, but gives me the testimony of my conscience, and the witness of his spirit, that I have, through grace, been enabled to fight a good fight ; and am going to enjoy the crown. These words naturally lead us to take notice,

I. Of the pleasing reflections the apostle Paul was enabled to make upon his past life.

II. The glorious prospect he had before him, and the triumphant frame of his soul thereon. - And may we, in considering these things, see the excellency of the Christian's life, the honourableness of his contention in the warfare, in which he is engaged, and be quickened and enabled to enter the lists in the name and strength of our Redeemer, that we may fight the good fight, and enjoy the prize *also*.

I. We are to take notice of the pleasing reflections the apostle Paul was enabled to make upon that part of his life which he had spent in his Redeemer's service. *I have fought, &c.* Here it may not be amiss to premise, that the apostle's pleasure did not arise from an apprehension of any merit or virtue in what he mentioned, as if these things could justify him before God. He renounced all his righteousness in life, and he retained the same sentiment till death. Our hatred of sin, our love to God, our diligence in his service, and all our good works cannot entitle us to the favour of God, and absolve us from sin ; but they are evidences of the reality of our faith and justification ; and when ever the Spirit of God enables us to see them as the real effects of a sanctified nature, and consequently as evidences to ourselves and others of our pardon and right to eternal life, they cannot fail of filling us with the same unspeakable satisfaction the apostle here discovers under the like view. *I have fought, &c.* In these expressions he has a manifest allusion to the Olympic games in use amongst the ancient Greeks ; such as wrestling, running, &c. in which whoever came off victorious, was honoured with a crown, or garland of flowers. Thus the apostle had been a warrior, he had fought, and had got the victory ; he had run, and had the mark in view ; he had kept his station, and discharged his

office, and now only waited for a much brighter crown, even a crown of righteousness, &c. We shall consider each of these distinctly, as they lead us to something useful and important.

The apostle had fought a good fight. Here we have the Christian life evidently compared to a *Warfare*; to carry on the allusion, and to shew the propriety of this comparison. We shall shew,

1. When this warfare begins.
2. What are the enemies and difficulties, Christians are called to encounter with, in this warfare.
3. The weapons God has furnished them with, in the use of which they are to get the victory. And,
4. The encouragements they have to use them in this warfare:

1. Let us consider when this warfare begins. As it is of a spiritual nature, so it does not actually begin till the soul begins a spiritual life. The natural man finds but little difficulty in the pursuit of his gratifications; only conscience may now and then disturb him with the apprehensions of eternity, and a judgement-seat. In general he quietly enjoys his beloved pleasures, and meets with but little interruption; Satan keeps him as an easy prey; sin governs him without any disturbance. He makes little or no opposition, he loves his captivity, and cannot be persuaded to proclaim war, until the all conquering Grace of God comes, and sets him at liberty. Christians, you knew nothing of this warfare, until the Spirit enlightened your minds and renewed your hearts. Then you entered the lists, were called to encounter with difficulties you were unacquainted with before, and must continue the contention, until death places you at an everlasting distance from every enemy. The contest begins as soon as the grace of God is implanted. Before the sinner could easily run into every excess; but now he finds a powerful check, the enemies take the alarm, summon all their strength, and begin the combat; and now the soul is warmly engaged; he is got into the field, and finds himself surrounded with enemies, who use their utmost skill and strength to prevent his progress Zion-ward, and to lead him into his former captivity. And thus the contest continues till the Christian is proclaimed conqueror, which will not be until body and soul are separated. This war-

fare none know but those who are the real followers of Jesus. The inward struggles, the warm contentions the Christian has with his enemies are concealed from the world. This warfare is not attended with noise of drums and outward instruments: many a battle is lost, and many a victory gained, and the world knows nothing of it. It is a spiritual warfare between the soul and its enemies. As none then can know it but the real Christian; and as it always begins when he really commences that character, so all your complaints, Christians, your struggles and conflicts, your fears and distresses, all evidence a warfare, and therefore discover you to be the real followers of Jesus, and to have a principle of grace implanted. The unrenewed sinner cannot be said to be engaged in a warfare: the Christian's enemies indeed are his enemies; they will be the instruments and cause of his everlasting ruin unless destroyed; but he is insensible of it; he is easy under it; he has nothing that puts him upon making an opposition, but rather every thing tends to prevent it. His understanding is darkness, his faculties are all polluted, and he chooses his captivity; all the pleasure he enjoys lies in a subjection to his enemies. This warfare cannot then begin till a principle is implanted that leads him to God and heaven: it cannot cease till the body is dissolved, and the soul is perfectly freed from sin, and got above the reach of every enemy. Let us now,

2. Consider who the Christian's enemies, and what his difficulties are which he is called to encounter. These are many, and are such as these,—the devil,—the world,—sin.

1. The devil is the Christian's enemy. The apostle mentions “principalities and powers, rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places,” as enemies the Christian has to contend with. Eph. vi. 12. The devil was an enemy to man as soon as he was created, and so he continues. This is a subtle and most powerful enemy, he is oftentimes the cause of great distress to the soul. He knows human nature, can find easy access to us, and has a variety of temptations, all which he makes use of, as he sees they will best answer his purposes. No sooner does he find his government disturbed, but he takes the alarm, and uses his utmost skill that he lose not a subject; he appears under a variety of forms; sometimes he shews the most

envenomed malice, and is like a hungry lion roaring after his prey, ready to devour the humble sinner: thus he is represented, 1 Pet. v. 8. His darts, which he throws with the utmost rage, are called fiery. Eph vi. 16. Such are those dreadful things he frequently suggests to the mind, by which he endeavours to lead the soul to final despair, and persuade him in the agony of his Spirit to put an end to his existence. Again Satan appears in a more favourable, but really more destructive form, as an angel of light, 2 Cor xi. 15. he comes in the disguise of a friend, as Judas did to our Lord, when he said, hail, master; and kissed him. Mat. xxvi. 49. So Satan will sometimes appear a friend to religion, if he can by that prevent us from going any further than an external appearance; if he can make us take up with the shadow instead of the substance. He knows where is our weakest part, and he has a variety of ways to introduce his temptations unseen to us, that he may the more easily succeed. He takes notice of the various circumstances we are in, and suits his temptations to them, and so he continues till death, when he makes his last onset, and tries all his skill. If he cannot break the Christian's head, as a divine says, so as to keep him out of heaven; yet he will, if possible, bruise his heel, and send him limping thither; that is, fill him full of fears, and doubts, about his eternal state.

2. Another enemy the Christian has to encounter with is this world. This world may both include the things of the world, and the men of the world.

1. The things of the world are become, through the corruption of nature, snares to the Christian in his way to Zion. The honours, the pleasures, the wealth and various enjoyments of this world. These are the things Satan made use of to tempt our Lord. Mat. iv. 8. "He took him to an exceeding high mountain, and shewed him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them: and said, all these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." Agur prayed very wisely, when he desired neither poverty nor riches, Prov. xxx. 8, 4. Such a state is least exposed to snares and temptations. When persons grow in wealth and honour, they think themselves above all admonition and reproof, both from God and man; they are above all religion, imagine they have a right to treat sacred things with indifference, and act as if they were no ways ac-

countable. "When Jeshurun waxed fat, he kicked." Deut. xxxii 15. This world instead of making us thankful as it increases, it puffs us up; instead of improving it more, we are more closely attached to it. It requires great grace to keep that person humble whom the world smiles upon: to grow in grace and grow in the world are difficult things. The sinner is easily caught by the flattering honours and pleasures of the present life: he sacrifices all to them, esteems them as his God; and the Christian finds them oftentimes great hindrances to him; they are pleasing to corrupt nature, steal away the heart, and leave little for God and religion. The young man esteemed his possessions before Christ and eternal life. We had need to use the utmost caution how we pursue the honour, wealth, and pleasures of this world; they tempt us to neglect God and eternity, take us off from nobler pursuits, promise us complete happiness, but disappoint our expectations, and leave the poor deceived sinner eternally to bewail his folly.

2. The men of the world are enemies to the Christian. There was ever a war between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. It cannot be otherwise. For between corrupt nature and grace, there is the greatest opposition. The heart of man being all over polluted, it cannot entertain the least esteem for holiness, but is filled with the greatest hatred to it: for the very same reason; the natural man cannot esteem the Christian considered as a Christian. This has appeared in every age hitherto, in the persecutions that have been raised against the followers of Jesus, and the cruelties that have been inflicted upon them. Sinners can agree to violate the sacred commands of God, and run into sinful excesses; but when God is pleased to make a distinction, no sooner is one of them convinced and enlightened: no sooner does he begin to set his face Zionward; but his companions take the alarm, their agreement is over, they have lost all their esteem for him, stigmatize him with the most odious names, and do all they can to perplex and distress him in his way to a better world. What cruelties have been invented, what tortures! what racks! what painful deaths! and all to put a stop to the Christian's progress, and to oblige him, if possible, to desert the ways of Christ. It is impossible to represent the venom of the heart against God and his people: it is an unspeakable mercy the

hands of the wicked are not always at liberty to distress the righteous. There is the same spirit still prevailing, that appeared in the most fiery persecutions ; the heart itself is not changed, it only wants power and opportunity to shew its malice. If the natural man cannot exercise cruelties upon the Christian, he will reproach him, make him the subject of his profane ridicule, and do all he can to injure him in his character, reputation, and estate. This makes the Christian life a warfare : the apostle Paul found it so ; he met with the greatest difficulties in his course ; " In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft," &c. 2 Cor. xi. 23, 27. These things greatly perplex the Christian in his way to a better world, and sufficiently shew his life to be a warfare.

3. Another enemy the Christian has is sin. Sin is his worst enemy : sin has spread its dreadful contagion through every faculty of the soul, and thereby furnishes Satan and the world with fit matter to work upon. The temptations of Satan would not be near so powerful ; nor the honours and enjoyments of the world so decoying if the heart was free from all sin. But through sin it is a nest of unclean birds, it is like tinder, it catches at every spark ; it is full of all manner of wickedness and abominations ; " from the heart proceed murders, adulteries, thefts, and every thing that defiles a man," Mark. vii. 20. And though the Christian is sanctified, yet he is sanctified but in part : sin still remains in every faculty, and causes an opposition : how is he wearied with its daily assaults ? Its secret workings ? What vain thoughts does it produce, what carnal desires, what coldness and indifference to spiritual things, what interruptions in duties ? How often does it cool the Christian's love to Christ, and his people, and ways ? Damp his zeal, weaken his faith, stagger his soul, and fill him with awful fears of everlasting judgements ? How often does it lead him into captivity, provoke God to hide his face, to chastise the soul, and to bring afflictions upon him to humble and try him ? How often does it eclipse his comforts, disturb his peace, and darken his evidences, and present him with the most melancholy prospects ? How often does it lead him to dishonour God, by murmuring and repining under afflictions, by distrusting his goodness, questioning his power, disbelieving his promises, and disputing his care ?

In short, sin is a perpetual and powerful enemy, it is difficult to curb its power, to subdue its dominion, and keep it in subjection. It is the cause of all the Christian's difficulties, it fills him with innumerable fears, and lays a foundation for great distress, much labour, and continual struggles. Thus the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: these two being contrary the one to the other, cause a perpetual war, Gal. v. 17. The apostle experienced so much of the power of sin and its sad effects, that he called himself even wretched, and longed and panted after deliverance, Rom. vii. 24, &c. His soul was wearied and fatigued from day to day, and he could not but desire to be delivered. Thus we see what are the Christian's enemies, and consequently what difficulties he must grapple with before he takes his final farewell of this world: his life must be a constant struggle with sin, Satan, and the world; and therefore with innumerable afflictions and temptations, fears and doubts. What is necessary to overcome these things? How shall he get the victory? How must he withstand and conquer? This leads us,

3. To shew the weapons God has furnished his people with in the use of which they are to get the victory. In fighting, the use of suitable weapons is highly necessary: if the enemy take us unarmed, we are easily conquered. It would be madness for soldiers to go naked to the battle, without those weapons which are necessary, not only to defend their own lives, but cut off and destroy the enemy. They have armour therefore provided, and such as is fit for the purposes of fighting, by which the victory is gained. It is a greater warfare the Christian is engaged in; it requires therefore suitable armour to guard against the assaults of the enemy, suitable weapons to maintain the conflict and gain the battle. Such weapons as are every way fit for the purpose God has provided, in the use of which his people though weak in themselves, yet gain the victory and come of triumphant. The Christian's armour we have particularly described. Eph. vi. 14—18. "Stand therefore having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness, &c. This is the armour, these are the weapons that are suited to this spiritual warfare; and in and through which the Christian maintains his ground, and comes off at last a conqueror. Time forbids me to enlarge upon

each of these particulars, yet we shall take some notice of them. And the first thing mentioned is a girdle; which was in common use among the eastern nations to bind their clothes fast about them that they might have less fatigue in walking, or in their employment. There was a military girdle likewise which came about the loins, which was not only an ornament, but a means of strengthening the soldier and preparing him for the battle. The Christian's girdle is truth, soundness of judgement and heart. A necessary character of a Christian. Hypocrisy is not only odious but dangerous, destructive to the soul. Sincerity makes a person appear amiable to others, and is a great means of strengthening the Christian under those difficulties he meets with. Satan is oftentimes ready to charge the Christian with hypocrisy, insinuates to him, that all he has done is nothing but a mere form: thus the sinner also casts the utmost aspersions upon the Christian, stigmatizes him with the name of hypocrite, represents him as acting falsely and deceitfully in the ways of God, and as secretly pursuing all manner of sin. How necessary is truth then to oppose to such a temptation? It casts a lustre upon a person's character, and it strengthens and supports him under all the calumnies and reproaches that are cast upon him. Peter could appeal to Christ for his sincerity, John xxi. 17. Job was charged with hypocrisy by his friends: it was happy for him, under so heavy a charge, that his conscience cleared him, Job. xxvii. 5, 6. When we are accused unjustly, it is a pleasure to a person that his conscience can discharge him. "Satan would often whisper in my ear, that I am but an almost Christian, &c. It is true I have been guilty of many imperfections, repeated backslidings; but I would not mock God with an outward form. Lord thou knowest that I desire to be what I appear to be: I would love thee with all my heart, &c. and so far as I know myself I am sincere and upright" See to it Christians that you have your evidences of your sincerity ever clear, that you may be enabled to say, under every charge of hypocrisy, "Our rejoicing is this, "the testimony of our conscience," 2 Cor. i. 12. The next piece of armour is a breast-plate; what soldiers frequently used to wear, to guard and defend them from the designs of their enemies, and preserve them as much as possible from mortal wounds. Thus the Christian is furnished with a

breast-plate of righteousness : by which the righteousness of Christ does not seem to be meant, but our own personal righteousness. Thus this breast-plate is said to consist of love, 1 Thess. v. 8. The heart being purified, filled with love and every divine grace, is thereby defended and guarded against all temptations to apostacy, which would prove fatal to the soul. If we have the exercises of those graces which God has implanted ; if we are enabled to keep up our purposes and resolutions of obedience ; and if we are found careful to maintain good works, Satan will not so easily lead us aside, we shall be in less danger of being drawn away by sin and temptations ; and we shall have some comfortable evidences of our interest in Christ and eternal life, to keep us from that despair our enemies would drive us to, and to comfort our souls under every affliction. The next piece of warlike furniture is to have our feet shod with the *preparation of the gospel of peace*. Shoes are a necessary piece of armour to keep our feet from being hurt by the pricking thorns, the flinty stones, or other things that lie in the path in which we walk. The Christian's way to a better world is full of difficulties : it is through much tribulation that we must enter into the kingdom of God, Acts xiv. 22. It is necessary the mind should be fortified against these things : and what has a greater tendency to do it than the gospel, which speaks nothing but peace and salvation ? A mind filled with that tranquillity and comfort the gospel promises, by assurance of the divine favour and eternal life, is fitted for the various difficulties of life, and stands prepared to meet the enemy in the field. The apostle Paul was thus shod : he was full of inward peace, being assured of the divine favour, and therefore could triumph over every enemy, Rom viii. 33—39. Thus the gospel fortified him against every difficulty by its peaceful discoveries. If we are comfortably persuaded that God is for us, we shall not fear all those that are against us. Oh look into the gospel in order to have your souls prepared for the difficulties of the way : view the promises it makes, the encouragements it gives, the prospects it sets before you ; see, it is all peace ; labour therefore to have your minds possessed of it. Again, the apostle goes on to another most important and necessary piece of armour, which is the shield : *the shield of faith*. There is no fighting for the Christian with any success

without faith, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ : “ This is
“ the victory that overcometh the world even our faith,”
1 John v. 4. It was by faith the apostle Paul was enabled
to triumph over every enemy : it was by faith that all the
Old Testament saints endured so many afflictions and came
off conquerors at last : by faith the martyrs endured the fury
of the fire, triumphed over death, and nobly maintained
their steadfastness. Faith vieweth the all perfect and glori-
ous righteousness of Jesus Christ, and opposeth this to the
unworthiness, sin, and guilt of the creature : faith views all
strength and grace in the great Redeemer, and sets it against
our weakness, and is the instrument by which we derive
from our Redeemer, all that grace that is necessary to keep
us in every danger, fit us for every duty, carry us through
every conflict, and to bring us off triumphant conquerors.
Above all therefore take the shield of faith. Again the
apostle mentions *the helmet of salvation*, or as it is otherwise
expressed, *the hope of salvation*, **1 Thess. v. 8.** Faith and
hope generally go together, and are greatly necessary in the
Christian warfare. The exercise of hope, like a helmet,
fills the Christian warrior with courage ; he goes to the
battle with greater resolution, receives every assault with
firmness of mind, and stands undaunted while the fiery
darts of the wicked one are sent thick at him. With a
lively hope the soul marches against every enemy, his hope
encourages him to the conflict ; it keeps him from sinking ;
it is an anchor, it keeps him steady in the midst of every
wave, and threatening danger. While he keeps up his hope
the enemy in vain assaults him ; he presses on till he gets the
victory. See therefore that your hope be well grounded,
and lively, if you think to stand your ground and come off
conquerors. Again the apostle mentions “ the sword of
“ the Spirit, which is the word of God :” this is compared
to a two-edged sword, nay it is sharper, “ it pierces even to
the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and
marrow ; and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of
the heart.” One of the soldier’s weapons is a sword, an in-
strument useful in war : the Spirit of God makes the word
effectual as a sword to cut the sinews of temptation, to kill
and slay the enmity of the heart, to destroy every lust and
corruption, and to carry on the work of sanctification and
holiness in the soul in spite of all opposition. Converse

much with the word of God, believe its importance, and oppose a *Thus saith the Lord*, to every suggestion and temptation of Satan, and to every enemy you meet with. This was the weapon with which our Lord fought when the devil tempted him in the wilderness; he turned him to the word with an *it is written*, Mat. iv. 4, 7, 10. Lastly, the apostle mentions "prayer; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit." Prayer is a most valuable and important duty; it is a means of keeping off temptations, we are therefore to pray against them: in the use of prayer we get strength from above, by which we are enabled to persevere in the way to Zion, and gain a complete victory. Moses' prayer was more efficacious than Joshua's sword: so long as he held up his hands, Israel prevailed, Exod. xvii. 11. The Christian need not be afraid that delights in prayer, and frequently draws near to God; prayer happily fits him for the greatest conflicts; for God who hears prayer, answers his petitions and gives him what is necessary to carry him through all and bring him off triumphant. Thus we see the Christian in his armour; thus fitted for engagement he may cheerfully enter the lists with all his enemies and not be discouraged, all things shall issue well, to the glory of God, the confusion of his enemies, and his everlasting joy and happiness. We now come,

4. To consider the encouragements the Christian has to fight and engage in this warfare. And here we shall only consider three things by which the Christian appears sufficiently encouraged to engage. 1. It is a good fight. 2. He has a glorious captain who will lead him on, stand by him, and strengthen him. And 3. He has an assurance of victory.

1. It is a good fight in which he is engaged. He has no reason to hesitate about the lawfulness of engaging; it appears plainly to be his duty. It is certainly the duty of every intelligent creature to walk in constant obedience to God, and therefore with the utmost strength to resist every thing that would draw him off from his duty. It is a good fight, for it is the cause of God, it is for his glory: God is no ways honoured by a tame submission to every lust or every temptation; he is rather highly dishonoured. The way to glorify God is to oppose every enemy, to hate every sin, to crucify every lust, to shun every snare, and to press

on in a course of faith and obedience. It is a good fight, for God calls us to it and approves of us in it. This is the consequence of implanting grace in the heart. It produces immediately an opposition to every enemy, stirs up the Christian to a most vigorous contention, and never ceases resistance till it comes off victorious. God therefore manifestly approves of it : for it is by his assistance that the Christian is enabled to stand his ground, and come off a conqueror. For he, in himself, is weak and absolutely unequal to so great a work, and unless the almighty Redeemer was to give him all suitable strength, he must fall an easy sacrifice to every enemy. It is a good fight, for it will issue in the Christian's everlasting happiness, it can be no ways pernicious or destructive to him : it may be indeed uncomfortable ; the contention may cause him much distress, but it will end well : it is therefore for the Christian's interest to engage in this spiritual warfare. A submission to his enemies will be attended with the most dreadful consequences ; nothing less than an everlasting banishment from God, and unspeakable and everlasting misery and wretchedness. Again it is a good fight for it will bear a reflection. There are many things we do that will not bear a review ; our consciences, unless hardened, immediately rebuke us on a consideration of neglect of duty, or actual commission of sin. But every resistance against sin, every struggle with our spiritual enemies will bear a reviewing ; the review will be so far from galling our consciences, that it will afford pleasure : and all our uneasiness will be, that we have not contended with greater warmth, that we have not resisted with greater force, every temptation. The apostle Paul was just upon the borders of an eternal world, he had eternity in view, yet behold ; he is not startled at the prospect, nor uneasy at a consideration of the opposition he had been enabled to make to every enemy : no, he rather speaks it with the highest pleasure : " I have fought," &c. I am now going to appear before God ; going to give an account of my stewardship, and be fixed for ever ; and I can, in this important crisis, look back with an undisturbed serenity of mind upon my Christian warfare ; the thoughts of my contention with my spiritual enemies do not give the least terror to death ; no, I bless God I have been enabled to fight : it is a good cause in which I have been em-

barked, it will bear me out in the views of death, and give me pleasure in my last moments. Not that I have merited any thing : no, all my dependence is upon my dear Redeemer; and I bless him that has enabled me to fight a good fight, which is an evidence of my love to and my interest in him. Thus it is a good fight and this is a sufficient encouragement to engage in it. Christians, you will never be ashamed either here or hereafter of your fighting this good fight ; it is the interest of Christ ; it is the interest of your souls ; it is for the glory of God. Was it a bad cause, or did it want any evidence of its being truly good and excellent, you might hesitate ; but hear a dying person, one who had tried it, who had met with many enemies, uncommon difficulties, hear this brave apostle just before he bids all things an everlasting farewell, hear him in this critical moment, pronouncing it, as it were with his last breath, a good fight ; worth our engaging in. This is the trying time, the hour of death : now the world appears as nothing : now sin discovers all its odiousness ; now the worldling sees his disappointment : the proud rebel begins to start, looks aghast, and wishes he had, like others, fought a good fight : he finds he has been doing wrong and must be ruined. The Christian is the only person that can now on good grounds rejoice—I have fought, &c. Be not discouraged, but continue your conflicts, you will never have reason to repent of it.

2. The captain of your salvation will stand by, encourage and strengthen you. It is a thing of considerable moment in a battle to have a brave commander, a good leader, one who will lead on, stand by, and not desert the men ; but encourage and help them in the hour of danger. Such a commander has the Christian warrior : a glorious captain, Jesus Christ, who loves him and will never desert him. Fight under his banner ; follow him, and whatever engagements he calls you to, he will encourage and strengthen you in. Christ has promised to be with his people always, even unto the end of the world. He has never yet forsaken any : his people have been oftentimes in great dangers ; engaged with powerful enemies, almost ready to be led captive : they have frequently to appearance been upon the point of giving up all hope, ready to stagger and conclude it is all over ; when the captain of their salvation has encouraged and strengthened them, stirred them up to a fresh contention and enabled

them to hold on and persevere with courage and cheerfulness.

“ Fear not for I am with thee, be not dismayed for I am thy God, I will help thee ; yea I will strengthen thee, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.” Isa. xli. 10. “ I will never leave thee nor forsake thee,” Heb. xiii. 5 These promises have been always, and shall ever be fulfilled. Will God call his people out to fight not only with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, with enemies numerous and powerful, and leave them to grapple by themselves ? No, his people have always hitherto found him kind and faithful ; and so they will to the end of the world, when every enemy will be vanquished and their salvation be fully completed. What an encouragement is this to enter the lists, and fight with every enemy ? Had we no one to lead us on, to stand by us, to assist and strengthen us, we might then be discouraged from such an attempt : but when we have so brave a captain to fight under, one who is heartily attached to our interest, one who really loves us and will never leave us, it is enough to embolden and animate us ; to spur us on, and to quicken us to the engagement. You may trust your Redeemer, he will stand by you, he may suffer you to be hard pressed in the engagement; but in the hour of extremity he will help you, he will keep you with his mighty hand, support your sinking spirits, and encourage your souls to perseverance and fortitude.

3. The Christian has a sure prospect of victory. Was the case uncertain and dubious the Christian might be afraid of a disappointment ; the young beginner might be discouraged in his entrance upon this warfare ; but there is an absolute certainty of victory. The most experienced commanders, the best disciplined soldiers are not sure of success, when they enter upon engagement. The battle is not always to the strong, nor the race to the swift ; the wisest are often-times puzzled, and the bravest and most resolute overcome ; but it is not the case here, the Christian soldier fights upon sure grounds. Not that the victory is obtained by his own strength and prudence ; for who is sufficient for these things ? Was he to fight alone he must lose the battle, and be led a captive ; but though weak in himself, he is strong in his mighty Redeemer : “ I can do all things,” says the apostle, “ through Christ Jesus strengthening me,” He that

loves the Christian will bring him off a conqueror. None shall ever be able to pluck his people out of his hands ; the gates of hell shall not be able to prevail against them. What are principalities and powers, what are all earthly snares and temptations, nay what is sin itself, though never so deeply rooted in the soul ? All must yield to an almighty power, when that is displayed. The Christian may be led into captivity, the apostle Paul himself was, but though he fall he shall arise again, resume the fight, and conquer at last. Why may the Christian be sure of conquest and victory ? Because God has promised it, Christ has purchased it, and he gives him strength to overcome. All the enemies the believer has are not a match for him, considering him as united to Christ, and strengthened by him ; he has no reason to despond, but to rejoice and triumph ; a little time and his warfare shall be accomplished and the victory be his. This by no means weakens his endeavours or makes him indolent : though the glory is Christ's, yet the victory is got in the use of means. It encourages the Christian then to faith and prayer, and to put on that armour which God has appointed. What can animate the soul more than an assurance of conquest ? It will not be always so, oh my soul ; Look forward to that day when thou shalt be proclaimed a conqueror. Now I languish at times under fears, I am ready to be pressed down with difficulties, but it will not be long before I shall get above the reach of all my enemies, and sing victory and salvation. Hark the apostle triumphs in his last moments : the trumpet sounds to tell him the victory is his, the battle is just over and his enemies are all vanquished. I have fought a good fight. I have encountered a variety of enemies, I have laboured hard and been pressed sore, but now it is almost over ; a few struggles more, and I shall gain the field, a few more conflicts and my warfare will be accomplished : I am now in view of the prize, and in a little time I shall enjoy it. Thus did the great apostle conquer at last, and so shall every real Christian, through his almighty and glorious Redeemer.

i. Hence then we learn, it is not an easy thing to be a Christian. The soldier that is always in the field has hard service, he must be ever upon his guard, lest the enemy should surprise him : he must endure cold, be subject to hunger and thirst, learn to habituate himself to hard-

ness, if he would stand his ground, and discharge his duty. Christians must endure hardness like good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

The Christian's life is a warfare, a continual warfare; from the first moment of his spiritual life to his possessing the crown, he must be ever upon his watch; he has enemies continually endeavouring to lead him captive, watching every opportunity to beat him from his ground, he must not be indolent or slothful. Think not a little will do; it is not a few weak desires, or feeble attempts that make a Christian; if you think to meet with no difficulties you will be mistaken, you had best sit down and count the cost. Lusts and corruptions the most pleasing to nature, must be subdued and mortified: Satan and hell conquered: the soul must stand against the temptations of the world, and follow Jesus till death, through all difficulties and opposition: this it is to be a Christian: we had best inquire whether we have only the shadow without the substance, that we be not deceived and meet with a disappointment. It is difficult work to fight the good fight: it costs many prayers and tears, many hard struggles before the Christian comes to Zion. You that are contenting yourselves with only a form, are but almost Christians: the believer has great and difficult work to do, with which you are entirely unacquainted.

2. Hence learn, how it is the Christian overcomes, and to whom all the glory is due. It is not by his strength, but in the strength of Christ that he conquers sin, Satan, and the world. The apostle did not attribute any thing to himself, he did not take the glory of conquering his enemies; for he in many places declares his own weakness, and his dependence upon Jesus Christ for grace and strength to overcome. The armour which God has provided points out to whom the glory of victory is due; faith, hope, and prayer all give the glory to Jesus Christ, to whom it is justly due. We must depend upon him if ever we come off with honour. It is a mistake here that causes many to miscarry: they begin in their own strength, they continue for a little while, but soon tire and faint, give up the conquest and fall a sacrifice to their enemies. We from hence then see how necessary it is that the sinner should have a sense of his own weakness in order to his setting out right in the ways of God, and consequently how needful it is that the gospel

should be preached, as it opens to us the way of salvation, and leads us to the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom alone it is that we overcome. May we learn to depend upon him, apply to him, and give him all the glory.

3. What a difference there is between earth and heaven, and how happy is the Christian when he has got safe above. Earth is a firesome and fatiguing place; we meet with nothing but difficulties to retard us in our way to Zion; nothing but snares and temptations to entice our affections from God; here we groan under the weight and pressure of sin; our souls hang the wing, and we are oftentimes disconsolate and melancholy. But above there is no enemy to encounter, no difficulties to perplex, no ensnaring objects to lead us from God: there the wicked cease from trouble, and there the weary are at everlasting rest. Oh happy souls that have got the victory, and are introduced into their Redeemer's kingdom; now they have no tormenting cares, their fears are all scattered, their conflicts are for ever over, their enemies are placed at an everlasting distance, and they are triumphing as conquerors; as those who have gained the day, and are now wearing the immortal crown. Oh who would not long to be there? Who would not fight the good fight, to wear so glorious a crown at last? Who would not be willing to put off this earthly tabernacle to be with Jesus? Look within the veil, oh my soul, and see the glory that is prepared; view the place, see how it will be when thou hast got the victory, and rejoice in the vast, the immortal prospect.

S E R M O N X I V.

THE CHRISTIAN'S COURSE.

2 TIM. iv. 7, 8.

I have finished my Course.

TO die is something solemn and important; the soul had need to have somewhat to support him in the critical moment. To have a just sense of the worth of a soul, and the importance of eternity is enough to make us sink, unless we can see our sins forgiven, and the Saviour smiling. It is not every one that, like the apostle Paul, can face the king of terrors with boldness and resolution. Nature shudders at the awful shock, and is ready to start back at the boundless prospect, till God comes with his divine consolations, and cheers our fainting spirits, by telling us all is well, and giving us a pleasing view of approaching glory. The apostle Paul had laboured hard in his master's service, and he was well rewarded both in this life and in that to come; he had not only the enjoyment of the prize at last; but he had a comfortable prospect of it here. The thoughts of bidding an everlasting farewell to all earthly things, did not give him the least uneasiness; he received the tidings of death with that bravery, that calmness and cheerfulness which are peculiar to the Christian; and talked of his dying, nay of his awful manner of dying, with all the composure of

a follower of Christ. He viewed his past life, and though he could see many imperfections, yet he rejoiced that God had enabled him to *fight a good fight*, and to bear his testimony in the midst of enemies, and opposition to his dear Redeemer; he looked forward and though all was eternity, yet he was not affrighted, for he saw the crown prepared, the judge ready to put it upon his head, and multitudes of glorified saints to be his company, to join him in his everlasting Hosannahs, and songs of victory and salvation. *I have fought*—From these words we proposed,

I. To consider the pleasing reflections the apostle takes of that part of his life which he had spent in his Redeemer's service.

II. The glorious prospect he had before him, and the triumphant frame of his soul under that amiable view. We have entered upon the first of these; and have considered that part of our text which represents the Christian life under the similitude of a warfare.

We now come to the apostle's 2d, reflection. I have finished my course. Here the apostle evidently compares the Christian life to a race; another of the Olympic games, in which he that first reached the goal was presented with a prize, a garland of flowers, which though of no intrinsic value, yet was esteemed a mark of distinguishing honour. Thus the Christian sets forward in his way to heaven, he runs his heavenly race, at last finishes his course, reaches the mark and receives the prize. In our further treating upon this I shall,

I. Consider the way or path in which the Christian is to run.

II. How we are to run so as to finish our course with advantage.

III. The encouragement we have to run this race.

I. We are to consider the way or path in which the Christian is to run. This is essential to a race; there must be a way a path appointed and determined in which persons were to run. Such there is in the heavenly race; the end is eternal life, the way is appointed and determined by God who gives the prize, and he has marked it out, and revealed it to us in his word. This way we find to be a way of faith and holiness.

i. The way in which the Christian is to run is a way of

faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus Christ calls himself the way, John xiv. 6. Christ has opened a way for us into the holiest of all, and he is likewise the way thither. He satisfied infinite justice for the sins of his people, appeased the wrath of God and opened a way for the conveyance of grace and mercy in the everlasting salvation of the guilty. And had he not undertook this great and important work, we must have been in the most deplorable circumstances. None being equal to it but he who graciously condescended to undertake it, and has gone gloriously through it. It is accordingly through faith in him that we become partakers of the blessings he has purchased. Thus God has every where revealed faith in Christ as the way to salvation. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life," John iii. 16. "He that believeth shall be saved." Mark xvi. 16. "Being justified by faith we have peace with God." Rom. v. 1. "By grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God," Eph. ii. 8. "Without faith it is impossible to please God" Heb. xi. 6. This is the way he has appointed, and he will approve of no other. How can we reasonably expect acceptance with God in any other way but that which he has determined? This would be supposing him a weak imperfect being; defective in his wisdom or changeable in his nature and purposes. It supposes God to reveal a way of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, that this is the way he has determined and appointed, but yet it supposes him accepting of a creature who is prejudiced against the way of faith, and sets up one of his own in opposition thereto: it is arrogance to attempt to put God upon a level with changeable creatures, he is of one mind and who can turn him? It is through faith in Christ that we must be justified. The apostle tells us it is by that righteousness "which is of God, by faith," Phil. iii. 9. And that is none but the righteousness of Jesus Christ, which is graciously imputed to us and received by faith. The apostle tells the Galatians, they did once run well. "Who hindered you, that ye should not obey the truth," Gal. v. 7. Ye once firmly believed the doctrine of justification by the righteousness of Christ. Who is it, has turned you out of the way? This is the good old way; a way that has

been tried ; a way in which all who have run have reached the mark and got the prize : it is the most comfortable way, it gives the Christian the highest courage, the greatest intrepidity in every danger, and the sweetest composure in the views of death : it is, in short, the best way, the safest to walk in , we cannot miscarry here, but must finish our course well, and be put into the possession of the crown.

2. The way the Christian is to run is a way of holiness. “ I will run the way of thy commandments,” says the Psalmist, “ when thou shalt enlarge my heart,” Psa. cxix. 32. Faith is productive (wherever it is) of universal obedience. God, in the everlasting covenant, determined holiness to be the way to everlasting happiness ; thus he hath chosen his people “ through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of “ the truth,” 2 Thes. ii. 13. “ He hath not called us to “ uncleanness but to holiness,” 1 Thes. iv. 7. God has appointed a certain measure of grace and holiness, which every one of his people shall fill up before they are introduced into his kingdom above. This is fitly called a course ; a course that is limited and laid out, in which those that are engaged in a race are to run. In a race there is a quantity of ground laid out, at the end of which a mark is fixed, he that runs and first reaches the mark receives the prize : Thus with great propriety is the Christian life compared to a race, there is an appointed mark which they must through divine grace reach ; before they enter into rest, for so it is appointed. Not that this has any casual influence upon the prize so as to merit it ; the prize they receive as a free gift ; but holiness is a meetness for heaven, and the different measures and degrees of it God has fixed, and we find it different in different persons. Christians, in proceeding on this course, do it not with the same life and vigour ; some appear cold and indifferent, whilst others are quick and lively ; some make great advances, whilst others go on by slow degrees. Some begin the heavenly race soon, in the bloom of life, whilst others loiter till towards the evening of their days. Some make quick improvements and through Christ finish their course soon, go off the stage of life, and receive the crown of glory ; whilst the race of others is long ; they begin in youth, and continue their zeal and patience, their faith and labour of love till a good old age. However all are made holy, and they bring forth the fruits of holiness :

Not that they arrive at perfection in this life ; it is impossible. Nevertheless we are to seek after advances in holiness, knowing that the nearer we approach to perfection, the more shall we be like unto God, in a conformity to whom lies our greatest honour. The way of sin leads down to the bottomless pit ; it is the way of holiness alone that ends in eternal life.

II. We now come to consider how we are to run, that we may finish our course with advantage. If we examine the word of God and the Christian's experience, we shall find the following things to be necessary. 1. That every weight should be cast off, as the apostle expresses it. 2. That we begin right and continue so, viz. In a dependence upon Christ. 3. That we are armed with patience, courage, and resolution. 3. That we be watchful and diligent. And 5. That we keep pressing forward and persevere to the end of our course.

1. That we may run the Christian race well, it is necessary that we cast off every weight. A person that runs chooses not to be overburdened, because it may retard him in his way, he may soon tire, and faint, and lose the prize. In allusion to this the apostle Paul exhorts us, " to lay aside every weight; and the sin which so easily besets us, and so run the race that is set before us " . Heb. xii. 1. We have many things that prove as weights to press us down, and make our running difficult. The love of present things is a burdensome load ; a too close attachment to this world is greatly injurious to the Christian, it clogs him in his race, makes him run heavily on, and make but little progress. The young man seemed setting out full speed towards eternal life, but when he came to find he was to part with his worldly possessions he gave over the heavenly pursuit. Mat. xix. 22. Every weight must be in some measure removed ; whatever we find to clog, confine, and hinder us in our race we must lay aside ; the sin therefore that so easily besets us, whatever it is, whether pride or passion, covetousness, envy, uncleanness, &c It must be laid aside, or there will be little or no progress made. There is a sin in every one that is generally distinguished by the name of constitution sin ; that is, it is a sin that appears to be interwoven with our very constitutions ; it is the sin that is most predominant in us, to which we are most inclined, and which most of all leads

us aside. This sin cannot but retard the Christian's progress, it vexes and frequently disturbs him; and unless greatly mortified and subdued, it makes him almost ready to faint, staggers his soul, and causes the greatest perplexity. How necessary is it then to our running well that this, nay every sin be subdued? unless the dominion of sin is destroyed in the soul, he cannot run to advantage; it will effectually confine and keep him down. Therefore you must inquire whether sin reigns in your hearts, whether you love it, and your happiness lies in the pursuit and practice of it; if so, there is no running this race. A work of sanctification must be begun, whereby your souls may be in some measure at liberty to set forward in the heavenly race; this being previous to it.

2. In order to run well we must begin and continue in a dependence upon Christ. To begin wrong is the same as not to attempt it. We are naturally too fond of ourselves, and too ready to apprehend that we are capable of doing every thing in a Christian life by our own strength. With these imaginations the sinner makes some attempt, begins a reformation, abstains from the practice of various sins, attends the means of grace, reads the word, and perhaps prays, and seems resolved for heaven; but the difficulties he meets with soon overpower him, his corruptions begin again to assault him and to be predominant for him; he retains a pleasing remembrance of former gratifications; a coldness in duty, and so he gives up the conflict, and returns again to folly. If we should succeed in the Christian race, we must set out right. This is a matter of the utmost importance. How necessary is it then that the sinner's impotency and weakness should be represented to him, that he may guard against flattery and self dependence? How necessary that Jesus should be represented as our strength, as well as righteousness; that we may go to him for all we want, and walk in a constant dependence upon him: without him we can do nothing. The difficulties we meet with in our way would perplex and weary us, was it not for our almighty Redeemer. The corruptions in our hearts would soon prevail, cool our affections, stop our progress, and entice us from God, was there nothing to curb and subdue them. We had need be ever sending up our petitions to our glorious Redeemer; "draw us, we will run after thee." Cant. i. 4. He must

enliven us with his gracious smiles ; he must give us fresh strength continually to strive with and surmount every difficulty ; he must quicken our desires, or else we shall loiter in our race, grow faint and weary, and proceed no further. They must be absolutely unacquainted with their own hearts, who imagine they are equal to every duty and difficulty, and will not depend upon the great Redeemer, for his kind and necessary assistance. Christians you must have your eyes up continually to Jesus ; your dependence upon him : " run the race that is set before you, looking to Jesus the author and finisher of your faith," exercising faith in him, and expecting all that strength from him, by which alone you will be enabled to hold on and finish your course with advantage.

3. We must run with patience, courage, and resolution. Thus says the apostle, " run with patience the race that is set before you." Heb. xii. 1. The ground that is laid out for a race, the path in which they are to run, is not always smooth and even ; sometimes there are steep ascents, or the way is rough and rugged ; that those that run cannot make that speed they would desire ; they may stumble and fall, and be some time before they reach the mark. Thus it is in the Christian race. The way is not so easy and smooth as many may imagine, it is full of difficulties : the Christian must ascend many mountains of opposition, and run through valleys dark and difficult before he gets to the end of his race. He meets with many things that clog him in his way, dispirit and perplex him, try his faith and patience, and call for great courage and resolution : sometimes he that runs in a race is ready to be dispirited, and was he not to take fresh courage at the view of the prize he must give out ; thus it is with the Christian. He is often tossed between hope and fear : sometimes he has the prize in view, and hopes to enjoy it ; at other times it is lost in darkness, he cannot see it, his hopes begin to flag, and his soul to be discouraged. And now there is need of patience, fortitude, and resolution to bear up his mind in such a painful dilemma, and to encourage him to wait and hope, and still keep on in expectation of the prize. Patience is a most valuable grace, it is greatly suited to the present difficult and perplexing state, and keeps the soul from sinking under those difficulties it meets with, composes the mind, quiets every tu-

multuous passion, and helps the Christian to press on in opposition to every discouragement. Some meet indeed comparatively, or however apparently with but few obstacles in their way: the path seems smooth and pleasant, and they hold out with cheerfulness, see the prize before them, and rejoice in the prospect; whilst others languish along the road, are often ready to grow faint and give over; meeting with a variety of difficulties to try their faith, before they reach the goal. Some finish their course with cheerfulness, smile at the shady valley of death, and bravely withstand every enemy in their way, until they have reached the mark and got the prize; whilst others droop, hang their harps upon the willows, and start at the appearance of that immortality, which will crown their labours with a most glorious and exalted happiness. However every Christian meets with something to exercise his patience and to shew the necessity of resolution and courage. Do your souls hang the wing? Are you ready to faint and give out? You are not the first: exercise a little patience, and all your difficulties will soon be over. Why do you meet with mountains of opposition? It is to try your faith, that God may be glorified in your patience, that you may wait and depend upon him for the prize, and receive it at last with unspeakable thankfulness. Be not disheartened, this is not the way to reach the goal; but be of good courage, "you shall reap if you faint not."

4. We must be watchful and diligent. A person who runs a race must be active and diligent, not slothful and careless: he may then lose the prize. The Christian must be active and speedy. To run signifies as much as speedily to go forward, Gal. v. 7. to make haste, Prov. i. 16. it signifies readiness of affection. Thus it points out that diligence and activity we ought to discover in our Christian race: the slothful person that hid his talent in the earth, was cast into outer darkness where there is weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth, Mat. xxv. 30. We must strive to enter in at the strait gate, Luke xiii. 24. The apostle was diligent in his race, his mind was bent upon it; having his eye fixed upon the prize, he was active: he forgot those things that were behind, he did not loiter and look back, but, as a person in a race, kept his eye upon the prize, he looked and he pressed forward; the nearer he came to the

goal the more he pushed, as a runner exerts all his strength; and throws himself forward to reach the mark, Phil. iii: 13, 14. He was upon his guard, lest he should be retarded; he watched over his heart, mortified the deeds of the body, and took the utmost care that he was not hindered in his course, 1 Cor. ix. 24, 27. "Know ye not that they that run in a race run all,—so run that ye may obtain.—Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things.—I therefore so run not as uncertainly, so fight I, not as one that beateth the air, but I keep my body under, and bring it into subjection, &c. Take heed to yourselves," says our Lord, "lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, drunkenness and the cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares," Luke xxi. 24. A person overloaded with liquor is not fit to run a race: no more are those fit for the Christian race who are full of sensuality. Be upon your guard, Christian, the way you run is difficult, and it is attended with many snares and temptations; Satan, the world and your own hearts will oppose your progress, stand in the way and lead you astray: every fall you have, every stumble you make, every snare you fall into will be a hindrance to you; will harass and perplex you, and cause you much labour and difficulty. Watch therefore and pray that you enter not into temptation; be up and doing, be not indolent, you may have many steps yet to go, many difficulties yet to encounter before you reach the goal; "gird up the loins of your mind then, be sober and watch unto the end," 1 Pet. i. 13. See that your minds are more upon the stretch; that you make more speed, that you loiter not; in fine, take care that your loins be girt and your lights burning, that you may be waiting for the coming of your Lord and master.

5. We must keep pressing forward and persevere to the end of our course.—A person that runs in a race, keeps on; if he stumbles and falls, he gets up and goes forward: he is approaching nearer and nearer the mark every step he takes. Running signifies making progress. This is not always visible in the Christian: he sometimes appears to decay, languish and go backward; but there are different ways of growth: the Christian may grow in grace and make some progress though it may not be so visible to himself and

others.—Trees in winter appear dead and wither, but in the spring, revive and flourish: the Christian often meets with winter seasons: he is cold and almost frozen, but when the sun of righteousness begins to arise, and like the sun, in his return from the winter solstice, spreads his glorious beamis, the Christian begins to look beautiful and flourishing, “he goes forth and grows up like calves of the “ stall,” Mal. iv. 2. We should be ever concerned to go forward, and to have it visible to ourselves, and others, that we do so. Christians, if you stumble and fall, lie not still! but up and press on. Loiter not, but keep the prize always in your eye; and be moving towards it: you cannot run well unless you hold on and persevete. “He that is faithful unto death shall receive a crown of life.” Rev. ii. 10. “He that endureth unto the end shall be saved,” Mat. x. 22. You may meet with many discouragements, but still keep on, the further you go, the less ground remains to be trod, therefore let not your hearts be troubled; neither be afraid, but keep on one steady course; the nearer you come to the end of your race, be the more active, let the prospect of victory animate and quicken you, and let nothing be in your minds but to finish your course, and to enjoy the prize. We come now to consider,

III. The encouragement Christians have to run this race. It is attended with toil and difficulty, the believer must take perhaps many wearisome steps before he reaches the mark, but this should be no discouragement; let none be alarmed at the prospect of difficulties; there is enough to quicken and strengthen the soul in this race; for instance, 1. There is a glorious crown before us. 2. He that begins aright shall at length certainly finish his course. 3. Every one that finishes his course shall as surely receive the prize.

I. There is a glorious crown in prospect. I shall not here particularly inquire into the nature of this crown, that will be considered when we come to the latter part of our text. I shall only consider now the Christian’s crown as glorious, to shew the encouragement he has diligently and patiently to run the race set before him. The prize which the heathen conquerors received in their games, was only a crown, or garland of flowers, or greens: a low prize indeed! of no intrinsic value, only those who gained it were esteemed as victors; and it was reckoned a mark of honour;

though in itself it was a mean, empty, insignificant trifle, not worth contending for. Whereas the Christian's prize is glorious, unspeakably glorious: our Redeemer's service is not an unprofitable service; he is no hard master; he not only fits for his service those whom he calls to it, but freely rewards them at last: were they to have nothing but what they really merited and deserved, they must come short of this prize; there is no proportion between our services, and the crown of glory. Judge not therefore of its value by the performance of duty: estimate not its worth according to the manner in which you have served your Redeemer: behold it as the purchase of the great Redeemer, God and man, view it as his gift, given to glorify and exalt the riches of his grace, and you cannot but entertain the most raised conceptions of it. The crown we have in prospect is no low earthly trifle; it is not made up of corruptible things as silver and gold; but of blessings inconceivably more exalted, such as eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, and which the heart of man is incapable of conceiving: blessings not of a day, not transient and fading, but incorruptible, immortal, everlasting. Is not this then sufficient encouragement to run the Christian race? Shall the young beginner be discouraged at a prospect of difficulties? Shall the Christian that has long toiled, tire and faint at last? No, look forward to that day when the Christian's crown will be displayed in all its glory: look into the veil, where the prize is laid up, and see its glory. And is not this enough to overbalance every sorrow, every weary and painful step? Mark what the apostle says. He had well considered every step of the Christian's race, the difficult wilderness he was to pass through, the sufferings he was to endure, and the end of his pilgrimage, the glory he should at last receive; he had well weighed every circumstance in his mind, had put this life in one scale, and glory in another, and found the latter by far to overbalance the former. "I reckon therefore," says he, "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy " to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed " in us," Rom. viii. 18. This then is a glorious encouragement to the Christian, and should quicken him in his way, support his spirits when ready to faint, and bear up his mind under the most pressing difficulties. Moses had his eye upon the recompence of the reward above, when he

turned his back upon the glory of the Egyptian court, entered upon the Christian race, and made choice of his afflictions: the prospect encouraged him, amidst those trials he met with; and he frequently took a view to strengthen his mind, Heb. xi. 25. Thus the Christian has the greatest encouragement to hold on with the greatest fortitude; the crown he has in prospect will make ample amends for every tear, every struggle, every painful step; it will be far above his expectations, far beyond his utmost reach of thought. Oh glorious encouragement! What difficulties can alarm the soul that has such a prospect? See, Oh my soul, what is before thee: canst thou think what is laid up within the veil? A glorious crown, a crown immortal and everlasting: not made of earthly materials: far beyond all sensible enjoyments: How then can I think of loitering, or fainting, in my race? Shall mortals, ambitious of a little earthly honour, run with the utmost cheerfulness and vigour! Shall they despise the difficulties of the race and press on to reach the mark? And shall not a prospect of immortal honour, awaken me to the utmost diligence, encourage me under every difficulty, and help me to press forward? Can I faint, lie down weary of my toils, and give up the crown? No my soul, have thine eye upon the prize, consider its magnificence and that will quicken thee in thy way, and enable thee to hold on.

2. He that begins his race aright, shall finish his course.—It is a principal thing in the Christian race to set out in the right path: too many are ready to mistake the way, and therefore never come to the mark, and gain the prize. Here we are liable to err; we are enemies naturally to the way which God has appointed, and vainly think that which is most agreeable to our own apprehensions is the most agreeable to God and safe for us. Thus we mistake at first, in the matter of the greatest importance, and wander until we are absolutely and eternally lost, unless God is pleased to lead us into the right way. Some there are, that to appearance begin right, but soon tire, and faint, and give up. Their zeal abates, their love grows cold, they cannot encounter with so many difficulties; they cannot resist the risings of corruption, they cannot live a life of faith and mortification, they soon grow weary and give up the contest. These, notwithstanding their appearance, never began

right. Had they really had the dominion of sin subdued, grace implanted, and been enabled to give up themselves really and sincerely into the hands of Jesus Christ, they would have continued until they had finished their course and got the prize. This therefore should not be the least discouragement to the humble soul; for where the good work is begun, it shall be carried on until it is perfected, and every one that really begins the race shall reach the mark. The great question is, have you been made sensible of your weakness, your guilt, and unworthiness, and your inequality to the difficulties of the Christian race? And have you been enabled to cast your whole dependence upon the great Redeemer? Have you, under a sense of sin and guilt, been enabled to fly to Jesus Christ as your only sanctuary? Is it your concern to seek to, and depend on him daily for grace, wisdom, and strength to enable you to hold on? In short, is Christ your all! You may then be encouraged, though the way be rugged and difficult; he to whom you have committed yourselves will guide, direct, support, and keep you, and at last give you the prize. It is only those that depend upon their own strength, and are empty professors that faint and give up: not those who are united to Christ depend upon him, and are partakers of his grace, such cannot lose the prize; he has put his spirit within them, to carry on the work of sanctification and holiness in them, to guide and direct them in the way they should go; to quicken and enliven them when slothful, to support them when weak, to encourage them when cast down; and to fill them with fortitude and courage, resolution and faithfulness, and enable them to press forward and hold on their way till they finish their course, and get the prize. Fear not ye humble souls that have set your faces Zion-wards; you shall not faint and give up; the more sensible you are of your own weakness, the more you go to Christ as your strength and righteousness, and the less you are in danger of being drawn aside out of the path that leads to eternal life, be of good courage, you shall so run as to obtain: none in your circumstances ever yet came short. Thousands have been afraid, as well as you, were ready to faint, thought they must tire, stop and go no further; but have been again quickened, set on with fresh vigour, and, through the strength of their Redeemer, finished their course with joy.

Seeing then there is so great a cloud of witnesses, be encouraged to run the race with patience, in hopes that you also, through the same glorious power, shall reach the mark and possess the crown. The apostle Paul was but a man, a weak and frail man like us ; he was not equal to the difficulties of the Christian race, of himself : yet he was enabled to hold on till he came to the end : hear him intimating the same just before he took possession of the prize. “ I have finished my course.” I have been long sweating and toiling in the Christian race, I have met with many hindrances and obstructions in my way : I have laboured hard, have been often ready to faint ; I have had many stumbles ; but, blessed be God, I have been enabled to keep on, I have still pressed forward, and now I am just come to the end of my course, my difficulties are just over, a few steps more and I shall reach the mark, and receive the prize. Thus did the apostle triumph ; thus did he finish his race well, and now has got the crown in sure possession ; be not afraid you shall hold on likewise, he that kept him will keep you, direct, quicken and encourage you, and enable you to persevere unto the end, that you may have eternal life.

Every one that finishes his course, shall receive the prize. This is not the case amongst men ; many perhaps run, but there is but one that can receive the prize : he that first reaches the mark has the honour and advantage of the prize ; those that are behind, though they come afterwards to the goal, yet they have no part therein, but it is not so in the Christian race ; every one that comes to the goal, and finishes his course, whether it is sooner or later has the crown. “ Know ye not,” says the apostle, “ that they which run in a race, run all ; but one receiveth the prize ?” Though never so many set out with expectation, all must meet with a disappointment except one ; “ so run that ye may obtain. 1 Cor. ix. 24. Though our race is not the same with theirs, though not only he that comes first to the mark, but every one that finishes his course shall be crowned ; yet it requires the utmost activity and diligence ; the case is not indeed who is first at the goal ; but the path is full of difficulties, and the great concern in the Christian race is to reach the goal. Many, to appearance set out well, but faint in the way, tire and give out. Therefore the apostle’s exhortation is necessary : so run, that is, as those in a race,

that strive who shall be foremost, so do ye strive to hold on your course; It is of no importance whether you reach the mark before others or not; if you get thither, whether it is first or last, you shall have the prize. This then cannot but be an encouragement to the Christian in running the race that is set before him: has he an assurance of reaching the mark, and as soon as he reaches the mark shall he be crowned? What should discourage him then in pursuing the track that is marked out for him? Do others finish their course before him? Are many that set out with him in this heavenly race, got to the end of their journey, and rejoicing in the possession of the prize? He shall at length reach the goal himself, and join them in giving everlasting praises to him that enabled them to finish their course well, and has given to each the prize of immortality. Oh happy news! What encouragements are here! the prize is glorious, you shall all, that begin in Christ finish your course, and every one that does so shall be crowned. To conclude, with some improvement of the point.

1. The further we proceed in our text, the more we see the difficulty of the Christian life, and the vanity of their hopes who content themselves with a mere form. The last metaphor wherein the Christian life is compared to the warfare, shews the difficulties of it; and so does this, wherein it is compared to a race; a race signifies much labour and toil; that our minds must be upon the stretch, our souls active and armed with patience; that we must watch and strive, and press forward with all our might. Oh you that imagine a little will do in religion, and therefore are not concerned to be active or diligent in the pursuit of spiritual and eternal things! See the vanity of your hopes, the stupidity of your souls; see how Satan is lulling you into an easy security, when you are in the utmost dangers, will you not believe there is much difficulty in religion, that it requires much labour and toil? Look into our text; and give us a reason, why the Christian life is compared to a fight, and to a race? Do not these and many other similitudes in the word of God point out plainly, that it is not an easy thing to be a Christian indeed? And will you not yet believe? Are you determined to run the venture, when the scriptures are so evidently against you? The consequence must be dreadful! Oh be not content with a few faint wishes, an

external shew of appearance, but examine yourselves. And in earnest seek after eternal life. Mind religion as the one thing needful.

2. How foolish are all those that run eagerly after perish-
ing enjoyments, and neglect the prize of immortality! The
prize men generally run for, is of an earthly nature, yet see
how many have been willing to contend for it. The Chris-
tian's prize is glorious and immortal, as it is expressed,
1 Cor. ix. 25. "They do it to obtain a corruptible crown;
" but we an incorruptible." And yet how few aim at this
glorious prize!

3. What arguments are there for running this race. Sit
down a while and consider; examine the case impartially;
view the different objects men are pursuing, and consider
what is the issue of their pursuits. See the natural man
toiling for a little glittering gold, or a little honour which
will soon leave him. See the Christian upon a different pur-
suit; his face is stedfastly set Zion-wards, he has heaven in
his eye, in his aim, and no less than heaven will crown his
pursuit: behold what different views these two have at
death—One taking an unwelcome farewell—Looking back,
and longing to return—looking forward and shudder-
ing—unless stupid—See the other, if under the influences
of the Spirit, rejoicing that he has just finished his race, and
is waiting for the prize.

Consider these things and begin this race ye that are
young—To that end look up to the Spirit of God who can
enable you to begin, hold on, and at last finish your course
with joy and triumph.

4. How should every one that has begun this race rejoice
in the encouragements that have been offered!—Whether
you have but just entered, or whether you have been long
toiling, yet take encouragement to hold on, "for he that
" endureth to the end, shall be saved and enjoy the prize,
" So run, therefore, that you may obtain."

S E R M O N XV.

2 TIM. iv. 7, 8.

I have kept the Faith, &c.

BEFORE we enter into the kingdom of heaven, we must pass through much tribulation, Acts xiv. 22. This life is a state of trial; it tries our faith and patience, our stedfastness and constancy in our Redeemer's service, and it calls for the exercise of all those graces which God has implanted. There is a wide difference between earth and heaven: here we are labouring under pressing difficulties, striving with innumerable enemies, and wading through seas of affliction; there the Christian is at everlasting rest, free from every trouble, and triumphing over every enemy. Heaven is not to be got without difficulty: we must strive much, press hard, and cry earnestly. Heaven is to be taken by violence, it is not given to the indolent and slothful. We must run with patience and diligence, fortitude and courage, for the way is mountainous and rugged; full of intricacies and difficulties that call for great care lest we mistake the road, and for great resolution, that we faint not before we reach the goal. We have already considered the Christian life under the similitude of a race, have inquired into the way we are to take; how it is we must run so as to finish our course well, and the encouragements Christians have to run this race. We now come to consider the third reflection which the apostle was enabled to make, I have kept the faith. Here I shall,

- I. Shew what is meant by keeping the faith.
- II. Shew the necessity and importance of it.

I. Let us consider what is meant by keeping the faith—
This may point out two things.

1. That we firmly believe the doctrines God has revealed, and steadily maintain them; and, 2 That we faithfully observe the vows and engagements we have brought ourselves under, to our glorious master, and hold on with integrity and constancy in his service.

1. It may signify that we firmly believe the doctrines God has revealed, and stedfastly maintain them. We read of a “faith once delivered to the saints.” Jud. v. 3. This faith includes the various articles and doctrines, which the apostles, under the immediate influences of the Holy Ghost, delivered to the church and people of God. These therefore coming from God are certainly worthy of our credit, deserve our notice, and ought to be stedfastly maintained by us. There is but one faith, which God has revealed in his word; all the various opinions of men, or different doctrines that are industriously propagated in the world, cannot be that faith, being many of them directly opposite to, and inconsistent with one another. That all who enjoy the Scriptures, do not believe the truth of the gospel, is not owing to the darkness of the revelation God has made, but to our natural prejudices against the truth: every part of divine revelation conveys a determinate sense, which it is possible for us to know; else we reflect upon God for giving a revelation which we do not, which we cannot understand. Hence then, as it is possible to come to the knowledge of the truth; we have various exhortations in Scripture, to believe it, to maintain and keep it, to seek after unity and judgement, &c.: keeping the faith must imply, first, our believing it. The apostle himself believed those glorious doctrines he so earnestly contended for. As a minister and as a Christian, he believed the gospel in all its parts, and warmly maintained it; he kept the faith, without giving up any part of it, through fear or cowardice. “He was “not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power “of God to salvation to every one that believeth,” Rom. i. 16. He boldly faced all opposition, openly defended the gospel, and would not part with one of its truths, on any

pretence whatever : and he pressed others to stand up for it, “ not to be like children tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine,” Eph. iv. 14. “ But to hold fast that form of sound words they had heard and learned.” The present time is a time to try our stedfastness in the faith. The glorious truths of Christianity are become the objects of contempt. They are so opposite to the dictates of degenerate nature ; so exceed the reach of our understandings ; and so much humble and debase our proud hearts, that cannot receive them, but make them the subjects of ridicule, though never so clearly revealed. It is almost a reproach to a person to profess a regard to the peculiar doctrines of grace ; it requires therefore courage and resolution in both ministers and Christians, to own and defend the gospel, and not to betray a cowardice of spirit, and so give up the faith for the sake of peace, or through shame and fear. “ I have kept the faith,” says the apostle. I have stood my ground and kept my station ; I have preached the gospel of Jesus Christ, and have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. I have parted with nothing through shame or fear ; I have gone through persecutions and reproaches innumerable, and yet I have not deserted the cause I have espoused ; but have kept my charge, and am now going to seal the glorious truths I firmly believe, with my blood.

2. The expression signifies, that we faithfully observe the vows and engagements we have brought ourselves under, to our glorious master, and hold on with integrity and constancy in his service. When we enlist ourselves under the captain of our salvation, we take him for our Lord, our Prophet, Priest, and King, we give up ourselves unto him, and bring ourselves under the strictest engagements to love, honour, serve, and follow him in all things unto the end of life ; we engage to sacrifice all for him, and be faithful unto death. This was the case with the apostle Paul, when Jesus called to him from heaven, he fell at his feet, crying out, “ Lord what wilt thou have me to do ? ” Acts ix. 6. Lord, I am sensible of my folly, I have been doing wickedly, but now behold here am I, devoted to thy service, here am I ready to fulfil thy commands ; speak Lord what thou wilt have me to do ; I will follow thee in all things, &c. Thus the apostle, at his conversion, gave up himself to God, and brought himself under the strictest en-

gagements to him, and he was faithful in his Redemer's service ; he met with a variety of difficulties in the discharge of his duty, enough to have discouraged him, and forbid his continuance had he not experienced an almighty power upholding and supporting him : but see, he is not moved, he will not desert his master's service, whatever difficulties stand in the way. All the persecutions he met with, did not lessen his love or abate his zeal : all the hardships he endured did not weary his soul, or cause him to slacken his pace ; he still kept on with a noble firmness and resolution ; and he had nothing so much in view as the honour of his great Redeemer. See how cheerfully he submits to be stripped, to be imprisoned, and to endure all manner of cruelties for his master's sake ! " He counted all things but " loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, " for whom he cheerfully suffered the loss of all things, " and counted them but dross and dung," Phil. iii. 7, 8. Thus he continued faithful even to the last, and set his face like a flint, cheerfully parting with his blood for Christ and his cause : and thus he kept the faith. We are to " hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering," Heb. x. 23. You must maintain your allegiance to Jesus Christ, to whom you have given up yourselves. See that you war a good warfare, " holding faith and a good conscience, " which last, some having put away concerning faith have " made shipwreck," 1 Tim. i. 19. You have given up yourselves to Jesus, you are bound to him by oath, by promise, by the most solemn vows, by the most sacred ties, and by the strictest engagements. See then that you follow him : to vow and not to perform is only to mock God, and to deceive your own souls. See that you keep the faith; behave with fidelity to the king of righteousness whose professed subjects you are. I have kept the faith, I have met with many enticements, many snares, many difficulties, and temptations, but blessed be God I have been enabled to stand fast, I have been enabled, through grace, to persevere, notwithstanding every difficulty, and now have the prize in view.

II. We are now to shew the necessity and importance of keeping the faith. And,

1. It is the distinguishing characteristic of a real Christian. We cannot, we dare not say it is essential to the Christian to believe and maintain all the peculiar doctrines of

the gospel ; Christians, according to their standing in Christ, according to their education, according to their different instructions, have different conceptions of the gospel : as there are some whose judgements are sound, but whose hearts are wicked ; so there are others whose hearts are better than their heads. Yet Christians agree in that which is essential to their character, they are all united to Christ and are concerned for his glory : they are all such as believe on him for salvation ; and they are such as are constant and persevere in his service. Those that turn aside from following the Redeemer, were never his disciples in reality. There are too many who are stony ground hearers ; who, through a sudden overflowing of affection, make a profession of the gospel of Christ, but soon return to folly, either through a remembrance of former gratifications ; or through some peculiar difficulties they met with in their profession. That profession that is not set upon good principles will never hold. Those whose hearts are established with grace never totally fall off. Fall they may, and oftentimes do, but they shall return to God by deep and humble repentance, resume their integrity, and press on towards the mark. The seed that is sown in the heart grows up unto eternal life : the grace that is implanted keeps the soul in some measure steady ; and strength being daily communicated, he keeps on, follows his leader, until he finishes his course ; all the temptations he meets with, all the enemies he encounters, are not able to prevail over him. He never absolutely deserts his glorious master, but remains faithful unto death. He does not make vows and never perform them, but is enabled to pay his vows in some measure, and to continue in the service of his Redeemer until he leaves this world, and enters into a better. This is the character of every real Christian. He must maintain his allegiance to his glorious Lord, withstand the opposition he meets with, and keep his fidelity.

2. In keeping the faith, the Christian's comfort is greatly promoted. The glorious doctrines of faith are of the most excellent nature ; they abundantly recompence the Christian in his steady belief of and attachment to them, by the unspeakable supports they yield in every circumstance and station of life. A consideration of the person, offices, righteousness, and characters of Jesus Christ ; the everlasting

covenant and promises of God ; the person and operations of the Holy Ghost ; together with the various other important mysteries of Christianity ; greatly conduce to sweeten every difficulty, to ease every burden, to remove every anxious care, to enlighten every affliction, strengthen our hopes in life and death, and fill us with unspeakable joy and satisfaction. The more we know of the Gospel, the more we are like to be comforted and strengthened under every sorrow. Ignorance of and want of attention to some of the glorious truths of Christianity expose the Christian to a variety of fears, difficulties and burdens, which a knowledge of the Gospel has a tendency to remove. Whilst the Christian is steadfastly maintaining the faith he has received, he finds it cheering his soul with the noblest supports, reconciling him to the greatest afflictions, and enabling him to rejoice when every other refuge and support fails. The martyrs experienced the excellency of those truths they sealed with their blood ; whilst they were suffering for them, they were supported by them, and rejoiced more than if they had been raised to the highest pitch of earthly honour and prosperity. They that keep the faith lose nothing by it. The gospel is better than all the world ; this and this alone cheers the soul, when nothing else can ; it heals the wounded conscience, forbids every fear, and gives him living hopes in his dying moments. Oh ! Who would be cold and indifferent to the faith God has revealed ? Who would give up that which can reconcile them to leave the present life, and make their views of eternity glorious ? Shall we prefer the low honours of this world before it ? Shall we part with the faith through fear of reproach and persecution ? What, part with that which alone can comfort our souls in life and death ? God forbid ! — Take the words in the second sense, to signify fidelity and perseverance in our Redeemer's service ; and we cannot but soon see how closely that stands connected with our comfort. When we are led into captivity, break our engagements, and prove at any time unfaithful ; how are our consciences wounded, how is our peace interrupted, and what fears are introduced, that break in upon our comfort and give us awful apprehensions of death and eternity ? Whereas whilst we are enabled steadily to adhere to our great Redeemer, to hold on in his service, and to persevere, we have thereby some comfortable evi-

dences of our interest in Jesus and his salvation, to comfort our souls both in life and at death. The more faithful and the more steadfast we are in the service of our great master, the more comfortable. The ways of sin and ungodliness cannot certainly bring any solid satisfaction to the mind : every time we turn aside there must be an interruption of our peace ; solid comfort is only to be found in keeping the faith. I have kept the faith ; I have not been ashamed of the faith of Christ, but have been enabled to maintain it with a holy zeal. I have lived in the faith, in some measure, as well as stood up for it, and been enabled to persevere in my master's service even unto the end. This was to the apostle a comfortable evidence of his interest in a better world, and therefore a cheering cordial in his dying moments. He could face death in all its various forms with an undisturbed calmness and serenity of mind, and rejoice in the prospect of an approaching eternity. Would you have the same comfortable evidence ? you must then keep the faith. Can you expect to be lively in your souls ; to enjoy the smiles of God's countenance ; can you expect to be free from melancholy fears, from the alarms of conscience ; whilst you are cold to the faith, or walk unfaithfully with God ? Remember David's fall, how it wounded his soul, provoked the spirit of God to withdraw his special influences, and filled him with anguish and distress : Ps. li. 8. &c. Backslidings darken our evidences, and lay a foundation for distress and melancholy, make us go on heavily through life, and droop our wings when death and eternity appear in view.

3. Keeping the faith is necessary to promote the honour of Christ, and to secure the Christian from those errors and snares to which he stands exposed. Whilst we are indifferent about the faith we are liable to be turned away, and to be tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning craftiness of men. The many expressions of " buying the truth, and selling it ; not contending for the faith once delivered to the Saints," &c. shew the excellency of the faith and the necessity and importance of keeping it. The enemy is watching every opportunity to unhinge our minds ; how soon is it done when we are not steadfast, but wavering ? Oh hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering. Whilst you appear steadfastly resolved for Christ and his gospel, as you have received it, you will be in little danger :

of being drawn into error by the most crafty insinuations of those that love not the truth. But if you are unsettled and unsteady, you may easily be drawn to receive the doctrines of men, and fall into errors the most fatal to the soul. Whilst you are unsteady and wavering, the enemy may likewise draw your feet aside into the forbidden paths of impiety; you may wound your consciences, and dishonour your Lord. The enemy has but little hopes of success, when he finds the Christian resolved, his heart established, stedfastly attached to the service of his master, and determined to walk therein. Besides, keeping the faith is necessary to the honour of Christ: as we have taken the character of Christians, so we should be concerned to walk agreeably thereto. As we profess to believe the gospel of our Lord, and call ourselves his followers, we ought certainly to keep the faith, otherwise we dishonour Christ, bring reflections upon that honourable name by which we are called, and render Christ and the gospel the subjects of ridicule and contempt. Who honours his great master more than he who swerves not from his interest, whom no temptations can draw away, but stands firm in every danger, resolutely withstands all opposition, and perseveres in faith and holiness even unto the end? Such are ornaments to the cause they espouse: they only honour Christ, live like Christian's, and glorify God. And wouldst thou, Oh my soul, honour thy Redeemer? would you, Christian's, lay no foundation for reflections on your glorious master? Are you tenderly concerned for his honour? Then keep the faith. Stand up like Christians for the gospel, and part with none of its glorious truths: persevere in the ways of holiness; like good soldiers fight your way through every difficulty; like good sentinels be upon your guard, keep your station, let nothing move you from the hope of the gospel; then will you honour your dear Redeemer, and act consistent with your character and profession.

4. Without a stedfast perseverance in the faith our hopes of heaven are vain and deceitful. Perseverance in the faith does not entitle us to eternal life, but there is no eternal life without it. God has promised the crown of life only to those who are faithful unto death. Those that, after they have once made a profession, fall off, are in the utmost danger. Every fall should fill us with a godly jealousy, every backsliding should put us upon the inquiry, whether we have received the grace

of God or not. Those appear in dangerous circumstances who once professed to receive the faith and to give up themselves to Jesus Christ, but are now fallen off, have deserted the ordinances of God, and are strangers to good works. How happy is it when we can say with the apostle, "but we are not of them that draw back unto perdition, but we are of them that believe unto the saving of the soul!" Heb. x. 39.—How much should we be upon our guard? Though where the good work is begun, it shall be carried on; yet there are many who appear to begin in the spirit and end in the flesh. The doctrine of perseverance therefore by no means encourages slothfulness and security, it is brought about in the use of means. Those therefore who imagine that a work of faith and grace is begun in their souls and grow careless and secure, running into sin, upon a vain presumption that the seed sowed shall not die, but grow up unto everlasting life; such persons have the greatest reason to fear they never were rightly acquainted with the power of religion, and therefore that their hopes of eternal life are absolutely vain. This should by no means distress the humble soul, and fill him with slavish fears; in a humble dependence upon Jesus Christ, you shall persevere and be faithful unto the end. But you who once felt the force of convictions, made the most solemn promises and vows, and an open profession for a time; but have lost your concern, forsaken the Lord, and turned again after your former follies; what evidence can you produce of your interest in Christ, and your title to eternal life? What then are your hopes? Can you be so irrational as to expect the glorious crown, because you once to appearance bade fair for it? Can you think that God will welcome you into his immediate presence, because you for a little while expressed a concern to walk before him in all righteousness, because you discovered a few faint wishes to be his, and made a few feeble attempts towards the Christian life? No, you have since fallen away, renounced what you once professed, and will appear every way unworthy of eternal life; unless you are united to Christ and found in him. How melancholy must it be with the apostate, when death and eternity appear in view, if his conscience is awake? To look back upon his former profession, and compare it with his past life: to consider his amazing security, his dreadful apostacy; to look forward

and see a righteous judge standing ready to pass the sentence according to his works : Oh awful view ! Where are now his hopes ? His heart begins to sink his spirits droop ; it is a dark and dreadful prospect. May we not suppose him saying, Oh what have I been doing ! I can look back to the time, when, like the young man, I bid fair for heaven ; I passed under many convictions ; like Balaam wished to die the death of the righteous, and appeared determined for heaven ; but my zeal soon abated, my pretended love grew cool, I could not continue a life of mortification, faith, and self-denial ; and was therefore soon weary, and turned again by degrees to my former stupidity and folly, yet persuading myself that all was well ; but how can I hope ? Am I not a hypocrite ? Will God own one that has deserted his cause, forsaken his colours, left his station, and turned apostate ? Alas ! alas ! my case is melancholy ; I have ruined myself : what can I blame but my own heart ? The ways of God I found to be too severe for me, I could not relish closet duties, I have no regard for spiritual meditation, and the other distinguishing duties of the Christian life ; Oh foolish creature ! I have left God, and he will I fear leave me when I stand in most need of his favour and presence. Oh eternity, eternity ; what an awful thought ! Oh death, death thou art armed with every terror ! Oh that I could fly from thy fatal arrow ; but I must submit to thy call, and now take the important consequences. Not such is the language of the persevering Christian, especially if under the refreshing influences of the Spirit of God. I have kept the faith. True, I have been chargeable with many backslidings and imperfections ; I have been often beset with Satan and my own heart ; and Oh how near was I to being led aside to my everlasting ruin ? My feet were almost gone ; I had begun to decline ; begun to enter upon the borders of temptation, had swallowed the bait laid before me, and often, yea often I repeated the same ; thus had I been gone for ever, had not infinite distinguishing grace convinced me of my folly, and recovered my soul, and led me in the paths of righteousness again ; Oh blessed be God that kept me from absolutely falling away, and enabled me to return unto him. I have often stepped aside, I have been cold and indifferent, but my God has again quickened me ; he has kept me by his mighty power, he has enabled me in some measure to persevere in

faith, and holiness; I depend not upon this for salvation, but, blessed be God, it is an evidence of the grace of God in me; it is an evidence of my union to Jesus Christ, in and through whom I hope to be put into the possession of that crown which he has purchased for all his people. Thus without perseverance, our hopes of eternal life are vain and deceitful, and absolutely without foundation. Apostacy is attended with melancholy consequences. Better never to have known the way of righteousness, than after to turn from it, 2 Pet. ii. 21. There is nothing but a dreadful looking for of judgement, and fiery indignation for all such. A word or two of improvement must close.

1. Is keeping the faith the distinguishing character of a Christian? Then how few are there in the present age. It is melancholy to see such numbers casting contempt upon the doctrines of faith: this nation was once famous for a zeal for the purity of the gospel; but now in too many places there is a famine of hearing the word of the Lord. The gospel is become the object of too general contempt; churches and congregations have left the faith once delivered to the saints, and religion is degenerated into infidelity. It is almost become a reproach to a person to profess to believe the gospel, and to stand up for Jesus Christ, and him crucified: How few are there that really love our glorious Redeemer? How many are there that fall off from their profession, desert the cause of Christ, prove unfaithful to him, and turn out no better than hypocrites? The honours of the world lead away some, the sensualities of life ensnare others: some are influenced by a view of riches to leave the Redeemer, others are ashamed to own him, because of the reproaches that are cast upon his followers; too many have but a name to live, and content themselves with a mere form, after they have professedly given up themselves to God. Were our public assemblies to be carefully examined, how many would be found unfaithful? There are not many in this assembly I apprehend, that have escaped convictions, either through the word, or providence; these have, when under convictions, promised and vowed, resolved and determined, to take up their cross, and follow Christ, but alas! How few have been faithful? How many have broke their vows, and after a little appearance of zeal, turned again to their old pursuits, or have so

far dwindled as to take up with some outward form? The number of true Christians then must be but small. There may be many who may take the name; but how few are there who keep the faith? How few that hold on and persevere in the ways of God even unto the end? Oh melancholy consideration!

2. Is perseverance in the faith the character of a real Christian? How melancholy must their state be who never yet set forward in the ways of God! How many are there young and airy, whose minds are full of nothing but vanity; who have never yet sat down and seriously considered the great concerns of their souls, whether they are Christians, or whether they are not, whether heaven is worth seeking after; they run carelessly on in the path of pleasure, and spend not one thought upon future things. Melancholy consideration! What, no concern about your immortal souls! No serious inquiry whither you are going, what will be the end of your present pursuits! No desire to walk in the ways of God! No thought about future happiness! This is the melancholy case; young persons greedily swallow the bait that is laid before them, are easily ensnared by the honours and pleasures of the present state, without considering what is necessary to an immortal happiness. Is not this acting a most irrational part? Are you too young to die? Are you sure of life? Will your present pursuits give you complete satisfaction, and secure you everlasting felicity? No, you have not kept the faith, you are unconcerned about it, you think nothing of a future reckoning; you dream of nothing but of pleasure, wealth, and earthly honour; and may be suddenly snatched out of time into a long and miserable eternity; amazing stupidity! your state is melancholy in the midst of your apparent prosperity: your souls are every moment at stake, for you have not so much as thought about keeping the faith. But Oh how much more melancholy is it with those who are come to the decline of life, and yet have not thought seriously about the faith; who have given themselves no time to think about their souls? You are hastening to the grave, and yet have not thought of eternity. Is it not melancholy to see gray hairs in the ways of sin? What, are you going to appear before God, to be called to an awful account, and yet strangers to the divine life! no concern whether you are in the road to Zion? Astonishing

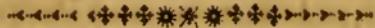
folly! Can you say with the apostle, when in the views of an eternal world, we have kept the faith? No, alas, you will have, if you continue in your present thoughtless condition, no evidences of an interest in Jesus to comfort your souls in your departing moments: you will have nothing but an awful eternity in prospect; nothing but everlasting burnings before you to fill your souls with awful surprise, and inexpressible agonies. None of those that will then be found under the dominion of sin, can say they have kept the faith: they never received it aright, they never gave up themselves in reality to Jesus; sin kept dominion over them, and all they professed was only a mere form; all their religion was only lip service. Such is the state, such the case of every unrenewed soul: they are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity, slaves to Satan, and children of wrath.

3. Is it so important to keep the faith? Then let us seriously examine our own hearts concerning it. Examination is a duty highly necessary: to be nothing but hearers will be but of little avail, if we never look into our own hearts, and inquire whether we experience what we hear. Then let me now sit down and take my heart to task; let me turn within and make diligent search: I have heard this day that it is the distinguishing character of a Christian to keep the faith. And how is it with me? Do I believe the gospel which Christ has revealed? Have I received the great doctrine of faith? Those doctrines that are of such great importance, that enter into the very essence of religion, and are the foundation of all true holiness? And have I kept the faith I have received, amidst the reproaches of infidels, and the sneers of scoffers? Have I not been ashamed of the gospel of Christ? Have I parted with the truth, through fear, or for the sake of the world? Is Christ a stumbling stone, and a rock of offence unto me? Have I given up myself to the Lord Jesus? Have I solemnly dedicated and devoted myself unto God? Have I determined and promised to be the Lord's? Have I vowed, and have I been enabled to perform my vows? Have I been faithful to my Redeemer? Have I been enabled to withstand all opposition; to maintain my ground, to keep diligent watch, and to continue in my master's service? Or have I broke through all my resolutions, and turned again to my former vanities? Have my

lusts and corruptions been too predominant in me? Have they stifled every conviction, overcome every resolution, and led me again into captivity? Have I been unfaithful to my master? Or have I continued still resolved for heaven and eternal life? And what is my present frame? What are my resolutions? What are my thoughts? Am I pressing forward? Am I stedfast and immovable, and am I resolved, through the grace and strength of my Redeemer, to hold on and be faithful unto death? Inquire, Oh my soul, and let me not be a stranger to myself. Examination is difficult work, but it is necessary; necessary to our comfort, necessary to our growth in grace, necessary to know our state, why then are we so backward? You who make a profession of religion, sit down and inquire, whether you have hitherto kept the faith; whether you are hypocrites or whether you are Christians indeed? How necessary is it to have this important point determined? Omit it therefore no longer; "for now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation."

4. Let me earnestly exhort you to keep the faith. As you value your comfort; as you value your immortal souls; if you have any concern for your real interest, shew it by a steady belief of the gospel, and faithful adherence to Christ.—Oh you that have given up yourselves to Jesus—Keep the faith—Stand fast—To that end look up to him for strength—Be much in prayer—Watch over your hearts—Keep death and eternity always in view.

S E R M O N XVI.



THE CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

2 TIM. iv. 8.

Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day : and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

IT is the opinion of too many that a religious life is a life of melancholy : they form conceptions of certain austereities in religion which by no means suit their relish, and which give them an entire distaste to the ways of God. The Christian doubtless meets with a variety of difficulties in the service of Christ, it is a warfare ; a warfare in which the Christian soldier has many enemies to encounter : it is a race in which we must run, labour, and toil before we reach the mark : yet notwithstanding, it is a comfortable and profitable service. The Christian meets with suitable supports and comforts in his way ; God does not leave him to toil by himself, but gives him his presence and favour in life, and crowns him with everlasting life and glory at death. There is a crown at last which will make ample amends for all their labours, difficulties and sorrows, and fill them with full and complete happiness. The apostle Paul met with as many

and as pressing difficulties as most ; yet he would not have exchanged his condition with the most magnificent prince in the world : he experienced divine supports in the way, and when he got to the end of his race, he rejoiced in the prospect of a glorious crown, which he now enjoys, and will do so for ever. May we like him maintain our stedfastness in life, hold out to the end, have the same glorious prospects before us, and receive the prize of immortality. "I have fought the good fight," &c. These words give us a view of the apostle's reflections he was enabled to make upon that part of his life which he had spent in his master's service.—And the glorious prospect he had in view, and the triumphant frame of his soul under such a prospect. We have already considered the apostle's reflections, before he left the stage of life. He had fought a good fight,—he had finished his course,—and he had kept the faith. We now come,

II. To consider the glorious prospect the apostle had before him, and the triumphant frame of his soul under that amiable view. We shall divide this into two heads. The prospect itself, and the frame of soul the apostle was in. First the prospect, and secondly the frame.

First, let us consider the prospect itself. "Henceforth there is laid up," &c. Here we find various things worthy of our observation, viz. the prize the apostle had in view ; the person by whom it is bestowed ; the time when it shall be given ; and the character of the persons who shall enjoy it.

I. Let us consider the prize the apostle had in view, "a crown of righteousness." Here the apostle may not only allude to a crown which was given to the conquerors in the Olympic games, but to a crown, the ensign of power and dignity ; for we find the Holy Ghost has represented the happiness above, under a variety of the most grand similitudes, taken from sensible objects, about which we are conversant, and in which are the highest degrees of human glory, in order to strike our attention, raise our expectations of, and stir up and quicken our desires after, so exalted a happiness. Royalty is the highest pitch of human grandeur. Those that wear earthly crowns are got to the very summit of earthly honour, and are in that station in which centers all worldly glory and happiness. What an idea is this

similitude designed to give us then of that glorious world, where every saint wears an unfading, incorruptible and immortal crown? Here, what angry debates, what warm contentions, what bloody contests are occasioned by an over-thirst for government, for all cannot reign; but in the bright regions of immortality, all the people of God are of this illustrious rank and character: all stand before the throne as kings and conquerors, bearing the ensigns of royalty and victory, are perfectly freed from every anxious care, and possess a happiness as glorious as their natures are capable of. In fine, this crown points out the whole of the Christian's happiness in a better world, and gives us the grandest ideas of it. It is far beyond our present reach; we fall inconceivably short in our conceptions of it; it is the preparation of an almighty power, of infinite wisdom and grace; it is the purchase of Christ, and consequently it must be incomparably glorious. It is here called a crown of righteousness. The propriety of which will appear if we consider, that it consists of perfect righteousness. It is purchased by the righteousness of our dear Redeemer, and it comes to us, or we are put into the possession of it in a way of righteousness.

1. This crown consists of perfect and everlasting righteousness. The sparks of this crown are perfect holiness and a conformity to God. Here lies the difference between earth and heaven. This is a state of sin and imperfection: while in a state of nature there is not the least spark of true holiness appearing in us. We are nothing but sin. The image of God is every where defaced. The understanding, will, and affections are all polluted; we are nothing but sin; made up of ignorance, enmity, obstinacy, and sensuality. And when renewed by the spirit of God, we are yet imperfect: at first grace is compared to smoking flax and a bruised reed; it is as it were almost smothered by those corruptions that are still in the soul. And when it comes to its most flourishing state here, when it burns up into a bright, even into the brightest flame it can do in the present life, it is far from perfection. Perfection is what the Christian is aiming at, and earnestly pressing after; but it is a blessing reserved for heaven. The Christian when arrived to the highest measures of grace here, yet finds some remains of sin; his duties are but imperfect, and sin cleaves to every faculty. There

is some pride, some ignorance, some carnality, some enmity in the best of God's people in the present state: in heaven they shall receive the sum of all their wishes, in that perfect holiness with which they shall be crowned. This crown has no alloy in it; it is pure without the least mixture. Behold the saint when he has put off the body and arrived in the realms of glory: see him shining in the glorious image of God, placed at an everlasting distance from all sin, and fully possessed of all the beauties of holiness. Behold his understanding no more clogged with darkness; his will no more tainted, his affections no more polluted; he has dropped the body of sin, and is without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. "Here we know in part, but there we shall know as we are known; here we see through a glass darkly, but there face to face."

Here our services are imperfect, but there all righteous and holy; no vain thoughts, no impure desires, no wanton looks. The soul perfectly loves his glorious Redeemer; God absolutely and entirely possesses his affections; and no other object appears to divide his heart; he worships him who sits upon the throne, with unwearied cheerfulness; and finds no temptation, but an everlasting delight in God and holy subjection to him. Oh happy, Oh desirable state! Who would not long to be in heaven? To be fully delivered from all sin, to be made perfectly holy! This glorious thought fills the Christian with a peculiar satisfaction in this imperfect state, and helps him to wait with patience till that happy day when his desires will be fully satisfied. Such is the crown that is in reserve, such the happiness of heaven: body and soul shall be fully freed from all sin, and be possessed of complete holiness. In such a view is heaven amiable to the real Christian.

2. This crown was purchased by the righteousness of Jesus Christ. It cost a valuable price, and therefore is of inestimable worth. Heaven is a purchased possession. We forfeited and lost it by sin; and before we could have the possession of it, it must be purchased for us. This was necessary to preserve the honour of the divine government, to secure the glory of his perfections, and to magnify the riches of sovereign grace, which was the peculiar end he had in view in the salvation of sinners. For God to have given heaven to guilty creatures, without any satisfaction to his

justice for sin, would have reflected upon his holiness and purity, his truth and faithfulness, which perfections he would exalt and glorify in bestowing eternal life. This then made way for the obedience and sufferings of our great Mediator. For in the second covenant man's salvation was not to be precarious or uncertain, or liable to be lost; but fixed and absolute; and as we were unable to perform the conditions of this second covenant, by which the salvation promised was to be secured; our great mediator has done it in our room and stead: he came as he agreed, appeared in human nature, perfectly obeyed the law, and suffered death; by which the great ends of moral government are answered, the divine perfections glorified, and heaven secured to all his people, inasmuch as Jesus made an absolute purchase of it for them. Though our righteousness could be of no real value, yet his was of infinite worth and excellency. He was under no obligations to take human nature, only what arose from his free and voluntary promise and engagements. The end and design of his fulfilling all righteousness was entirely to make satisfaction to infinite justice, and purchase heaven for his people. He is God as well as man, the two natures being closely united; his righteousness was the righteousness of God as well as man; from thence it derived all its efficacy, and on this account is it a valuable consideration for heaven itself, and all that glory which he will bestow upon his people. Thus we are to receive this crown as the purchase of Christ, and as the free gift of God, hence it is become sure to every believer. If Christ has purchased it, it shall be given; else it would reflect upon the divine faithfulness. That Christ's righteousness was sufficient to purchase it who can doubt? It is a glorious truth. The crown in reserve is a crown secured by the righteousness of our Redeemer; it is purchased by him. Lord we would receive it as such, and adore the infinite riches of our Redeemer's grace, in thus securing it to us.

3. We come to the possession of this crown in a way of righteousness. It's being purchased for us does not lay a foundation for our slothfulness, sin, and security. To give salvation in this way would be inconsistent with the divine perfections: there is an absolute impossibility. Those that represent sin and security as the necessary consequences of salvation by grace, and the righteousness of Christ, have

never yet rightly seen the beauty of these truths, nor experienced their power and sweetness. There must be a personal righteousness in order to the possession of this crown; it is called a crown of righteousness; it consists of righteousness, and how can we be fit to enjoy it, or feel any real pleasure in the enjoyment, unless we are righteous? When there is no suitableness in the heart to the object we expect to enjoy, our expectations are vain, for happiness necessarily supposes agreement. We must have therefore internal righteousness, or a righteousness wrought in us before we can enjoy this crown: nay, the happiness above is a perfection of what God begins here in the heart. Heaven is begun in the soul when the Spirit subdues the dominion of sin, and implants the divine image. Heaven is fully enjoyed when this work is completed, which will be at death, when the soul is introduced into the immediate presence of God. There must be this work of holiness in the heart: "Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." John iii. 3. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Heb. xii. 14. This holiness is not only implanted in the heart, but it appears in the life; all those therefore who are strangers to good works, are strangers to internal holiness, and have little reason to lay claim to eternal life, for wherever grace is implanted, it will manifest itself in love to God, in prayer, watchfulness, and in walking soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world, in all those subjects who are capable of it. Thus we see how beautiful the method of salvation is; how much it glorifies God, and how well it secures the comfort and happiness of every believer; by the righteousness of Christ, the justice, truth, and holiness of God are exalted, heaven is fully purchased: by internal holiness a meetness is given for the enjoyment of heaven, and by the fruits of righteousness in those that are saved God appears righteous in giving them eternal life, and the mouths of all his ungodly enemies are stopped. And this leads us,

II. To consider the person by whom this crown is bestowed, and his character as a righteous judge. This illustrious person is every where represented to be our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, Acts xvii. 31. "God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he

" hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised " him from the dead." Christ is the appointed person, and he is every way fitted for the great and important work, he being God as well as man: he is absolutely incapable of committing the least mistake or error. He knows all the actions of his creatures, he sees the springs and motives from whence they proceed: He is not to be deceived by fair pretences; he knows the hypocrite from the believer, can distinguish the least dram of grace from the fairest profession, and cannot be imposed upon. And he is a righteous judge. He will display his righteousness in the last sentence that he will pass upon every creature. He will appear perfectly righteous in the condemnation of the wicked, and in the salvation of the righteous, in dooming one to everlasting darkness, and inviting the other into mansions of everlasting felicity. The wicked cannot open their mouths against the sentence they will receive, or accuse the judge of injustice. No, they have but what they have deserved. The proper wages or desert of sin is everlasting death. God never determined their minds to evil; he never constrained them to walk in the paths of impiety; they were advised and warned to the contrary: he sent his ambassadors with messages of peace; he sent his ministers to warn them of the wrath to come; they were told of the nature and desert of sin, the worth of their souls, and the awfulness of falling into the hands of an angry God. They were told of the refuge that is provided, the suitableness of the saviour, and his willingness to save all that come to him; they were invited to come to Jesus, were exhorted to flee from the wrath to come; they had the calls of God's word and providence, and every encouragement was given them to stir them up to a diligent pursuit of eternal things. This is the case with gospel sinners: and will it not be an act of righteousness in the judge to doom such to everlasting darkness? And as for those whom he will sentence to the bottomless pit, who were deprived of these privileges, the rules he will observe in their judgement will be perfectly equitable and righteous: " for as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law—in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ." Rom. ii. 12. So that every sinner must be for ever silent. Hell cannot reasonably object to, and heaven will applaud the sentence. He will ap-

pear righteous likewise in bestowing the crown of eternal life upon his people. For he purchased it for them, he gave them a title to it, and he promised them the enjoyment of it. He purchased it for them. He laid down his life for his sheep, he suffered the punishment they had deserved, bore their sins on his own body on the tree, and fulfilled all righteousness on purpose to purchase eternal life. If then the purchase was absolute; if he entirely satisfied justice, and gave a valuable consideration for heaven; must not such objects of his love be saved? God acts righteously to the mediator in giving them faith, and an entrance into this salvation in time, and Christ will act righteously in passing the glorious sentence upon them at last. Christ gives his people a title to this crown here. This he does when he clothes them with his perfect and everlasting righteousness. The title which he gives them is clear and good: it is indisputable, and will bear the test. Devils cannot set it aside; and the judge will not; it is of his own giving, and he will therefore accept of it. If the title is good, who can dispute the enjoyment? Christ gave it, and he will act a righteous part in bestowing the crown of glory and immortality upon them. But further, he has promised the crown to his people. He has given an actual, absolute promise to all who wash their robes in his blood, fight under his banner, run diligently their race, keep the faith, and maintain their allegiance unto death: he has promised the crown to all such, and therefore is perfectly righteous in giving the enjoyment. We hence see that Christ the judge does not give his people eternal life for any peculiar merit or excellency there was in their works done on earth. And yet he is righteous in giving them the prize of immortality. We read that the sentence will be according to our works. Rom. ii. 6, &c. "God will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who, by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life. But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness; indignation and wrath; tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil; of the Jew first and also of the Gentile." Faith is mentioned in justification without works; as it is by faith alone, and not by works that we lay hold on Jesus Christ, and are interested in him: but in the last judgement, good

works are mentioned and not faith. And why? because good works are the only evidences of a genuine and sincere faith

The representation which is made of the final judgement in the 25th of Mat. &c. is of the visible church; all professing faith, but not all possessed of it. Nay, is it not the ease with all sorts, in all nations to hope for future happiness? And how shall the good be distinguished from the bad, but by the marks and characters of the real Christian? The trial is openly to be made; in order to distinguish then, between the hypocrite and the sincere soul, in order to make it appear who really believed in Christ, and who did not; their works are to be brought to light and examined; Christ will therefore mention the charity, and beneficence, and other works of his people, publicly proclaiming the springs and principles of love and gratitude, from whence they proceeded, and consequently will declare them true marks and characters of those that really believe on him, and accordingly introduce them into the possession of eternal life, as being purchased for all such: whilst he will mention the works of the wicked and ungodly as the marks of all that are really his enemies, and deserve everlasting condemnation. Thus he will appear righteous in each sentence: free from all partiality and prejudice, perfectly just and holy, to the everlasting admiration of some, and to the everlasting misery of others. We now come,

3. To consider when this crown shall be completely possessed and be fully given. It is here said to be given *at that day*, viz. The day of Christ's appearance to judge the world. This is the emphatical day the apostle mentions more than once; the day that will determine the everlasting states of all, put some into the possession of complete happiness, and sink others down into everlasting misery. This is the day when Christ the righteous judge will give the crown to the conquerors, and make them kings and priests unto God. This does not imply that the believer will remain indolent and inactive, or be put into a state of sleep or insensibility until that day: or that he shall remain in a state of trial and purgation. At death the soul enters into glory. Christ told the penitent thief, that that very day he should be with him in paradise.

The moment the soul is separated from the body, it is put

into the everlasting possession of the most exalted happiness. No sooner is the Christian released from his earthly tabernacle, but he is present with the Lord. A place of purgatory to purify our souls, and fit them for the enjoyment of the pure and unspotted pleasures that are above, is only an invention of man, calculated to promote and advance the power of the priest, and to accumulate wealth and riches in the Popish church. We must at death be either immediately sentenced to everlasting burnings, or received into everlasting felicity. But in the state of separation that will ensue at death, there cannot be a complete enjoyment of what Christ has purchased and promised. The body is mouldering in the grave, reduced to its original dust, inanimate and therefore insensible and inactive. The complete possession of this crown will be reserved therefore to that day: that day when Christ the judge will appear, that day when he will raise the body that has lain so long inactive, call all before his judgement seat, join every spirit to its respective body, and place body and spirit thus reunited in an unchangeable state, of misery or happiness. What a day will this be! A day big with terror and triumph! A day full of solemnity! The judge shall come arrayed in all his glory: in his own and in his father's glory, accompanied with a numerous retinue of angels and saints, Dan. vii. 10.
"Thousands of thousands will minister unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand will stand before him: the judgement will be set and the books be opened." The heavens dissolving, and the elements melting with fervent heat. All nature trembling at his presence! What a striking scene!
"The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with a voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord," 1 Thess. iv. 16.
17. Then will the glorious morning of the resurrection appear, when the saints shall be raised; their bodies, which have lain so long in the grave, and been scattered into ten thousand particles of dust, will awake; appear under different qualities, put on glorious forms, after the fashion of Christ's glorious body, and be fitted for the highest enjoyments in the heavenly world. The saints, the apostles tell

us, shall be raised first, afterwards the wicked; every body shall be raised, even the same body: with these eyes shall we see God, and with these ears hear the sentence. Oh glorious, yet awful day! What inconceivable crowds must attend the judge in the solemn transactions of it! See infidels starting at the view, saints rejoicing; some filled with fear and confusion, others with unspeakable joy and triumph. Jesus has already made his first appearance; this was to purchase salvation for his people; his second will be to finish it, when he will appear without sin, in all the pomp and splendour of the most exalted character. And now is the time that he will make up his jewels; now will he own and acknowledge his faithful warriors, those that have laboured in his service, have fought the good fight, finished their course, and kept the faith; now will he set the crown of glory which he has purchased upon their heads. Behold them rising therefore from the dust: see this corruption inheriting incorruption; this mortal putting on immortality, and Jesus a smiling Saviour welcoming them into his glorious kingdom, and making them eternally happy both in soul and body. "When he who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory," Col. iii. 4.

We now come;

4. To consider the persons to whom this crown shall be given. "To all those who love his appearing." The apostle was one of that happy number. When the great Redeemer shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; he, the apostle, shall appear, and shall receive from the hands of his divine master this glorious crown. "Henceforth there is laid up for me." But is he the only person whom Christ will honour with such a gift? No, "and not to me only; but unto all them also that love his appearing." This is the character of all those whom Christ the judge will honour in that great day. They love his appearing, for then every enemy will be vanquished. Satan the roaring lion will torment the people of God no more; sin that secret destroyer shall cease for ever. The door of the bottomless pit will be eternally shut, and no more shall the Christian stand in fear of its terrors. Death shall then be swallowed up in victory, and no longer confine the body: in short, every enemy shall be fully vanquished. Again, then the Christian's salvation will be perfected. Body and soul be again united,

and both fitted to dwell with the glorious Redeemer, and to serve him eternally. And lastly, then Christ the mediator will be glorified. Then will he appear in all his majesty and glory, and be admired by all his saints, whilst sinners, who here blasphemed his name, will tremble before him. On these accounts Christ's Redeemed people love his appearing, long after, and wait for it; and this is the character of all those upon whom the judge will bestow this amiable crown. It was doubtless a pleasing thought to the apostle Paul, that he was not the only person who should partake of the honours of the last day. He would not be alone. Every real believer is willing that others should be saved and triumph in the enjoyment of an everlasting crown as well as himself, the real Christian is not like the cruel miser, who would willingly grasp all to himself, and be unconcerned at others ruin, so he did but prosper. The gospel will not allow such a spirit. It forms us into a most generous temper, gives us a real love to others, and a true pleasure at the consideration of their salvation as well as our own. Though the flock of our Redeemer appears but small when we view it in this imperfect state; yet those that love Christ's appearing will make up a glorious number, in that day when he shall appear with the whole train of his ransomed people, the general assembly and church of the first born, who shall all appear with him and add to the glory, happiness, and joy of the day. Thus we have considered what this crown is, &c. We have only a few words to add concerning the frame of the apostle under so amiable a view. I have fought, &c. How amiable was his frame? How glorious his prospects! He was not terrified either by looking back or looking forward; but triumphed when he was going to bid all things here an everlasting farewell. And how could he but triumph? Had he his evidences of an interest in the divine favour clear? Had he such a vast, such a glorious prospect before him? Could he look forward to the time of Christ's appearance, and see the triumphs of that day and a personal interest in them? Oh what could intimidate him? What wanted he more? Was not this enough? Yes, behold he is satisfied, he is willing to die; ready to part with all earthly things, life, reputation and all: he was willing to give up all so long as he was happily assured of a

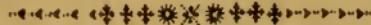
glorious crown. He had now nothing to discourage or affright him. He had now no more complaints to make; nothing to fear: death lost all its terror; he could triumph over it, and boldly face eternity, secure of his Redeemer's love. Was this the frame of all God's people; how happy, how pleasant would it be to die? Then we should hear of nothing from the Christian's mouth but triumphant songs. "O death where is thy sting?" &c. But such a frame at death is not absolutely necessary to salvation, we may go safe to a better world, and not be certain of it. It is absolutely necessary indeed to our dying comfortably, though it is not to our dying safely, a want of such a frame at death may occasion the most melancholy fears, fill the Christian with the greatest distress; but he is still united to Christ, and shall be safely conducted to the regions of blessedness. As such a frame then is not absolutely necessary, so God does not always give it to his people. We often see the Christian at death under the pressure of doubts and fears. Sometimes not fully certain; sometimes having but little hope; yet all get safe to a glorious world. A comfortable assurance of an interest in Jesus is a blessing which God gives to some and withholds from others, just as he sees to be most for his own glory. In times of public persecution when his people fall martyrs to his cause, he generally favours them with the glorious prospects of a better world to support and comfort them under their important trials. This was the case with the apostle Paul: he was going to be sacrificed for Christ, therefore his master kindly supported him and enabled him to rejoice in death. But in times of general prosperity, with the church; Christians are not so much favoured with these extraordinary comforts either in life or death. Yet God does not observe one constant and invariable method; he is pleased to distinguish some of his children by the light of his countenance, and to make their dying hours pleasant and comfortable. And it must be acknowledged to be a desirable and important blessing. Death cannot but appear melancholy and awful to those who are under an uncertainty about their everlasting state. What season more solemn, on this side the grave! What spectacle more awful, than a person just entering on eternity, and not knowing whither he is going? Impressed with a

deep sense of the worth of his immortal soul, the awful majesty of that God he is going to appear before, and with his evidences all dark; Oh it is impossible to conceive the confusion the soul is in at the awful view, he would willingly be all submission to God, but yet he cannot bear the thought of launching forth in such an uncertainty. How necessary is it therefore for our comfort that we enjoy God in death! Besides it is a glorious confirmation of the Christian religion: when a Christian looks upon death with an undaunted firmness of mind, and cheerfully parts with all present enjoyments to go to God; it is a clear and abundant evidence of the reality, excellency, and glory of Christianity, strengthens the faith of others, and encourages them to continue in the service of their Redeemer, in hopes of a happy immortality. On these accounts it appears to be our duty as well as our interest earnestly to seek, and importunately desire and labour after such a frame as this, when we leave the stage of life. Yet remember we are not to look upon it as absolutely necessary or to be distressed and discouraged on the want of such a favour, but ought to comfort ourselves with the consideration of the unchangeableness of God, the stability of his promises, the suitableness and all-sufficiency of Jesus Christ, and that those who are united to him, and depend upon him shall be glorified and saved by him, whatever be the dying frame. This subject is capable of particular improvement by many useful reflections, such as,—The wisdom of those persons who make it their chief concern to seek this crown. The way in which sinners are directed to seek it, viz. by the righteousness of Christ, which gives the title; and in a way of righteousness, which gives the fitness. How amazing it is, the solemn transactions of the last day have no greater impression and influence upon us. As also the importance of the duty of self-examination, what prospect we have of obtaining this crown, &c. But leaving these things to private meditation, I shall close the subject with one general remark, viz. Hence we see the excellency of the Christian religion, and what encouragement we have to believe and maintain it under all difficulties! Amidst the doubts that may arise in our minds, and the discouragements we may meet with, let us suppose ourselves near the dying bed of a triumphant saint, or view the apostle's frame in the last moments of his life, and we

shall soon be convinced of the reality and excellency of the Christian religion, and be encouraged to keep up our confidence in Christ, and our hope of eternal life. The Christian religion is not a fancy ; it is not an imaginary dream, however difficult it may be for us to comprehend it. It is a glorious reality ; for it supports the soul under its greatest difficulties fortifies the mind against all discouragements, and when every thing else fails ; when nature is dissolving, and time and all things disappearing, it then sweetly calms the mind, frees the soul from every fear, and fills him with the highest satisfaction. What season more important than the hour of death ? Every thing now conspires to fill the soul with gloom and melancholy, nay with the greatest surprise and consternation ; all his riches and worldly honours, are now going to be no more, he is taking his last and everlasting farewell of all earthly things ; and was he to be annihilated, it would be nothing : but he must not cease to exist, he is going into an unknown world : he has something within that forbodes something awful. Conscience tells him that he is going before the bar of God to be examined, and there to receive a sentence of everlasting life, or everlasting condemnation : he is going amongst innumerable spirits as yet quite unknown, and to have his dwelling fixed for ever either with devils or saints. What can be more awful than such a view as this ! Must not the soul shudder at such a vast and important prospect ? Behold him just ready to launch forth, and nothing here to yield him the least support. If he looks back upon his former enjoyments, they give him not the least satisfaction : does he view his friends weeping around him ? This instead of cheering him, rather adds to his confusion ; in short, every thing looks gloomy, and contributes to render death awful and solemn : but behold in this critical moment, the gospel soon changes the scene, brightens the Christian's prospects, enables him with pleasure to bid all below farewell, and to enter triumphantly the regions of immortality. Death loses all its terror, and whatever awful surprise filled his mind before, now with the sweetest composure he talks of eternity, the bar of God, and unembodied spirits, and longs for death to make the experiment. How glorious, how excellent then must that religion be, that thus comforts and

cheers a dying Christian. Is this a fancy, a dream? No, it is an undoubted reality, and receives a noble testimony from all those who leave this world in the comfortable expectation of a better. The Lord grant we may all thus close our eyes on time, and open them on eternity!

S E R M O N XVII.



LOVE TO AN UNSEEN SAVIOUR.

I PET. i. 8.

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.

THE love of Christ is a glorious theme to entertain our minds, a quickening subject to inflame our affections, being attended with the most desirable fruits and effects. How astonishing is it, that any should cast contempt upon that which angels admire and adore ? Wonders far exceeding the reach of finite mortals appear in the subject of redemption, deserving our utmost attention and calling for our highest praises. Strange that man should be so stupid and lost to all sense of gratitude as to contemn the amazing heights, and depths, and breadths, and lengths of the love of God ! Do we not wonder at the strange phenomena and appearances of nature ? And shall we not observe the more glorious and striking displays of divine grace in the works of redemption by Jesus Christ ? Shall we honour an earthly benefactor, a fellow mortal, who loves us and gives us all the evidences of the most sincere and friendly esteem, and shall we not much more love and honour him, who laid

down his life for us, and who is the author of eternal salvation to our souls? The persons to whom the apostle wrote were distinguished by their love of Christ and their faith in him, and were worthy of commendation on this account. As to their outward circumstances they were strangers, scattered about in various parts; they were pursued and hunted like partridges upon the mountains, and suffered a variety of persecutions and reproaches for the sake of Christ. Peter labours to encourage them by the prospect of that glorious inheritance they had a lively hope of, and by the consideration of their perseverance through the mighty power of God, verse 3, 4, 5. This they ought to look to, as it would have a peculiar tendency to strengthen their minds under every difficulty, reconcile them to every dispensation, and enable them to bear every affliction with a becoming fortitude and resolution of soul. He told them of the necessity there was for their present trials, that infinite wisdom abundantly appeared therein, as they were designed to promote the glory of God and their own advantages; the excellency of the Christian religion, being greatly confirmed, and their grace tried and improved, verse 6, 7. Whom having not seen, says the apostle, ye love, &c. These Jews had not seen Jesus, consequently they were not at Jerusalem at the feast of the passover, else they must have seen Jesus personally; but probably they might be there on the day of Pentecost when under Peter's sermon so many were converted: however it was as to this, they had not seen Christ bodily, but they had heard of him, and his word had melted their hearts, they saw him so distinctly by the eye of faith, as to be absolutely certain all was genuine that was reported of him, and as to fill their souls with the warmest love to him, and a joy unspeakable and full of glory. This was not only their case, but it is the case with every Christian, those who live at the utmost distance from the time in which Christ appeared upon earth. It is their distinguishing character: it is essential to their very being. Love is here put before faith, whereas it is in reality the effect of faith, the genuine and ripe fruit of it. These words present us with three things.

I. The distinguishing character of real Christians, they believe on him whom they have not seen.

II. The genuine effect of true faith, a spiritual and ardent love to an unseen saviour.

III. The happy consequence of such a faith in, and love to the saviour, it gives the soul joys unspeakable and full of glory. And oh that we may see the glorious excellencies of the great Redeemer, that we may believe in him, and find our souls filled with the most cordial esteem for him, and experience that joy that must necessarily arise from a view of his various characters and offices, and a comfortable persuasion of our interest in him ! But the only topic I have singled out, and shall attempt to discourse on, from this text, is,

The believer's love to an unseen saviour.

To produce in us a love to Christ, it is not necessary that we should see him with our bodily eyes, a few persons enjoyed that privilege the little time he was on earth, our apostle was one of them, and this privilege every Christian will enjoy in the last great day. "Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him," Rev. i. 7. Hence says holy Job, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth, and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold and not another," Job, xix. 25, 26.

27. But those who actually saw Jesus and loved him, are comparatively few to those who love him unseen. This is no way necessary to form in the breast this amiable grace : his word, accompanied by his spirit, is every way sufficient to do it, and is the great spring of such warm desires after, and such an affectionate esteem for Jesus Christ. Therefore we find persons in every age possessed of this most amiable grace. This love to Christ consists in entertaining the highest and most honourable thoughts of him, warm desires and strong affection to him : he is the soul's all in all : and all his desires, affections and thoughts, center in him. To make this fully appear, and to evince that the Christian acts the most rational part herein, let us inquire into three things.

1. What are the principal properties of the Christian's love to an unseen saviour.

2. What are the grounds, and reasons of such a love to him.

3. Mention a few things, which will evince the reasonableness of the Christian's love to an unseen Saviour.

I. We are to inquire into the properties of this love. And it has all the excellent properties that are necessary to make it appear amiable, and to shew how much the Christian is devoted to Christ. For it is sincere and hearty.—It is universal or has respect to Christ in all his characters, and titles.—It is superlative, it is constant, and everlasting.—

I. It is sincere and hearty. None questions its reality but the soul himself—except in public falls, and in a long course of backslidings. David gave no evidence of his love to Christ, when he fell so criminally, and so publicly with Bathsheba, and lay so long lecture: But when he came to himself, his bitter lamentations for his sin, abundantly manifested his hatred of it, and his real love to God. We must not judge of ourselves nor of others, by one single act in life, but by the habitual frame of a person, and the general bent and tenor in his behaviour. A real concern of mind for offending a friend, is a sign that we esteem him. And it is so here: the Christian loves Christ, yet he sometimes dishonours him; but is it not matter of his deepest humiliation that he should be so unkind and ungrateful; Lord, says he, have I thus offended thee? Oh why was I not more watchful? What! Indulge sin, sin which is so odious to my dearest Redeemer! Sin which has wounded him so bitterly, and tends to open his wounds afresh! Have I indulged sin? Have I been so inconsiderate and ungrateful? Lord, I mourn in dust and ashes before thee. I abhor myself: it is my greatest concern that I have offended thee, and Oh that I could find my soul more humbled: Oh be not angry with me, turn not away thy countenance, enter not into judgement with me: I cannot bear to think that I have provoked thee. Thus the Christian laments over his sins, is affraid he has provoked Christ to abandon him, and therefore is restless until he has cast himself prostrate before him, and given up himself afresh unto him. How often has it been the case with your souls, Christians, though you are so often questioning your love to the great Redeemer? Have you not often mourned in secret before him over your backslidings, your coldness to him, your unfruitfulness and other things by which you have been afraid, you have provoked him? When you have approached his

table, and there remembered his love, has not a remembrance of your sins at the same time filled you with bitterness? And have you not deeply lamented before him, your ingratitude to him? All this was an evidence that you sincerely loved him. Peter, when he was put to the trial, fell most shamefully, and who would have thought that the person that was denying him with oaths and imprecations really loved him? And yet he did; as by his repentance he made abundantly evident, for we read that, "he went out and wept bitterly," Luke xxii. 62. Again, appealing to God for our love to him, shews the sincerity of it. Peter therefore gave another sure evidence of his love to Christ; our Lord was pleased to interrogate him three times, that he might as often publicly declare his love to him. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" Peter, sensible of his late fall and of his weakness, did not say, yea Lord I do love thee more than these: he did not assert that his love was stronger than others: but he appealed to him for the sincerity of it. "Lord thou knowest that I love thee?" nay, when the question was put to him the third time; he adds, "Lord thou knowest all things," I appeal to thee for the reality of my love; thou must know for nothing is concealed from thee: thine eye surveys all things. Thou art perfectly acquainted with the secrets of every heart, and canst easily distinguish between hypocrisy and sincerity: thou therefore knowest Lord the real frame of my soul, and the situation of my heart, better than I know myself; speak then Lord; am I an hypocrite? If I am, let me be exposed; but thou knowest that I love thee sincerely, John xxi. 15, &c. You Christians perhaps cannot at all times speak so positively as this apostle did, being afraid your hearts deceive you. But so far as you know your own hearts, you can make the appeal: however you can say, Lord, thou knowest that we desire to love thee; we would not deceive ourselves, nor mock thee, we would have our hearts more fixed upon, and filled with love to thee. This then is a comfortable evidence of the reality and sincerity of your love. Another evidence of sincere love to Christ is the souls mourning after him, and his thinking upon him. We are ready to be uneasy in the absence of persons we esteem, and to have our thoughts frequently upon them. Thus it is in the present

case, the humble soul mourns after an absent Jesus, goes from one duty to another seeking his face, and inquiring and longing after him. Oh what pain it oftentimes gives the soul that he cannot see Jesus? And what satisfaction and joy when he is enabled to see his interest in him? What sweet intercourse? The soul sits under his shadow with abundance of delight, views his various perfections, excellencies and characters with pleasure, and rejoices in him as his all. This is illustrated in the conduct of the spouse, Cant. iii. 1, &c. And is it not your case, Christians? Your many fears, doubts, secret mournings, and longings, make it evident, and therefore you are no hypocrites. Your love is not nominal, it is sincere, it is hearty.

II. This love is universal, or it has respect unto Christ in all his characters and titles. When the spouse had enumerated various of the beauties and excellencies of Christ, she breaks out into an adoration of him as every where full of glory: "yea he is altogether lovely!" Cant. v. 16. What need I go any further in a description of him? He is all over amiable and glorious; in whatever character I view him, I find the strongest affection for and desires after him. Thus it is with the Christian, Jesus appears lovely in every character, in every title which he bears. The sinner bears no love to Jesus in any character; he sees no beauty in him: thus it is represented in Cant. v. ix. Strangers to Christ ask the Christian why his affections are so much set upon Jesus: what is your beloved more than another's beloved? Is there any beauty in him more than in other objects, does he possess any peculiar and distinguishing excellency? We can see nothing desirable in him, in any of his characters; and therefore cannot find any esteem for him. No, "we will not have this man to reign over us. We hate his government, we love not that he should bear the sway, or exercise an authority in our souls. "Depart from us for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." The sinner hates Jesus Christ: what contempt therefore does he cast upon him in his person, his righteousness, and all his characters? Some profess a regard to Christ in one character, but not in all, they would be willing to share in the blessings of his priesthood, but will not submit to his yoke, nor take up their cross and follow him. Such is not the Christian; he loves Christ in all that he is, and in all that he has.

As the great prophet he esteems him, adores him in that character, and looks to him for all saving knowledge. As a priest, the great High Priest, he honours him, and loves him; values and esteems his righteousness, rejoices in his sacrifice, and has the strongest regard for his advocacy and intercession: and as the king and lord of his people they love him, love his rule and government, think themselves safe under his protection, and would have their hearts more in obedience and subjection to him. As God over all blessed for evermore they love him; entertain the most honourable thoughts of him, and cast their whole souls upon him as the glorious foundation of their hopes of eternal life. Jesus! In whatever character I view him, says the Christian, he is amiable and lovely: all his characters are most important: see how he is described, "as the wonderful counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting father, the prince of peace." All titles the most glorious. Such is thy beloved, and such is thy friend, Oh my soul, how can I then but esteem him? I cannot but entertain the highest and most honourable thoughts of him. Sure he is all amiable: what excellencies belong to his person? How glorious his qualifications, his titles, his perfections? See him as thy friend to counsel, advise, and direct thee; as thy shepherd to guide, watch over, and keep thee; as thy brother to love thee, as thy father to pity and preserve thee: see him as the foundation to support thy hopes, as thy daysman and surety to undertake for thee. See him as the only begotten son of God, high in his favour and esteem; as Emmanuel, God with us, and therefore as the son of man appearing in human nature, and suffering and dying: see him as the captain of salvation leading his noble warriors to the battle, encouraging them therein, and giving them the conquest. As the sun of righteousness, enlightening, warming, and quickening the souls of his people with his cheering and reviving beams. Behold him as the great bridegroom espousing his people to himself for ever, married to them; rejoicing in and delighting over them. As the bread of life not only giving life but maintaining and supporting it in the souls of his children. Nay, see him as the lion of the tribe of Judah! view him as the great judge of quick and dead, summoning all before his supreme tribunal, and passing a decisive sentence upon each, and he appears ami-

able and lovely: in whatever character I view him, I see enough to raise my esteem of him, and cannot but be astonished that any should be blind to his excellencies, and have their hearts filled with the least enmity to him. Oh glorious Redeemer thou art all lovely: my soul with wonder and affection stands and views thy person and characters, and with delight gazes upon thy adorable excellencies. Is it possible for any to be so ignorant and stupid as to view thee with the least degree of indifference? Lord certainly it cannot be: it appears to be incredible, did not fatal experience too much shew it; but with concern I see thee despised and contemned by ignorant sinners, thee whom my soul would always love.

III. This love is superlative. It exceeds the esteem which the soul has for all other things. Christ requires the heart: he will accept of nothing less. "My son give me thine heart." Prov. xxiii. 26. It is agreeable to the command of God. Mark xii. 30. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength," It must be sincere, and it must engage the whole soul. The covetous man we find lays all his heart out upon his beloved idols. He can relish nothing but what is of this world. His thoughts, his affections, his heart, his hands, his time, and his all, are employed about the diligent pursuit of the riches and honours of the present state. And he has nothing for Jesus, "If any man therefore love this world," that is, set it up as his chief idol in his heart, and pursue it as his chief happiness, "the love of the father dwelleth not in him." 1 John ii. 15. Christ must bear the sway, else your love is partial, and comes short of that which is the mark, and characteristic of a real Christian. The Christian shews that his love to Christ is superlative by his longing after him; by his concern for his own and others ingratitude to him, by his desire to honour him, and his longing after that glorious world, where he shall love and serve him with the utmost perfection. The Christian thinks upon and longs after a dear Redeemer. His thoughts are not indeed so much and so warmly fixed upon Christ as he would desire them to be, the necessary affairs of life must employ his thoughts, and they perhaps too much encumber his mind, and give him uneasiness, lest, whilst he thinks he loves Jesus, he should be deceiving him-

felf, and be found to love the world before him. But this is not the case with such dejected souls. They are frequently longing after a dear Redeemer, and it is their greatest joy and happiness when they see his face ; but they think themselves wretched when they cannot find him. They cannot give the world all their time and thoughts, they must frequently steal an hour to converse with whom they love. And Oh with what conceit are they filled when they see or hear him dishonoured by prophane sinners, when they see the falls of those that profess a real love for him and consider their own ungenerous conduct and behaviour by which they have frequently offended him ! They are labouring to honour him more, are tender of his glorious name, and concerned to bring forth the fruits of righteousness to his abundant praise, they are circumspect therefore and watchful ; out of a love to Christ they love his people, and are concerned to pay a constant obedience to those commands which he has left them. And Oh how do they frequently long after that glorious world where they will be for ever freed from all sin, and be fitted for glorifying their great Redeemer in the most perfect manner ! the views of heaven give a peculiar pleasure to the believing soul ; because he there shall no more dishonour, offend, and provoke his dear Redeemer, but have clearer and more glorious views of his love, and make more suitable returns than he can possibly do here. All this shews his love to be superlative, notwithstanding all his fears. How careful should those be that find such a fondness for this world, lest they be found destitute of this divine and amiable Grace ? He that loveth this world above Christ is not worthy of him. Nay, he himself tells us, “ that who-
“ soever loveth father or mother more than him, or son or
“ daughter more than him, is not worthy of him.” Mat. x.
37. Hard saying this, who can bear it ? Not that we must hate parents and children, and such near and invaluable comforts to shew our love to Christ, nor can we in times of prosperity and peace, so well try ourselves by these things. But in times of persecution, whoever out of love and regard to parents and children disobey the commands of Christ, and turn their backs upon him ; such are not his disciples. We are to honour parents ; but when they interfere with our allegiance to Christ, we must leave them and follow Christ, being under greater obligations to obey God than man. A time

of prosperity is a wrong time for the Christian to try his love to Christ by such marks as these ; for he but seldom comes off with advantage. We hear him frequently saying I am afraid I cannot part with all things for Christ and follow him, should he call me to it : you cannot judge of this properly, though your present strength may be but small, yet when Christ calls you to trials, he will animate and support you in proportion to them. Therefore say not, your love is not right, as you give those evidences which are true and real, and suitable to the circumstances God has placed you in ; so you may conclude that you really and superlatively love a dear Redeemer.

IV. This love is constant and everlasting. It is not like the esteem which we have for our fellow creatures, which frequently stops upon receiving an affront, and is often changed into resentment. Where this grace is once implanted it continues and never ceases. Grace may not be always in the same lively exercise ; sometimes it appears cool and indifferent, at other times vigorous and lively ; but grace will ever remain in the soul that is renewed : nothing can quench that love which the believer has to Jesus. It will abide through every difficulty, through the remains of life and be greatly improved in a future world. The believer really loves his great Redeemer when he afflicts him, as well as when he smiles upon him. When he takes the rod into his hand to chastise him for his forgetfulness and disobedience, afflicts him in the tenderest part, yet this does not alter the Christian's sentiments of his exalted Redcemer, or change his esteem into hatred : but he casts himself prostrate before him, and humbles himself at his footstool, acknowledges his guilt, and mourns that he has offended him, and provoked him to hide his face and discover his resentment. It is the peculiar property of this love, to be constant and abiding, whatever is the conduct of God towards him. Should his life be nothing but one melancholy scene of sorrows and affliction ; should God take one comfort after another from him, till at last he has stripped him of all, even the dearest and most valuable, and thrown him into the most distressing circumstances ; nature would indeed be ready to recoil and prompt the believer to rise in rebellion against God, charge him with cruelty and injustice, and put him upon withdrawing his affections from him, but grace

teaches him a different lesson : he humbles himself therefore under his mighty hand, is full of concern lest God should have entirely abandoned him, and cannot be easy till he sees his smiles, and has some comfortable hope that he has not forsaken him, he may at times murmur and repine, but he quickly checks himself for his presumption, and humbly adores and loves that hand that has so much corrected him. This was the case with Job : his afflictions were remarkably sore and heavy, he was deprived of children and substance ; every one appeared against him ; and his body was full of anguish through the melancholy disorder that he was exercised with ; and now was the time for the trial of his love to and esteem of God. Did he under all this still keep up the most honourable thoughts of God ? Did he notwithstanding all this really love him ? Yes, he blessed the Lord in taking as well as giving, which discovered the highest love for and the most genuine obedience of soul to him. Job. i. 21. Nothing can possibly quench this love ; nothing can hurt it : the innumerable temptations to which the Christian is subject, the many ensnaring objects with which he is surrounded, all tend to lessen his esteem for Jesus, and catch his affections. But he stands unmoved in the midst of all ; views them all with indifference when put in competition with Jesus, and continues in his loyalty and affection ; no other lords or masters must have dominion over him ; he loves his Saviour, and he will love him unto the end. Whatever persecutions and distresses arise for the sake of Christ, he is not offended like the stony ground hearers ; he does not turn his back upon his great Redeemer ; but continues the same esteem both in life and death ; the most cruel and painful death has not caused him to think ill of Christ, but his love has led him through the greatest tortures, and made him willingly shed his blood for his glorious Saviour. Witness the martyrs who followed Christ unto death, and loved him so as to suffer the greatest cruelties human art could invent and an arm of flesh could inflict : this is that love that distinguishes the real Christian from the hypocrite : if you once professed to love the Redeemer but now have deserted him ; if other objects have gained all your esteem, or the reproaches and difficulties you met with in your profession of Christ, have caused you to change your thoughts of him, you never loved him in

reality, and therefore are none of his followers. Those that continue not, but turn aside, belong not to Jesus, nor have they any interest in him: Christ must always have your hearts, or else you will have no part in him: you that are entering upon the ways of Jesus, and find a desire after him, enquire, do you think to love him unto death? If ever you desert him, all your former profession will signify nothing: "if any man draw back my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Oh that we may not be "of them that draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe unto the saving of the soul." This love is constant; it is everlasting; death will not remove it, but place the soul where it will be much improved: there is no room for faith and hope, in the heavenly world, but there is for love. Faith and hope will be no more, for the object will be enjoyed; but the enjoyment will greatly increase the Christian's love. Here it is but imperfect, but there it is perfect: here it is often interrupted; the heart seems too often divided between Christ and the world; but in heaven there are no ensnaring objects to take the affections from Jesus, or cool the Christian's love; but the everlasting enjoyment of his Redeemer will keep it in everlasting exercise, and raise it to the highest pitch the soul is capable of. Oh Christian look more to heaven and long more to be with Jesus, for it is there you can only love your Redeemer aright: there your love will have no mixture, nothing to interrupt or check it, but every circumstance possible to heighten and increase it, and make you for ever happy in the exercise of it — Thus we see the properties of the Christian's love: it is sincere, it is universal, it is superlative, constant, and everlasting. All these shew the value of this grace, and how important it is: how essential it is to the real Christian, and therefore how necessary it is that we make a strict inquiry into our own hearts whether this grace is implanted in our souls, and has ever been brought into exercise. Who would not be willing to know that they are Christians indeed? Is it not a matter of the utmost importance to have this weighty point out of dispute? Besides, as Christians, those that are called to wait upon Jesus at his table, should examine themselves, and then eat of that bread and drink of that cup: let us therefore recollect what has been hinted upon this love to an unseen Saviour; and let us examine ourselves, lest we should

be mistaken. The great question is, do we love Christ? Do we love him in sincerity? Or is our love to him only nominal? Do you love him in deed and in truth? Sinners, it is evident you love not our Lord Jesus Christ, for you love sin: you hate his yoke, you cannot part with your beloved Dalilahs; you fondly hug them in your bosoms, and will not renounce them for Jesus and salvation. But is this your case ye that mourn in secret, lest you should be but almost Christians? Is this your character, ye that thirst after Christ at his table? No, ye love our Lord Jesus Christ, and ye shew it by renouncing your sins, mourning over them, and striving against them. Do you not long after Christ, think upon and rejoice in him? All this then shews the sincerity and reality of your love to him, and is not your love universal? Do you not take Christ in all his characters? Is he not precious to you in every title? As prophet, as priest, and king, and do you not submit to him in every character? Or at least desire and aim to do so? Again, is your love to him superlative? Do you love him with all your hearts? &c.—The sinner prefers others to him, but the believer cheerfully parts with every thing, every lust, every idol, every vain and sinful delight for him, and when called to part with the world, wife, children and substance, he leaves all and follows Christ through persecutions, and fiery trials.

In fine, is your love constant and abiding? Do you continue steadfast and unmoved? Or has it been only a sudden flash of affection like the Jews, Hosanna to the son of David, and then crucify him? Thus it is necessary to inquire how our affections stand: “For they that love not ‘our Lord Jesus Christ, let them be anathema maranatha.” 1 Cor. xvi. 22. This is the character of every real Christian, to love Christ. Oh that this grace may be implanted in each of our souls, that we may grow more and more into the likeness of Christ, may find his love increasing ours, and may at last be translated into that glorious world, where we shall love and praise him for ever and ever. We are now,

II. To inquire into the grounds and reasons why the Christian loves an unseen Jesus. Love to one another is generally owing to three things,—either a consideration of some peculiar amiableness and excellency a fellow creature possesses, or some near relation which we stand in to them,

or else some peculiar obligations we are under from their kind and endearing behaviour to us, and the favours they have conferred upon us. From some of these, love to one another takes its rise, and they all appear as reasons why the Christian loves an unseen Saviour. Though he has not seen him personally, yet he has heard of his excellencies, and has seen by an eye of faith his beauty and glory. He stands in the nearest relation to him, and has received the greatest favours from him; all which shew the foundation there is laid for the greatest admiration and esteem, and how ungratefully the Christian would act, as well as unsuitably to his character, was he not to love Jesus Christ. But particularly,

1. The Christian loves an unseen Jesus, because of the excellencies which he possesses. Whatever excellency is in the creature may be found in the highest perfection in Jesus Christ, for he inherits all true perfection: creatures' glories are all imperfect, there are innumerable deficiencies, they are chargeable with, innumerable foibles that cast a shade upon their excellencies, that they at times can scarce appear. But there is no mixture in Jesus: his excellencies always shine with infinite lustre, and are ever apparent to attract our esteem, and raise our admiration. Wisdom and knowledge, faithfulness and prudence, and the inward ornaments of the mind, humility, meekness and the like; these are what principally recommend us one to another, and engage our esteem. But what are these to those shining excellencies that are in Jesus, and justly render him a suitable object of our esteem? Behold him possessed of every divine qualification: As to wisdom and knowledge, who can exceed him? He knows all the various cases of his people, what their temptations, difficulties, and diseases are; and what applications to make for their removal: "he has all treasures of wisdom and knowledge," whereby he is able to govern every thing wisely, to conduct every circumstance so as to prevent the designs of Satan from taking effect, and to promote his own glory and the good of his people. Col. ii. 3. He is faithful and just in the execution of his threatenings, and in the fulfilment of his promises: his name is therefore emphatically styled "faithful and true," Rev. xix. 11. being faithful in the management of every concern that is committed to him,

whether by his father or by his people. He is almighty and powerful, able to help in the most distressing case, to support under, and to deliver out of the most deplorable circumstances. His name is therefore "mighty to save." If. lxiii. 1. He is unchangeable and everlasting, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;" he never alters his purposes nor changes his mind, Heb. xiii. 8. He is in short possessed of a fulness of excellencies; "in him it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell," Col. i. 19. He is kind and condescending, loving and compassionate, he is friendly and easy of access, he is considerate and bountiful, meek and humble. "He is the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," John i. 14. Nay, he possesses every divine excellency, being "God over all blessed for evermore," Rom. ix. 5. Who then shall not adore such excellencies? Certainly he that possesses them is a worthy object of our esteem. What is there that can appear more amiable and lovely? It is indeed one thing to profess to believe those excellencies in Christ, another to have a suitable sense of them; such a sense as draws the admiration and affection of the soul. We may hear of all the excellencies of Jesus, and yet find no real love to him: this is too frequently the case. The sinner hears and gives his assent, but for want of a real spiritual view, his heart remains hardened, and he finds no workings of affection. But this is not your case, Christians. Your understandings were once darkness, but now are they light in the Lord. You have had a spiritual discerning, by which you have seen the excellency and amiableness of Jesus, and found your desires drawn out after him. A view of his glory and suitableness has engaged your esteem, and filled you with the most honourable thoughts of him. Oh how can I but love him, says the believer? Not love Jesus! One so amiable, so suitable, so excellent and glorious! I cannot but adore his name, and admire his beauty; the whole creation is nothing when compared with him; he is fairer than all the children of men: and how amazing is it that my soul is no more employed in adoring his excellencies? Once I was ignorant, a stranger to every beauty; but now I cannot view Jesus in any character in which he is represented, but I see a glory and comeliness in him: and Oh stupid creatures that are not raised with the descriptions of

his person, his righteousness, his fulness, and his infinite excellencies !

2. The Christian loves an unseen Saviour because of the relation which he stands in to him. This occasions that love and esteem oftentimes which we have one for another : the ties of nature and relation are strong arguments and inducements to affection and esteem ; a mother must turn monster if she does not love her babe ; and so must a child if he does not love and honour his parent : a husband must act in direct opposition to his character, if he love not his wife, and a wife must be guilty of the same, if she can remain void of affection to her husband : children of the same family ought not to disagree, but the tenderest love and affection should spread and be ever diffused. All these characters and relations lay a just foundation for the greatest esteem, and call for the tenderest affection. And thus if we take a view of the relations which Christ and believers stand in to one another, we shall no longer wonder at the love which the Christian has for Jesus. Christ is represented as a bridegroom, as the husband ; and his people as the bride, for the wife : the relation is as real as that of husband and wife, and the greatest advantages flow from it : as a bridegroom therefore Christ is said to rejoice over his bride, and to love his spouse ; and must we not suppose the same in the church ? The same affectionate temper, and the kindest thoughts of the unseen Jesus ? The relation lays a foundation for the most cordial respect and esteem, and the character which is given the church abundantly and clearly shows that her warmest affections are fixed upon the great Redeemer. When the Christian comes to consider that Jesus has espoused him unto himself for ever, and that he has taken the character of an husband, his soul is full of the most cordial esteem, and he rejoices in and longs after him, is filled with a tender concern for his honour, and bears a lasting respect to his glorious name. Again, Christ and the Christian stand related as father and son : as it is necessary to act consistently with that relation, that a child should love his parent ; so it is equally necessary that Christians should love Jesus ; Jesus their compassionate father, who possesses all the kind affections of the most indulgent parent, and that in the utmost perfection. As a father he pities, he loves, he corrects, but

with affection ; he instructs and advises ; he longs, he yearns over his people : is afflicted in all their afflictions, and carries them ever upon his heart : as children therefore they are bound to love, to honour, and highly to esteem him ; to entertain the most exalted thoughts of him ; and to behave with the utmost respect to him. Again, Christ and his people are brethren : he took flesh and blood, and dwelt in human nature ; so that he is one with us, flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone. In such a relation how amiable must he appear to the Christian ? As a brother he entertains the highest respect, lives in constant harmony, and is not willing to offend or grieve him. Again, Christ and his people are related as friends : he calls them frequently so, John xv. 14, 15. And he acts a most friendly part to them by administering to their necessities, comforting them, and sympathizing with them under all their afflictions : as friends therefore they must on their part respect, honour, and esteem him, bear a tender concern for his glorious name, and ever discover a sincere regard to his interest and kingdom. There are various other relations in which Christ and his people stand to one another, to fill up which there must be a constant, sincere and mutual love ; but these few hints are sufficient to shew us, why Christians love an unseen Jesus.

3. The Christian is under the greatest obligations to Jesus for the wonders of his free and unmerited love to him : and no wonder then that he loves him though unseen. Where a person superior to us in outward circumstances, appears of a truly humane, generous and beneficent temper, condescends to the lowest offices in life to promote our advantage, calls us by the most affectionate titles, confers the highest favours upon us, and is continually studying our interest ; such a person was he to be found amongst us, could not but be greatly valued and esteemed. It would discover the utmost ingratitude, to slight or despise him : such, nay an infinitely greater friend is Jesus to the Christian ; his love exceeds all human compassion, it is infinitely great and glorious, and therefore cannot but raise the admiration of the humble soul ; and engage his esteem. This brings us to the third general, namely,

III. To mention a few particulars which may serve to evince the reasonableness of the Christian's love to an unseen

saviour. 1. Let us view the infinite glory of his person. 2. The amazing greatness of his condescension for his people's advantage. 3. The blessings which he has conferred upon the Christian. 4. The endearing titles he has given him. 5. The care he continually takes of him, and the glory he has prepared and will secure for him. And 6. The freeness of this love.

1. Let us view the infinite glory of the person of Christ. A person of eminent rank greatly recommends himself to the esteem of his fellow-creatures, when he appears affable and friendly, and takes notice of those that are much inferior to him: whilst persons of a haughty and insolent behaviour, are only fit objects of contempt, and are generally despised notwithstanding all their grandeur. And if it is so amiable in an imperfect mortal to take notice of those who are below him; how much more amiable must it be in Jesus the son of God, to take notice of those who are so much beneath his notice? Oh that every proud and haughty temper was moulded after the amiable temper of Jesus! Behold him exalted above all created beings; see him possessed of every possible excellency; view him in dignity above angels and archangels, receiving all divine honours, from those glorious and exalted spirits, and yet kindly taking notice of sinful polluted creatures, creatures at such a distance from him, and so much beneath his regards, and unworthy of his care! What amazing condescension is this in the high and lofty one that inhabits eternity? How glorious does he appear? It cannot but draw the esteem of the Christian, when he sits down and views the dignity of the son of God, and yet the notice which he is pleased to take of such guilty polluted creatures as we. How can I but love an unseen saviour, says he? Would it not appear the highest ingratitude to take no notice of the kindness of those of superior rank and character amongst ourselves? And is it not more ungrateful to be insensible of the notice which Jesus the mighty God takes of us? Lord I will, nay, I cannot but love thee: what, thou so glorious, so happy in the bosom of thy father, and in the enjoyment of thine own excellencies, yet dost thou take notice of such a polluted wretch! Hast thou notwithstanding thy greatness, thy glory in the midst of surrounding angels; hast thou yet been pleased to set thy love upon such a poor polluted worm as me? What honour is this thou hast con-

furthered upon me? Lord, I will ever love thee, I will ever adore thine infinite goodness; thy name shall be ever precious to my soul, and I will give thee my whole heart.

2. The astonishing humiliation of Jesus Christ, in human nature, is a most powerful attractive to the Christian, and cannot but raise his esteem. To take the least notice of such unworthy creatures as we, is amazing condescension; how much more when we consider what Jesus has done? He has done what angels wonder at, all heaven stands astonished; and yet sinful man can hear and remain unmoved! He can hear the representation without feeling one tender affection move; he can hear and yet be hardened; how wonderful that the stones break not their native silence, and upbraid us with ingratitude! Do you wonder, sinners, that the Christian discovers so tender an affection for Christ? It is rather wonderful, it is abundantly more so, that your hearts are so much hardened against him, when there is every thing that tends to raise your admiration, and engage your affection. Love is a powerful incentive to love: and Oh view the amazing love of Jesus Christ in his humiliation, and then consider what returns such love requires. See him possessed of infinite excellencies and perfections, and yet disrobing himself of his glory, and coming in the likeness of sinful flesh! "Behold he who was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, took upon him the form of a servant, and was found in fashion as a man, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross!" Such condescension as this is indeed astonishing; this is something the most wonderful and amazing that was ever transacted. "Oh, great is the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh," 1 Tim. iii. 16. And is not this enough to engage our warmest affections? Was a fellow creature to lay down his life, and freely sacrifice himself for our advantage, would it not be enough to render his memory ever precious to us? And should it not be much more the case here? Ask not the Christian why he loves an unseen Jesus. It is apparent to all: he must be the most hardened creature that can resist the influence of such astonishing love, and not find his breast filled with the most honourable and exalted thoughts of him. It is strange, says the Christian, if I should not love Jesus; Jesus, that kind, that generous friend, that wonder of an-

gels, who veiled his glory in a human form, stooped so low as to appear in flesh, in circumstances of poverty, meanness, and affliction, enduring the daring insolence and contradiction of profane sinners, the buffetings of devils, and submitted to a most painful and ignominious death, even the death of the cross. I must love that dear name; I must honour his person, and give him my whole heart and mind, and soul, and strength: oh how unspeakably great my obligations? Did the mighty God appear in the character of a servant, did he submit to the law, and endure the greatest sufferings for my sake? Oh most ungrateful wretch, if I did not love him! The heavens and the earth would be as much astonished at my ingratitude, as they are at the greatness of his love. Lord, may it never be said that I despise thee: no; thy love has won all my soul. When I view it, especially under the kind influences of thy spirit, it appears so glorious, that I cannot possibly withstand it; it melts my soul, raises my admiration, wins my affections, curbs every rising thought against thy person and government, and makes me willing to be entirely thine. Highly reasonable is it, I should be wholly and ever thine.

3. The blessings which Jesus has conferred upon the Christian, fill him with the warmest love to him. Herein is his love abundantly manifested. He came into this lower world to purchase the most valuable and important blessings, and he accordingly bestows them on the Christian: this consideration cannot but engage the soul to love him with the strongest affection. How winning is the kindness of our fellow mortals? When we receive favours, especially some extraordinary tokens of esteem, we should be reckoned the most abandoned, ungrateful, and unworthy creatures, if we did not respect our benefactor. And would it not be much more so here? The blessings which Jesus has bestowed upon the Christian, are not trifling and inconsiderable, but of the most valuable kind: they are blessings we all absolutely stand in need of, and are sufficient to give us lasting and substantial happiness. Is it a small thing to have our sins forgiven, and be made the children of God? Is it a trifling matter to be delivered from the power of sin, and be adorned with the image of God? Is it of no concern to be introduced into the favour of God, and be made an object of infinite love and delight? Lo these are blessings which Jesus

bestows upon every Christian here ! And how reasonable is it then that he should love and honour him ? Christians, it was Jesus that put your names in his book ; it was he that made satisfaction to infinite justice for your numerous sins, it was he that died, that you might live eternally. And oh it is this same Jesus that has actually redeemed your souls from the slavery of sin and Satan, and has made you the children of God : "he saw you in your blood, and said unto "you, live : and was not that a time of astonishing love ? He saw you dead in trespasses and sins, and hurrying on to everlasting death, and he sent his spirit to quicken your souls and make you alive : he saw you wandering and running in the broad road to everlasting ruin, and he stopped you in the midst of your career, and brought you into the way to eternal peace. Oh well then, may you love him ! it is he that has given you a new nature, lively hopes of a happy immortality, and a conformity to the divine image : he has clothed you with his perfect righteousness, cast that glorious robe around you, pardoned your sins and made you heirs of an immortal inheritance. No wonder that you love him ! such a friend, such a generous friend and benefactor is most certainly deserving of the highest esteem : you cannot possibly exceed in your love to him. Oh, says the Christian, how great are my obligations ? I had been now amongst the thoughtless crowd, running into all manner of excess of riot, or however absolutely ignorant and secure, every moment exposed to everlasting burnings ; had it not been for Jesus, who saw me, pitied me, and plucked me as a brand out of the fire. I had now been deceiving myself with false hopes, crying peace, peace, when under the most dreadful guilt, had not Jesus kindly took hold of me, enlightened my understanding, led me into the knowledge of himself, and gave me some well grounded hopes of eternal life : and has he thus wonderfully changed my state ? Raised me from a child of wrath to a child of God ? Has he freely pardoned all my sins, passed by my rebellious carriage and behaviour, and made me an heir of eternal glory ? And shall I not love him ? Are not these most powerful arguments, the greatest attractives ? I cannot withstand them : the consideration of what Christ has done for such an unworthy creature as I am, constrains me to love him, and to give up myself entirely unto him. Blessings so great, so excellent and glorious,

cannot certainly be ever forgot. " Oh whom have I in
" heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I
" desire or esteem in comparison of thee :" thou art all and
in all to my soul, Psal. lxxiii. 25.

4 The endearing titles which he gives his people, shew his love to them, and lay them under obligations to love him. He treats them in the kindest and most affectionate manner, both in his words and actions, he addresses them in the softest language, and calls them by the most endearing titles. Solomon represents Christ speaking to the church in the most tender manner, calling her " his spouse, his " love, his dove, his undefiled," Cant. v. 2. And making use of every title of endearment, to shew his love and affection to her. Thus, in various other parts of scripture, we have the most affectionate titles given to believers. Christ calls them *my people* to distinguish them from others, and to shew what property he has in them, and how much he esteems them. He calls them his children, made so by faith in his blood, and therefore as such lying near his heart. They are his jewels, his treasure, the apple of his eye ; all which manifest the peculiar tenderness he has for them, and the care that he takes of them. This therefore is enough to recommend him ever to their esteem : how justly would a person render himself an object of contempt amongst men, who did not esteem the man that always addressed him in the kindest language, and that with the utmost sincerity ? He must be of an uncommonly ungrateful disposition, who could remain churlish under such affectionate treatment. Let none then wonder why the Christian loves an unseen Jesus. It would be discovering the most sordid temper to cast contempt upon him as the proud profane sinner does. He cannot do it : he is lost and overwhelmed, when he comes to consider the titles which Jesus has given him, and consequently the love and tenderness of which they are so expressive. Lord, dost thou take such kind notice of me an unworthy creature ? Dost thou call me by such affectionate names ? I who am so vile, so polluted, who might have felt the weight of thine everlasting fury and vengeance. Lord, I am astonished, when I consider what honour thou dost put upon me, and shall I not love thee ? Lord what is my love ? Art thou made the more happy by it ? Dost thou receive any benefit or advantage from it ? No, far be from

me such a proud and self-flattering thought : yet, though thou art not rendered more glorious by it, still I love thee, it is my duty, it is my happiness, and whatever contempt others cast upon thee, I should be of all creatures the most ungrateful was I to do it : Lord I abhor the thought : behold thou knowest all things, and thou therefore knowest that I desire to love thee with all my heart, with all my soul, and with all my strength.

5. The care which Christ continually takes of his people, and the glory which he has purchased for, and will give unto them, abundantly shew the greatness of his love to them, and win their hearts and affections to him. He not only sends his Spirit at first to awaken, enlighten, and quicken them, but he manifests and discovers the utmost care of, and concern for them, while they are passing through this solitary wilderness, till he brings them to that glorious Canaan which he has purchased for them. They are surrounded with dangerous enemies, and consequently with innumerable temptations, by which they are liable to be led aside, to the dishonour of God, and wounding their souls : Jesus therefore takes them under his constant care, and acts the kindest part to them. As a shepherd, he continually watches over, guards, and protects them that no ravenous beast of prey break in upon them, and devour them, or lest they should wander from the fold, and be in danger of being eternally lost. Under a former head we have heard, that as a father he pities them under all their distresses, corrects their disobedience, and gives them the most affectionate instructions and advice. As the captain of their salvation he leads them on to the battle, encourages and animates them with the hopes of success, and brings them off complete conquerors. As their prophet he guides them by his word and spirit; as their priest he has offered himself a sacrifice to satisfy infinite justice for their sins; and as their advocate he sits above pleading their cause and making continual intercession for them. Thereby making up every breach, continuing them in the divine favour, and procuring them every needful supply. As their king he defends them in the enjoyment of their privileges and immunities, secures them from the power and malice of their enemies, governs them by his laws, and makes them happy in the enjoyment of his royal presence and favour. And thus he

discovers a constant care and concern for them. He hands out of his inexhaustible fulness, continually for their abundant supply ; he is their righteousness and strength ; their wisdom, sanctification, and redemption ; in short, he is their all and in all : they are nothing, they can do nothing without him. They are kept by his mighty power, through faith unto salvation : he continually heals their backslidings, forgives their iniquities and preserves them to his heavenly kingdom, which he has prepared for them, and where he will at length bring them. They are obliged to him for the blessings they have already received, for their perseverance in grace, and for the prospect of a glorious immortality ; he not only gives them blessings here, but he has prepared for them glories, glories of an immortal and exalted nature, and will put them into the full and everlasting possession of them hereafter : and is not all this enough to win their love, and engage their esteem ? It is not possible for the Christian to do otherwise than love his Redeemer. He must do it : his engagements, his obligations are so great, and his sense of them so deep, that he is powerfully, though sweetly constrained to love an unseen saviour. Oh my soul, behold the love of thy great Redeemer : what are corn, and oil, and wine ? What are silver and gold, and all corruptible things ? They are not to be mentioned with the blessings my Redeemer has given me, and has laid up for me : behold he has made me an heir of God, an heir of an incorruptible, immortal, and most glorious inheritance ; he has brought me out of my native darkness into his marvellous light, he has clothed me with the robe of his righteousness, and is daily acting the kindest and tenderest part towards me. And behold what he has laid up in reserve for me : see, Oh my soul, look into eternity, thy Redeemer has made it all over to thee ; he has taken the sting out of death for thee, and purchased heaven : see how he designs to exalt thee, to make thee a king and a priest unto God, and to live with him for ever and ever ! Oh how can I then but love him ? Deny him my heart : no, I abhor the thought : Lord I would be thine, for ever thine, I would love thee more, and I would mourn before thee that I am so defective.

6. A consideration of the freeness of the love of Christ, in all that he has done, and will do for the Christian, engages him to love and esteem him. Was a person to be-

stow valuable presents upon us in our necessitous circumstances, and have no advantage in view by so doing, but act from a mere principle of generosity and compassion, we could not but value and esteem so uncommon a friend: such a one is Christ to his people; he had no personal advantage in view, when he undertook the work of redemption; he was under no necessity to act so kind a part; none could compel him to it; he was perfectly free in whatever he has done. It was his own generous act; an act of the highest compassion, to display the riches of his distinguishing grace: we had nothing to recommend us to him, nothing to entitle us to his favour, but every thing that tended to fill him with an everlasting abhorrence of us: our circumstances were also the most distressing; poor and miserable, blind and naked; children of wrath and deserving of everlasting punishment: in these circumstances were we, when Jesus beheld us and loved us, and manifested himself unto us. What amazing grace, what astonishing love was this? When the soul comes to take a view of it, he is bewildered, overcome with the greatness of it, and raised in admiration: Oh why did Jesus put my name in his book? Why did he actually redeem me from sin and Satan? Why has he brought me into a state of favour with God, when many thousands around me, are buried in sin and exposed to everlasting burnings? Oh the love of Jesus is so astonishing that I cannot possibly entertain suitable conceptions of it! And how can I but love him who has done more for me than tongue can express, nay, than heart can conceive, and that freely, without the least obligation? Oh Lord, thy love overcomes my soul when I consider it: Oh that mine to thee was greater and more fervent. And thus we see the reasons why the Christian loves an unseen Jesus. And how rational a part he acts in the greatest fervours of devotion.

1. Hence we learn the stupidity and degeneracy of human nature, that we should be naturally enemies to so lovely a Saviour. We are ready enough to esteem what appears excellent, except it is in spiritual cases. And here, instead of valuing what is really worthy, we find a hatred of, and an aversion to it; see how Jesus is despised: with what contempt does the proud sinner view him; he hates his person, he will not submit to his government, he despises his glorious characters. Is not this something astro-

nishing? Alas how is human nature sunk! Oh the dreadful effects of sin, it blinds our minds, it corrupts our judgments; we call good evil, and evil good: amazing stupidity! That Jesus who should be the object of our esteem, is the object of our contempt! How is our nature changed! What strange, ignorant, perverse creatures are we? Lament, Oh my soul: the crown is fallen from thy head, and the most amiable object is despised.

2 Hence how should every Christian mourn that his love to Christ is so weak One so lovely, so glorious, one so generous and kind certainly deserves the strongest affection. The Christian is under the greatest obligations to Jesus; the blessings he has received, the glories he has in prospect call for constant returns of love. But Oh! how defective is the Christian himself? Do you love Jesus as you ought? Lament, Oh my soul: how wandering thy desires? How cool thy affections oftentimes to Jesus? What a fondness for present things? How earnestly do I pursue them? How seldom converse with Jesus and his love? How bent to backslide? How often does my wicked heart start aside? How frequently do I dishonour Jesus? Lament and mourn, O my soul, over thy ingratitude! Strange that one's heart should be so cold: strange that our souls should be no more employed in conversing with Christ's amiableness and excellencies!—Are you not all chargeable? Oh let us, as in the presence of God, charge our souls with neglect. And let us labour to grow in love to him.

3. How happy are all those who love an unseen Saviour? Those who love Jesus he loves. Prov. viii. 17. And what a pleasing consideration should this be to the soul?—Christ himself loves thee, Oh my soul! He has set his heart upon thee; thou art an object of his favour: What an honour! What an encouragement is this! Happy it is when we can thus apply the love of Christ to our souls: and all that love Christ may do it: for to whomsoever he is precious, they are precious to him; *we love him because he first loved us*, and from hence may most comfortably conclude our assured interest in him In fine,

4. How desirable a place is heaven, where we shall have the clearest views and greatest sense of the love of Christ to us, and find our souls filled with the strongest love to him? May we all learn to love an unseen Saviour. Amen.

THE
PLEASANTNESS
OF A
RELIGIOUS LIFE;
OPENED AND PROVED;
AND
RECOMMENDED TO THE CONSIDERATION OF ALL,
PARTICULARLY OF
YOUNG PEOPLE.

TO WHICH IS SUBJOINED,
A CHURCH IN THE HOUSE.
BEING A
SERMON
CONCERNING
FAMILY RELIGION.

BOTH BY THE LATE REVEREND
Mr. MATTHEW HENRY,
MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL IN CHESTER.

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M,DCC,XCII.

БИБЛІОТЕКА

СІЧНЯВІДОВІ ТА ПІДУОДІ СІЧНЯВІДОВІ

ДЛЯ ПІДГОТОВКИ УЧНІВ ДЛЯ ПІДГОТОВКИ
КО ГІДРОГЕОЛОГІЇ

І. А. БІЛІЦЬКИЙ

М. В. ГІДРОГЕОЛОГІЯ

ДЛЯ ПІДГОТОВКИ УЧНІВ ДЛЯ ПІДГОТОВКИ

І. О. М. І. А. Б.

ДЛЯ ПІДГОТОВКИ УЧНІВ ДЛЯ ПІДГОТОВКИ

І. О. Т. В. ГІДРОГЕОЛОГІЯ

ДЛЯ ПІДГОТОВКИ УЧНІВ ДЛЯ ПІДГОТОВКИ

TO THE

R E A D E R.

THAT distinction which the learned Dr. Henry More insists so much upon, in his explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness, between the animal life, and the divine life, is certainly of great use to lead us into the understanding of that mystery. What was the fall and apostacy of man, and what is still his sin and misery, but the soul's revolt from the divine life, and giving up itself wholly to the animal life? And what was the design of our Redeemer, but to recover us to the divine and spiritual life again by the influences of his grace? And to this his gospel has a direct tendency; his religion is all spiritual and divine, while all other religions favour of the animal life. Christianity, faith he, is that period of the wisdom and providence of God, wherein the animal life is remarkably insulted and triumphed over by the divine, book 1, chap. 7. And so far, and no further, are we Christians indeed, than as this revolution is brought about in our souls.

The conflict is between these two: Nothing draws more forcibly than pleasure; in order there-

fore to the advancing of the interests of the divine life in myself and others, I have here endeavoured, as God has enabled me, to make it evident, that the pleasures of the divine life are unspeakably better, and more deserving, than those of the animal life: Were people convinced of this, we should gain our point.

The substance of this was preached last year, in six sermons, in the ordinary course of my ministry, among many other reasons why we should be religious; I was then solicited to make it public, and now take this opportunity to prepare it for the press, when, through the good hand of my God upon me, I have finished my fifth volume of Expositions, before I go about the sixth. And herein, I confess, I indulge an inclination of my own; for this doctrine of the pleasantness of religion, is what I have long had a particular kindness for, and taken all occasions to mention. Yet I would not thus far have gratified either my friends request, or my own inclination, if I had not thought that, by the blessing of God, it might be of some service to the common interest of Christ's kingdom, and the common salvation of precious souls.

May 31st, }
1714. }

M. H.

THE
PLEASANTNESS
OF A
RELIGIOUS LIFE.

PROV. iii. 17.

Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

TRUE religion and godliness are often in scripture, and particularly in this book of the Proverbs, represented, and so recommended to us, under the name and character of wisdom, Prov. i. 2, 7, 20.—ii. 10.—iii. 13. Psal. cxi. 10. Because it is the highest improvement of the human nature, and the best and surest guide of human life. It was one of the first and most ancient discoveries of God's mind to the children of men, to the inquisitive part of them that are in search for wisdom, and would have it at any rate; then when God made a weight for the winds, and a decree for the rain, when he brought all the other creatures under the established rule and law of the creation, according to their respective capacities, then he declared this to man, a reasonable creature, as the law of his creation, Job. xxviii. 25,—28. “Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; “and to depart from evil,” the evil of sin, “is understanding.”

The great men of the world, that engross its wealth and

honours, are pretenders to wisdom, and think none do so well for themselves as they do: But though their neighbours applaud them, and their posterity, that reap the fruit of their worldly wisdom, approve their sayings; yet this their way is their folly, Psal. xlix. 13, 18. and so it will appear, when God himself shall call those fools, who said to their souls, take your ease, in barns full of corn, and bags full of money, Luke xii. 20. Jer. xvii. 11.

The learned men of the world were wellwishers to wisdom, and modestly called themselves *Philosophoi*, lovers of wisdom; and many wise principles we have from them, and wise precepts: And yet their philosophy failed them in that which man's great duty and interest lies in, acquainting himself with his maker, and keeping up communion with him; herein they that professed themselves to be wise, became fools, Rom. i. 22. "And the world by wisdom knew not God," 1 Cor. i. 21.

But true Christian's are, without doubt, the truly wise men, to whom Christ is made of God wisdom, 1 Cor. i. 30, in whom are hid, not from them, but for them, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, Col. ii. 3. They understand themselves best, and on which side their interest lies, who give up themselves to the conduct of Christ and his word and spirit; that consult his oracles, and govern themselves by them, which are indeed the truest oracles of reason, Prov ix. 10. Men never begin to be wise, till they begin to be religious; and they then leave off to be wise, when they leave off to do good, Psal. xxxvi. 3.

Now, to recommend to us the study and practice of this true wisdom, to bring us into a willing subjection to her authority, and keep us to a conscientious observance of her dictates, the great God is here by Solomon reasoning with us, from those topics, which, in other cases, use to be cogent, and commanding enough. It is wonderful condescension, that he, who has an indisputable authority over us, thus vouchsafes to reason with us; to draw with the cords of a man, and the bands of love, Hos. xi. 4. when he might make use only of the cords of a God, and the bands of the law, Psal. ii. 3. to invite us to that by precious promises, which he enjoins upon us by his precepts, and those not grievous, 1 John v. 3.

Interest is the great governess of the world; which, when

men are once convinced of, they will be swayed by more than by any thing else. Every one is for what he can get, and therefore applies himself to that which he thinks he can get by; the common inquiry is, "Who will shew us any good?" We would all be happy, would all be easy.

Now, it is here demonstrated by eternal truth itself, that it is our interest to be religious; and therefore religion deserves to be called wisdom, because it teaches us to do well for ourselves; and it is certain, that the way to be happy (that is, perfectly holy) hereafter, is to be holy (that is, truly happy) now. It is laid down for a principle here, "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom," ver. 13. that finds the principles and habits of it planted in his own soul by divine grace; that, having diligently sought, has at length found that pearl of great price: "And the man that getteth understanding," reckons himself therein a true gainer. The man that draws out understanding, so the original word signifies; that produceth it, and brings it forth, qui profert intelligentiam; and so the Chaldee reads it.— Happy is the man that, having a good principle in him, makes use of it both for his own and others benefit: that, having laid up, lays out.

It is necessary to our being happy, that we have right notions of happiness; the nature of it, wherein it consists, what are the ingredients of it, and what the ways that lead to it: for many keep themselves miserable by thinking themselves happy, when really they are not; and we have reason to suspect their mistake concerning themselves, because they mistake so grossly concerning others: they call the proud happy, Mal. iii. 15. they "bless the covetous, whom the Lord abhors," Psal. x. 4. It concerns us, therefore, to consider, whence we take our measures of happiness, and what rules we go by in judging of it; that we may not covet our lot with those, with whom we should dread to have our lot; that we may not say as the psalmist was tempted to say, when he looked upon the outward prosperity of worldly people, "Happy is the people that is in such a case;" but as he was determined to say, when he looked upon the true felicity of good people, happy, thrice happy, for ever happy, is that people whose God is the Lord, Psal. cxliv. 15. And as God here saith, whose judgement we are sure is according to truth, happy is the man that finds wisdom.

The happiness of those who are religious is here proved.

1. From the true profit that is to be got by religion; Godliness is profitable to all things, 1 Tim. iv. 8. It is of universal advantage. Though we may be losers for our religion, yet we shall not only not be losers by it, but we shall be unspeakable gainers in the end. They that trade with wisdom's talents, will find the merchandise of it better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold, and that it is more precious than rubies. As long since as Job's time it was agreed, that the advantages of religion were such, that as they could not be purchased, so they could not be valued with the gold of Ophir, the precious onyx, or the sapphire; the topaz of Ethiopia could not equal them, Job. xxviii. 16, 19. Length of days is in wisdom's right hand, even life for evermore; length of days and no shortening of them; and in her left hand riches and honour, ver. 16. the unsearchable riches of Christ, and the honour that comes from God, which are true riches, and true honours, because durable, because eternal, and for ever out of the danger of poverty and disgrace.

In all labour there is profit, more or less, of one kind or other; but no profit like that in the labour of religion: They who make a business of it, will find great advantage by it. Its present incomes are valuable, and a comfortable, honourable maintenance for a soul; but its future recompences infinitely more so, above what we are able either to speak or think.

2. From the transcendent pleasure that is to be found in it. Here is profit and pleasure twisted, which completes the happiness: for all excel who mingle the pleasant with the useful. Those who pursue the gains of the world in wealth and riches, must be willing to deny themselves in their pleasures; and they that will indulge themselves in their pleasures, must be content not to get money, but to spend it. As they that are covetous, know they must not be voluptuous, so they that are voluptuous leave no room to be covetous; but it is not so in the profits and pleasures of religion: here a man may both get and save the spiritual riches of divine grace, and yet at the same time bathe in a full stream of divine consolations, and be nevertheless a holy epicure in spiritual delights, for his laying up treasures in heaven; the soul may even then dwell at ease, when it is

labouring most diligently for the meat that endures to eternal life.

This is that which the text speaks of ; and both the profit and pleasure of religion are put together in the next words, " She is a tree of life," ver. 18. both enriching and delighting " to them that lay hold upon her." What gain or comfort like that of life ?

First, We are here assured, that her ways are ways of pleasantness ; not only pleasant ways, but in the abstract, ways of pleasantness, as if pleasantness were confined to those ways, and not to be found any where else : and the pleasantness ariseth not from any foreign circumstance, but from the innate goodness of the ways themselves. Or it notes the exceeding superlative pleasantness of religion ; it is as pleasant as pleasantness itself ; they are ways of pleasantness, this, in the original, is the word from which Naomi had her name in the day of her prosperity, which afterwards she disclaimed, Ruth i. 20. Call me not Naomi, pleasant ; but Marah, bitter. Think you hear wisdom saying on the contrary, call me not Marah, bitter, as some have miscalled me, but call me Naomi, pleasant. The vulgar Latin reads it, *viæ pulchræ*, or her ways are beautiful ways ; ways of sweetness, so the Chaldee.

Wisdom's ways are so ; *i.e.* the ways which she has directed us to walk in, the ways of her commandments, those are such, that if we keep close to, and go on in we shall certainly find true pleasure and satisfaction. Wisdom saith, This is the way, walk in it, and you shall not only find life at the end, but pleasure in the way. That which is the only right way to happiness, we must resolve to travel, and to proceed, and persevere in it, whether it be fair or foul, pleasant or unpleasant ; but it is a great encouragement to a traveller, to know that his way is not only the right way, but a pleasant way ; and such is the way to heaven.

God had told us, by Solomon, chap. ii. 3, 4. that we must cry after knowledge, must give our voice to understanding, that we must seek it, and search for it, must spare no cost or pains to get it : he had told us, that this wisdom would restrain us from the way both of the evil man, and of the strange woman, chap. ii. 12. 16. that it would keep us from all the forbidden pleasures of sense. Now, lest these restraints from pleasure, and constraints to piety and labour,

should discourage any from the ways of religion, he here assures us, not only that our pains will be abundantly recompensed with the profits of religion, but the pleasures we forego will be abundantly balanced with the pleasures we shall enjoy.

Secondly, It is added, that all her paths are peace. Peace is sometimes put for all good; here some take it for the good of safety and protection. Many ways are pleasant, they are clean and look smooth; but they are dangerous, either not found at bottom, or beset with thieves; now the ways of wisdom have in them a holy security, as well as a holy serenity; and they who walk in them have God himself for their shield as well as their sun, and are not only joyful in the hope of good, but are or may also be quiet from the fear of evil.

But we may take it for the good of pleasure and delight, and so it speaks the same with the former part of the verse: As there is pleasantness in wisdom's ways, so there is peace in all her paths.

1. There is not only peace in the end of religion, but peace in the way. There is not only peace provided as a bed, for good men to lie down in at night when their work is done and their warfare is accomplished; but they shall then enter into peace, rest in their beds, Isa. lvii. 2. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace, Psal. xxxvii. 37. it is everlasting peace: but there is also peace provided as a shade, for good men to work in all day, that they may not only do their work, but do it with delight. For even the work of righteousness as well as its reward, shall be peace, Isa. xxxii. 17. and the immediate effect of righteousness, as well as its issue at last, quietness and assurance for ever.

It is possible, that war may be the way to peace: sic quærimus pacem, thus we pursue peace, is the best motto to be engraven on weapons of war. But it is the glory of those who are truly religious, that they not only seek peace but enjoy it. The peace of God rules their hearts, and by that means keeps them; and, even while they are travellers, they have peace, though they are not yet at home.

It is the misery of the carnal irreligious world, that the ways of peace they have not known, Rom. iii. 17. for they are like the troubled sea; there is no peace, saith my God,

to the wicked, Isa. lvii. 20, 21. How can peace be spoken to those who are not the sons of peace? Luke x. 4, 5. to those who have not grace for the word of peace to fasten upon? They may cry peace to themselves, but there is no true peace either in their way or in their end: To such I say, as in 2 Kings ix. 18. What hast thou to do with peace? turn thee behind me; while in God's name I speak peace to all who are in covenant with the God of peace, to all the faithful subjects of the prince of peace: They have experimentally known the way of peace, and to them I say, Go on, and prosper; Go on in peace, for the God of love and peace is and will be with you.

2. There is not only this peace in the way of religion in general, but in the particular paths of that way. View it in the several acts and instances of it, in the exercise of every grace, in the performance of every duty, and you will find that what is said of the body of Christianity, is true of every part of it; it is peace.

The ways of religion are tracked as path-ways are, Cant. i. 8. we go forth by the footsteps of the flock. It is the good old way that all have walked in, who are gone to heaven before us; and this contributes something to the peace of it. Walk in the old way, and you shall find rest to your souls, Jer. vi. 16. We go on in our way with so much the more assurance, when we see those going before us, who, through faith and patience are now inheriting the promise; let us but keep the path, and we shall not miss our way.

The Chaldee reads it, *Itinera ejus pacifica*, that is, Her journeys are peace. The paths of wisdom are not like walks in a garden, which we make use of for diversion only, and an amusement; but like tracks in a great road, which we press forward in with care and pains, as a traveller in his journey, still going on, till we come to our journey's end. We must remember, that in the ways of religion we are upon our journey, and it is a journey of business, business of life and death, and therefore we must not trifle, or lose time, but must lift up our feet, as Jacob did, Gen. xxix. 1. (Then Jacob went on his way, in the margin it is, he lift up his feet) and lift up our hearts as Jehoshaphat did in the ways of the Lord, 2 Chron. xvii. 6. and not take up short of the end of our faith and hope, not take up short of home: And though the journey is long, and requires all this care

and application, yet it is pleasant, it is peace notwithstanding.

In the way of religion and godliness, taken generally, there are different paths, according to the different sentiments of wise and good men in the less weighty matters of the law; but, blessed be God, every different path is not a by-path; And if it be not, but keep within the same hedges of divine truths and laws, as to the essentials of religion, it may be, it shall be a way of peace; for both he that eateth and he that eateth not giveth God thanks, Rom. xiv. 6. and has comfort in it. If we rightly understand that the kingdom of God, the way of wisdom, is not meat and drink, and we shall find it to be, which indeed it is, righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, Rom. xiv. 17.

3. There is this peace in all the paths of wisdom, in all the instances of pure and undefiled religion; look into them all, make trial of them all, and you will find there is none to be excepted against, none to be quarrelled with; they are all uniform and of a piece; the same golden thread of peace and pleasure runs through the whole web of serious godliness.

We cannot say so of this world, that all its paths are peace, however some of them may pretend to give the mind a little satisfaction; its pleasures have their allays; that which one thing sweetens, another comes presently and enbitters. But as there is a universal rectitude in the principles of religion, Psal cxix. 128. I have esteemed all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and Prov. viii. 8 All the words of my mouth are in righteousness, faith wisdom, and there is nothing foward or perverse in them; so there is an universal peace and pleasure in the practice of religion; All our paths, if such as they should be, will be such as we could wish.

The doctrine, therefore, contained in these words, is,
That true piety hath true pleasure in it. Or thus;
The ways of religion are pleasant and peaceful ways.

C H A P. I.

The Explication of the Doctrine.

TIT is a plain truth which we have here laid down, and there is little in it that needs explication: It were well

for us, if we would but as readily subscribe to the certainty of it, as we apprehend the tense and meaning of it. Nor will any complain that it is hard to be understood, but those who know no other pleasures than those of sense, and relish no other, and therefore resolve not to give credit to it. Those who think, How can this be, that there should be pleasure in piety? will be ready to question what is the meaning of this doctrine? and call it a hard saying.

You know what pleasure is; I hope you know something what the pleasure of the mind is, a pleasure which the soul has the sensation of. And do you not know something what piety is? a due regard to a God above us, and having the eyes of the soul ever up unto him; and then you know what I mean when I say, that there is an abundance of real pleasure and satisfaction in the ways of religion and godliness.

But to help you a little in the understanding of it, and to prevent mistakes, observe,

First, That I speak of true piety, and of that as far as it goes.

i. Hypocrites are very much strangers to the delights and pleasures of religion; nay, they are altogether so, for it is joy which those strangers do not intermeddle with. Counterfeit piety can never bring in true pleasure. He who acts a part upon a stage, though it be the part of one who is never so pleasant, though he may humour the pleasantness well enough, he doth not experience it. The pleasures of God's house lie not in the outer courts, but within the veil. None know what the peace of God means, but those who are under the dominion and operation of his grace; nor can any who deny the power of godliness, expect to share in the pleasures of it. When wisdom enters into thine heart, takes possession of that, and becomes a living active principle there; then, and not till then, it is pleasant unto thy soul, Prov. ii. 19. Those who aim at no more than the credit of their religion before men, justly fall short of the comfort of it in themselves.

Hypocrites have other things that they delight in, the satisfactions of the world, the gratifications of sense, which put their mouths out of taste to spiritual pleasures, so that they have no pleasure in them. They that have their hearts upon their marketings, are weary of the New Moons and the Sabbaths, Amos viii. 5. With good reason, therefore,

doth Job ask, " Will the the hypocrite delight himself in " the Almighty ?" chap. xxvii. 10. No, his soul takes its ease in the creature, and returns not to the Creator as its rest and home.

Some flashy pleasure an hypocrite may have in religion, from a land-flood of sensible affections, who yet has not the least taste of the river of God's pleasures. There were those who " delighted to know God's ways." Isa. lviii. 2. They met with some pretty notions in them, that surprised them, and pleased their fancies; but they did not delight to walk in them. The stony ground received the word with joy, and yet received no lasting benefit by it, Luke viii. 13. Herod heard John gladly, Mark vi. 20 He found something very agreeable in his sermons, and which natural conscience could not but embrace; and yet could not bear to be reproved for his Herodias. A florid preacher, such as Ezekiel was, may be to them as " a very lovely song of one that " can play well on an instrument," Ezek. xxxiii. 32. And yet, at the same time, the word of the Lord, if it touch their consciences, and shew them their transgressions, is to them a reproach, Jer. vi. 10.

They whose hearts are not right with God in their religion, cannot have the pleasure of communion with God; for it is the foul only which converseth with God, and that he communicates himself to. " Bodily exercise profiteth little," 1 Tim. iv. 8. and therefore pleaseth little. The service of God is a burden and a task to an unsanctified unrenewed heart; it is out of its element when it is brought into that air: and therefore, instead of snuffing it up, and saying, behold what a pleasure it is ! It snuffs at it, and faith, " Behold, what a weariness it is !" Mal. i. 13.

Nor can they take any pleasure in communing with their own consciences, or in their reflections; for they are ready upon all occasions to give them uneasiness, by charging them with that which is disagreeable to their profession, and gives the lie to it: and though they cry, peace, peace, to themselves, they have that within them that tells them, the God of heaven doth not speak peace to them; and this casts a damp upon all their pleasure, that their religion itself gives them pain, God himself is a terror to them, and the gospel itself condemns them for their insincerity. And, in time of trouble and distress, none are so much afraid as the sinners

in Zion, Isa. xxxiii. 14. The secret sinners there; and fearfulness is the greatest surprise of all to the hypocrites, Amos vi. 1. that were at ease in Zion, and thought its strong holds would be their security.

And therefore it is, that hypocrites cast off religion, and discharge themselves of the profession of it, after they have a while disguised themselves with it; because it did not sit easy, and they are weary of it. Tradesmen, that take no pleasure in their business, will not stick to it long; no more will those who take no pleasure in their religion: Nor will any thing carry us through the outward difficulties of it, but the inward delights of it; if those be wanting, the tree is not watered, and therefore even its leaf will soon wither, Psal. i. 3. The hypocrite will not always call upon God, will not long do it, because "he will not delight himself in the Almighty," Job xxvii. 9, 10. And this ought not to be a stumbling block to us. Thus hypocrites in religion prove apostates from it; and the reason is, because they never found it pleasant, because they were never sincere in it, which was their fault, and not the fault of the religion they professed.

Let us therefore "take heed, and beware of hypocrisy," Luke xii. 1. as ever we hope to find pleasure in religion. Counterfeit piety hath some other end in view, some other end to serve, than that which is the spring of true delight. They who rest in that "hew them out cisterns," Jer. ii. 13 that can hold but little water, and that dead, nay, "broken cisterns that can hold no water?" And how can they expect the pleasure which they have, that cleave to, and continually draw from, the "fountain of life and living water?" No; as their principles are, such are their pleasures; as their aims are, such are their joys; they appeal to the world, and to the world they shall go. But let not the credit of religion suffer then, for the sake of those who are only pretenders to it, and so indeed enemies to it.

2. It is possible that true Christians may, through their own fault and folly, want very much of the pleasure of religion; and therefore, I say, true piety, as far as it goes, is very pleasant; as far as it has its due influence upon us, and is rightly understood, and lived up to.

We abide by it, that wisdom's ways are always pleasant; and yet must own, that wisdom's children are sometimes un-

pleasant, and therin come short of justifying wisdom in this matter as they ought to do, Luke vii. 35. and rather give advantage to her accusers, and prejudice to her cause. Either they miss these ways, and turn aside out of them, and so lose the pleasure that is to be found in them ; or (which is a common case) they " refuse to take the comfort" which they might have in these ways. They hamper themselves with needless perplexities, make the yoke heavy which Christ has made easy, and that frightful which he designed should be encouraging ; they indulge themselves, and then, as Jonah, when he was angry, justify themselves in causeless griefs and fears, and think they do well to " put themselves into an " agony," to be " very heavy and sore amazed," and their souls exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, as Christ's was ; whereas Christ put himself into such an agony to make us, easy.

But let not true piety suffer in its reputation because of this : For though it be called a religious melancholy, it is not so ; for it is contrary to the very nature and design of religion, while it shelters itself under the colour of it, and pretends to take rise from it. It is rather to be called a superstitious melancholy, *deisidamonia*, arising from such a slavish fear of God, as the Heathen were driven by to their Demons and barbarous sacrifices ; which is a great injury to the honour of his goodness, as well as a great injury to themselves.

If the professors of religion look for that in the world, which is to be had in God only, and that is perfect happiness ; or, if they look for that in themselves, which is to be had in Christ only, and that is a perfect righteousness ; or, if they look for that on earth, which is to be had in heaven only, and that is perfect holiness ; and then fret, and grieve, and go mourning from day to day, because they are disappointed in their expectations, they may thank themselves, " Why seek they the living among the dead ?" Luke xxiv. 5, 17.

Let but religion, true and pure religion in all the laws and instances of it, command and prevail, and these tears will soon be wiped away : Let but God's servants take their work before them, allow each principle of their religion its due weight, and each practice of it its due place and proportion, and let them not dash one precept of the gospel, any

more than one table of the law, in pieces against the other : let them lock upon it to be as much their duty to rejoice in Christ Jesus ; as to mourn for sin ; nay, and more, for this is in order to that ; and then we shall not fear, that their sorrows will in the least shake the truth of our doctrine : for, as far as the religion is carried, it will carry this character along with it, and further it cannot be expected.

Secondly, In true piety, I say, there is a pleasure ; there is that which we may find comfort in, and fetch satisfaction from. There is in it a good as well as an useful pleasure. That is pleasant which is agreeable, which the soul rejoiceth in, or at least reposeth in ; or which it relisheth, pleaseth itself with, and desireth the continuance and repetition of. Let a man's faculties be in their due frame and temper, not vitiated, corrupted, or depraved ; and there is that in the exercise of religion which highly suits them, and satisfies them : and this pleasure is such as is not allayed with any thing to cast a damp upon it.

i. The ways of religion are right and pleasant ; they are pleasant without the alloy of injury and iniquity. Sin pretends to have its pleasures, but they are the “ perverting of “ that which is right,” Job, xxxiii. 27 they are stolen waters, Prov ix. 17 Unjust, though pleasant ; but the pleasures of godliness are as agreeable to the rectitude of our nature, as they are gratifying to the pure and undebauched desires of it. It is the way in which we should go, and the way in which, if we were not wretchedly degenerated, we would go of choice.

They are right ; for they are marked out to us by our rightful Lord, who, having given us the being of rational creatures, has authority to give us a law suited to our being ; and he has done it both by natural conscience, and by the written word : he hath said, “ this is the way, walk in “ it,” Isa. xxx. 21. It is not only permitted and allowed us, but charged and commanded for us to walk in ; he hath sent us as messengers from him to travel this road upon his errand.

They are right ; for they lead directly to our great end, have a tendency to our welfare here and for ever. They are the only right way to that which is the felicity of our being, which we shall certainly miss and come short of, if we do not walk in this way.

But that is not all, they are also pleasant: "Behold; how good and how pleasant!" Psal. cxxxiii. 1. It is the happiness of those that fear God, that he not only teacheth them in the way that he shall choose, (and we may be sure that is the right way) but also that their "souls shall dwell at ease," Psal. xxv. 12, 13. And justly may they dwell at ease, who have infinite Wisdom itself to choose their way, and guide them in it. That may be right which is not pleasant, and that pleasant which is not right; but religion is both: Therefore in the next verse it is compared to the tree of life. The tree of knowledge was indeed pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired, but it was forbidden; and therefore religion is called a "tree of life," Gen. xxix. 6. which was not only pleasant, but was allowed till sin entered.

2. They are easy and pleasant; pleasant without the alloy of toil and difficulty, any more than arises from the corruption of our own nature: That indeed makes such opposition, that we have need of arguments; and, blessed be God, we have good arguments to prove the practice of religion easy: But it is more than so, it is pleasant.

Much less is said than is intended, when we are told that "his commandments are not grievous," 1 John v. 3. They are not only not grievous and galling, but they are gracious and pleasing. His yoke is easy, Mat. xi. 30. The word there used, *Chresos*, signifies more than so, it is sweet and gentle: Not only easy as a yoke is to the neck, when it is so well fitted as not to hurt it; but easy as a pillow is to the head when it is weary and sleepy. It is not only tolerable, but very comfortable. There is not only no matter of complaint in the ways of God, nothing to hurt us, but there is abundant matter of joy and rejoicing: It is not only work which is not weariness, but work which is its own wages; such a tree of life, as will not only screen us from the storm and tempest, and feed us with necessary food, but we may sit down under the shadow of it with great delight, and the fruit of it will be "sweet unto our taste," Cant. ii. 3.

3. They are gainful and pleasant, and have not the alloy of expence and loss. That may be profitable, which yet may be unpleasant; and that pleasant, which afterwards may prove very unprofitable and prejudicial. What fruit

have sinners from those things in which yet they said they had pleasure ? Rom. vi. 21. But religion brings both pleasure with it, and profit after it : The pleasures of religion do not cost us dear ; there is no loss by them, when the account comes to be balanced.

The gain of this world is usually fetched in by toil and uneasy labour, which is grievous to flesh and blood. The servants of this world are drudges to it ; " they rise up early, sit up late, eat the bread of sorrows," Psal. cxxvii. 2. in pursuit of its wealth. They " labour and be-
" reave their souls of good," Eccl. iv. 8. But the servants of God have a pleasure even in the work they are to get by, and which they shall be recompensed for.

Besides the tendency that there is in the practice of serious godliness to our happiness in the other life, there is much in it that conduceth to our comfort in this life. David observes it to the honour of religion, Psal. xix. 10. that not only after keeping, but in keeping God's commandments, there is a great reward ; a present great reward of obedience in obedience. A " good man is satisfied in himself," Prov. xiv. 14. that is, in that which divine grace hath wrought in him ; and the saints are said to " sing in the way of the Lord," Psal. cxxxviii. 5. as those that find them pleasant ways

And the closer we adhere to the rules of religion, and the more intimate our converse is with divine things, the more we live with an eye to Christ and another world, the more comfort we are likely to have in our own bosoms. Great peace have they that love God's law, Psal. cxix. 165. and the more they love it, the greater their peace is ; nay, it is promised to the church, that all her children shall be taught of the Lord, (and those whom he teacheth are well taught, and taught to do well) and then " great shall be the peace of her children," Isa. liv. 13. it shall be entailed upon them ; peace like a river, gliding with the ease of a bird.

Thirdly, I call it a true pleasure. As there is a science, falsely so called, 1 Tim. vi. 20. so there is a pleasure falsely so called. One of the ancients distinguishes between *Hedonas agetheis*, and *Hedonas Pseudeit, Damascen. Orthod. Fid. l. 2.* pleasures that have some truth in them, and pleasures that deceive us with a lie in their right hand. Some have said that the school of Epicurus, which is commonly branded

and condemned for making pleasure man's chief good, did not mean sensual pleasure, but the pleasure of the mind. And we should be willing enough to admit it, but that the other principles of his philosophy were so atheistical and irreligious. But this we are sure of, that it is a true pleasure which religion secures to us; a pleasure that deserves the name, and answers it to the full.

It is a true pleasure: For,

1. It is real, and not counterfeit. Carnal worldlings pretend a great satisfaction in the enjoyments of the world, and the gratifications of sense; Soul, take thine ease, saith one, Luke xii. 20. I have found me out substance, saith another, Hosea xii. 8 even the life of my hand; saith a third, "*I have seen the fire,*" Isa. lvii. 10. The wicked boasts of his heart's desire; but Solomon assures us, not only that the end of that mirth is heaviness, but that even "*in laughter the heart is sorrowful!*" Prov. xiv. 13. Both those that make a god of their belly, and those that make a god of their money, find such a constant pain and uneasiness attending their spiritual idolatries, that their pleasure is but from the teeth outward. Discontent at present, disappointments, and fear of worse ungoverned passions (which seldom are made less turbulent by the gratifications of the appetite) and above all, conscience of guilt, and dread of divine wrath, these give them the lie, when they boast of their pleasures, which, with such allays, are not to be boasted of; they would not be thought to be disappointed in that which they have chosen for their happiness, and therefore they seem to be pleased, they seem to be pleasant, when really their heart, if it knows its own wickedness, cannot but "*know its own bitterness,*" Prov. xiv. 10.

And many of the good things of this world, of which we said, These same shall comfort us, prove vexatious to us; and we are disappointed in that, wherein we most promised ourselves satisfaction; If we say our bed shall comfort us, perhaps it is not a bed to rest on, but a bed to toss on, as it was to poor Job, when wearisome nights were appointed to him. Nay, such strangers are we to real pleasure in the things of this life, and so oft do we deceive ourselves with that which is counterfeit, that we wish to live to those days of life which we are told will be evil days, and those years of which we are assured that we shall say, "*We have no pleasure in them,*" Eccl. xii. 1.

But the pleasures of religion are solid, substantial pleasures, and not painted; gold, and not gilded over: Those sons of pleasure inherit substance, Prov viii. 21. it is that which is (Job xv. 11) the foundation firm, the superstructure strong, the consolations of God not few, nor small, while a vain and foolish world “cause their eyes to fly upon that which is not,” Prov xxiii. 5. Worldly people pretend to the joy they have not; but godly people conceal the joy they have, as he did that had found the treasure hid in the field. They have, like their Master, “meat to eat, which the world knows not of,” John iv. 32.

2. It is rational, and not brutish. It is the pleasure of the soul, not of sense; it is the peculiar pleasure of a man, not that which we have in common with the inferior creatures. The pleasures of religion are not those of the mere animal life, which arise from the gratifications of the senses of the body, and its appetites; no, they affect the soul, that part of us by which we are allied to the world of spirits, that noble part of us, and therefore are to be called the true pleasures of a man.

The brute creatures have the same pleasures of sense that we have, and perhaps in some of them the senses are more exquisite, and consequently they have them in a much higher degree, nor are their pleasures liable to the correctives of reason and conscience as ours are. Who live such merry lives as the Leviathan, who plays in the deep? or the birds that sing among the branches? Psal. civ. 12, 26.

But what are these to a man who being “taught more than the beasts of the earth, and made wiser than the fowls of heaven,” Job. xxxv. 1011. and being dignified above the beasts, not so much by the powers of reason, as by a capacity for religion, is certainly designed for enjoyments of a more excellent nature, for spiritual and heavenly delights? When God made man, he left him not to the enjoyments of the wide world, with the other creatures, but inclosed him a Paradise, a garden of pleasure (so Eden signifies) where he should have delights proper for him; signified indeed by the pleasures of a garden, pleasant trees, and their fruits, but really the delights of a soul, that was a ray of divine light, and a spark of divine fire, newly breathed into him from above, and on which God’s image and likeness was imprinted. And we never recover our felicity, which we lost by our first parents in-

dulging the appetite of the body, till we come to the due relish of those pleasures which man has in common with angels, and a due contempt of those which he has in common with the brutes.

The pleasures of wisdom's ways may at second-hand affect the body, and be an advantage to that; hence it is said, Prov. iii. 8. to her "health to the navel," and "marrow to the bones;" but its residence is in the "hidden man of the heart," 1 Pet. iii. 4. and its comforts "delight the soul in the multitude of its thoughts," Psal. xciv. 19. It is pleasant to the soul, and makes that like a watered garden. These are pleasures which a man, by the assistance of divine grace, may reason himself into, and not as it is with sensual pleasures, may reason himself out of.

There is no pleasure separate from that of religion, which pretends to be an intellectual pleasure, but that of learning, and that of honour: But as to the pleasure of a proud man in his dignities, and the respects paid him, as Herod, in the acclamations of the crowd, it doth but affect the fancy; it is vain-glory, it is not glory: It is but the folly of him that receives the honour, fed by the folly of them that give it; so that it doth not deserve to be called a rational pleasure; it is a lust of the mind that is gratified by it, that is as much an instance of our degeneracy, as any of the lusts of the flesh are.

And as to the pleasure of a scholar, abstracted from religion, it is indeed, rational and intellectual; yet only the pleasure of the mind, in knowing truth, and not its enjoying good, Solomon, that had as much of this pleasure as ever any man had, and as nice a taste of it, yet hath assured us from his own experience, that in much wisdom of this kind is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow, Ec. i. 18.

But the pleasures which a holy soul hath in knowing God, and in communion with him, are not only of a spiritual nature, but they are satisfying, they are filling to the soul, and make a happiness adequate to its best affections.

3. It is remaining, and not flashy and transitory. That is true pleasure, and deserves the name, which will continue with us as a tree of life, and not wither as the green herb; which will be not as the light of a candle, which is soon burnt out, but as that of the sun, which is a faithful witness in heaven. We reckon that most valuable, which is most durable.

The pleasures of sense are fading and perishing. As the world passeth away, 1 John ii. 17. so do the lusts of it : That which at first pleaseth and satisfieth, after a while palls and surfeits. "As the crackling of thorns under a pot," Eccl. vii. 6 which make a great blaze, and a great noise for a little while, but soon end in foot and ashes ; such is the " laughter of the fool ; the end of his mirth is heaviness." Belshazzar's jollity is soon turned into the utmost consternation ; "The night of my pleasure hath he turned into fear to me," Isa. xxi. 4. The pleasures of sin are said to be but for a season, Heb. xi. 25. for the "end of that mirth is heaviness." As they have no conscience, so they have no continuance.

But the pleasures of religion will abide ; they wither not in winter, nor tarnish with time, nor doth age wrinkle their beauty : Frosts nip them not, nor do storms blast them ; they continue through the greatest opposition of events, and despise that time and chance which happens to all things under the sun, Eccl. ix. 11. Believers when they are sorrowful, appear only as sorrowful, for they are always rejoicing, 2 Cor. vi. 10. and ii. 14. Thanks be to God who always causeth us to triumph. If an immortal soul make an eternal God its chief joy, what should hinder but that it should rejoice evermore, 1 Theff. v. 16. for as the treasure, so the pleasure is laid up there, where neither moth nor rust can corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal. Christ's joy, which he gives to those who are his, is joy which no man taketh from them, John xvi. 22. for it is their heart that rejoiceth. They are the beginning of everlasting pleasures, the earnest and foretaste of them ; so that they are, in effect, pleasures for evermore.

So then, the great truth which I desire my heart and yours may be fully convinced of, is this: "That a holy, heavenly life, spent in the service of God, and in communion with him, is, without doubt, the most pleasant and comfortable life any man can live in this world."

C H A P. II.

The Pleasure of being Religious, proved from the Nature of True Religion; and many particular Instances of it.

THE doctrine needs no further explication, nor can it have any better than our own experience of it ; but the chief part of this undertaking is to prove the truth of it : And O that God, by me, would set it before you in a true light, so as that you may be all convinced of it, and embrace it as a faithful saying, and well worthy of all acceptation, that a godly life is a pleasant life ; so as that we may be wrought upon to live such a life !

Pleasure is a tempting thing : What yields delight, cannot but attract desire ; it is next to necessity, so strongly doth it urge. Surely, if we were but fully persuaded of this, that religion has pleasure on its side, we would be wrought upon by the allurement of that to be religious. It is certainly so, let us not be in doubt of it. Here is a bait that has no hook under it, a pleasure courting you which has no pain attending it, no bitterness at the latter end of it ; a pleasure which God himself invites you to, and which will make you happy, truly and eternally happy : and shall not this work upon you ?

But we may entertain ourselves and our hearers long enough with discourses of the pleasantness of wisdom's ways ; but they will not profit, unless they are mixed with faith. O that we would all mix faith with this truth ! that we would yield to the evidence of it !

To make way for the truth of it, I would only desire two things ;

1. That you would lay aside prejudice, and give a fair and impartial hearing to this cause, and do not prejudge it. He who answers any matter before he hear it out, it is folly and shame to him, Prov. viii. 13, 14 especially if it be a matter of great importance and concern to himself ; a matter of life and death. Be willing therefore to believe that it is possible there may, and then I doubt not but to make out that it is certain there is true pleasure in true religion.

You have got a notion, it may be, and are confirmed in it by the common cry of the multitude, that religion is a sour melancholy thing, that it is to bid farewell to all pleasure and delight, and to spend your days in grief, and your years in sighing : and if we offer any thing to the contrary, that it is a pleasant thing, and the best entertainment that can be to the mind, you are ready to say, as Ezekiel's hearers did of him, Doth he not speak parables? Ezek. xx. 49. Doth he not speak paradoxes ? You startle at it, and start from it as a hard saying. Like Nathaniel, when he said, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth ? John i. 46. so you are ready to say, Can there be any pleasure in religion? Believe it, sirs, there can be, there cannot but be pleasure in it.

Do not measure religion by the follies of some who profess it, but do not live up to their profession nor adorn it: Let them bear their own burden, or clear themselves as they can; but you are to judge of things not persons, and therefore ought not to be prejudiced against religion for their sakes. Nor should you measure by the bad opinions which its adversaries have of it, or the bad name which they endeavour to put it into, who neither know it nor love it, and therefore care not what unjust things they say to justify themselves in the contempt of it, and to hinder others from embracing it; but think freely of this matter.

2. That you would admit this as a principle, and abide by it, That the soul is the man. This is the demand I make in order to the proof of the doctrine ; and I hope it will be readily granted me. That man is principally to be considered as an intellectual, immortal being, endowed with spiritual powers and capacities, allied to the world of spirits, and accountable to the Father of spirits ; that there is a spirit in man, which has sensations and dispositions of its own, active and receptive faculties distinct from those of the body : and that this is the part of us, which we are and ought to be most concerned about ; because it is really well or ill with us, according as it is well or ill with our souls.

Believe, that, in man's present state, the soul and the body have separate and contesting interests. The body thinks it is its interest to have its appetites gratified, and to be indulged in its pleasures ; while the soul knows it is its interest to have the appetites of the body subdued and mortified, that spiritual pleasures may be the better relished :

And we are here upon our trial which of these two we will side with.

Be wise therefore, be resolute, and shew yourselves men who are actuated and governed by reason, and are affected with things as reason represents them to you. Not reason as it is in the mere natural man, clouded, and plunged, and lost in sense; but reason elevated and guided by divine revelation to us, and divine grace in us. Walk by faith, and not by sense; let the God who made you, and knows you, and wishes you well, and from whom your judgement must proceed, determine your sentiments in this matter, and the work is done.

Now I shall, in the first place, endeavour the proof of this doctrine, by shewing you what religion is, wherein it consists, and what those things are which constitute serious godliness; and then you may yourselves judge whether it be not in its own nature pleasant. If you understand religion aright, you will find that it has an innate sweetnes in it, inseparable from it. Let it but speak for itself, and it will recommend itself. The very shewing of this beauty in its own features and proportions, is enough to bring us all in love with it.

You shall see the pleasure of religion in twelve instances of it.

First, To be religious is “to know the only true God, “and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent,” John xvii. 3. And is not that pleasant? This is the first thing we have to do, to get our understandings rightly informed, concerning both the object and the medium of our religious regards, to seek and to receive this light from heaven, to have it diffused through our souls as the morning light in the air, and to be turned to the impressions of it, as the clay to the seal, Job xxxviii. 14 and this is a pleasure to the soul that understands itself, and its own true interest. “Truly the light is sweet, “and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun;” Eccl xi. 8. It “rejoiceth the heart,” Prov xv. 30 Hence light is often put for joy and comfort; but no light is comparable to that of “the knowledge of the glory of God in “the face of Jesus Christ,” 2 Cor. iv. 6.

This is finding the knowledge we had lost, and must for ever have despaired of finding, if God had not made it known to us by his Spirit: It is finding the knowledge we are un-

done without, and happy, for ever happy in ; for what is heaven but this knowledge in perfection ? it is finding the knowledge which the soul would covet and rest in, if it had but recovered itself from the delirium which by the fall it is thrown into. They who sat in darkness, when they begin to be religious, begin to see a great light, Matth. iv. 16. And it is a pleasing surprise to them ; it is coming into a new world ; such a pleasure as none could know so well, as he who had his sight given him, though he was born blind. Matth. xiii. 16. "Blessed are your eyes," saith Christ to those whom he had brought into an acquaintance with himself, "for they see. Apply thy heart to my knowledge," saith Solomon, Prov. xxii. 17, 18. "for it is a pleasant thing if thou keep it within thee." Thou wilt "eat honey, " because it is good, and the honey-comb, which is sweet "to the taste ; so shall the knowledge of wisdom be to thy soul." Prov. xxiv. 13, 14. Could a learned man, who had hit upon a demonstration in mathematics, cry out in a transport of joy, *I have found, I have found* ; and may not they much more boast of the discovery, who have found the knowledge of the most high ?

There is no pleasure in any learning like that of learning Christ and the things that belong to our everlasting peace. For that which is known is not small and trivial, is not doubtful and uncertain, is not foreign to us, and which we are not concerned in ; which are things that may much diminish the pleasure of any knowledge : but it is great and sure, and of the last importance to us, and the knowledge of it gives us satisfaction ; here we may rest our souls. To know the perfections of the divine nature, the unsearchable riches of divine grace, to be led into the mystery of our redemption and reconciliation by Christ ; this is food, such knowledge as this is a feast to the soul : It is meat indeed, and drink indeed ; it is the knowledge of that which the angels desire to look into, 1 Pet. i. 12. If the knowledge of the law of God was so sweet to David, sweeter than honey to his taste, Psal. xix. 10 and cxix. 103. how much more should the knowledge of the gospel of Christ be so to us ? When God gives this wisdom and knowledge, with it he gives joy to him who is good in his sight, Eccl. ii. 26.

I wonder what pleasure or satisfaction those can have in themselves, who are ignorant of God, and Christ, and an-

other world, though they are told there is such a knowledge to be had, and these are they who have it, and it is their continual entertainment. But thus do men stand in their own light, when they "love darkness rather than light"

Secondly, To be religious, is to return to God, "and rest in him as the rest of our souls:" And is not that pleasure? It is not only for our understandings to embrace the knowledge of him, but our affections to fasten upon the enjoyment of him? It is to love God as our chief good, and to rest in that love; to "love him with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and might," who is well worthy of all that love, and infinitely more; amiable in himself, gracious to us; who will accept our love, and return it; who hath promised to "love those that love him," Prov. viii. 7. The love of God reigning in the soul (and that is true religion) is as much a satisfaction to the soul, as the love of the world is a vexation to it, when it comes to be reflected upon, and is found to be so ill bestowed.

How pleasant must it needs be, so far to recover ourselves, as to quit the world for a portion and happiness, as it is utterly insufficient to be so, and to depend on him only, who has enough in him to answer our utmost expectations? when we have in vain sought our satisfaction where it is not to be had, to seek it and find it where it is? to come from doating upon "lying vanities, and spending our money for that which is not bread," Isa. iv. 2. to live and live plentifully upon a God that is enough, a God all-sufficient, and in him to enjoy our own mercies? Did ever any thing speak a mind more easy and better pleased than that of David, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul?" Psal. cxvi. 7. to God as thy rest, for in him I am where I would be, I have what I would have: Or that, Psal. xvi. 2, 5, 6. "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord, the portion of my inheritance, and of my cup?" And then, "the lines are fallen to me in pleasant places, and I have a goodly heritage?" Or that, Psal. lxxiii. 25. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee; for when flesh and heart fail, thou art the strength and joy of my heart, and my portion for ever?"

We place not religion in raptures and transports; but, without doubt, holy souls that are at home in God, that have "made the Most High their habitation," Psal. xci. 9. whose

desires are towards him, whose delights are in him, who are in him as their centre and element, dwell at ease. None can imagine the pleasure that a believer has in his covenant-relation to God, and interest in him, and the assurance of his love. Have I taken " thy testimonies to be my heritage for ever?" Psal. cxix. 111. surely they are the rejoicing of my heart; I cannot be better provided for. When king Asa brought his people to renew their covenant with God, it is said, " They sware unto the Lord with a loud voice, and with shoutings, and with trumpets," 2 Chron. xv. 14, 15. " And all Judah rejoiced at the oath, for they had sworn with all their heart." When we come to make it our own act and deed, to " join ourselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant," and are upright with him in it, we cannot but be pleased with what we have done; it is a marriage covenant, it is made with joy, Cant. ii. 16. " My beloved is mine, and I am his."

Thirdly, To be religious, is to " come to God as a Father, in and by Jesus Christ as mediator :" And is not this pleasant? We have not only the pleasure of knowing and loving God, but the pleasure of drawing nigh to him, and having by faith a humble freedom and intimacy with him, Psal. lxxv. 4. " Blessed are they that dwell in his courts," they shall be " satisfied with the goodness of his house, even of his holy temple." Religion is described by coming to God; and what can be more agreeable to a soul that comes from him?

It is to come to God as a child to his father, to his father's house, to his father's arms, and to cry, *abba father*. To come as a petitioner to his prince, is a privilege; but to come as a child to his father, is a pleasure: and this pleasure have all the saints, that have received the spirit of adoption. They can look up to the God that made them, as one that loves them, and has a tender compassion for them, " as a father hath for his children," Psal. ciii. 13. and delights to do them good, taking pleasure in their prosperity; as one whom though they have offended, yet is reconciled to them, owns them as his children, and encourages them to call him Father. When he afflicts them, they know it is in love, and for their benefit, and that still it is " their Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom," Luke xii. 32. When Ephraim bemoaned himself as a bul-

lock unaccustomed to the yoke, God bemoaned him “as a dear son, as a pleasant child,” Jer. xxxi. 18, 20. And, if even prodigals when penitents become pleasant children to God, surely they have no reason to be unpleasant to themselves.

But this is not all; it is not only to come to God as a father, who himself loves us, John xvi. 27. but it is to come to him in the name of Jesus Christ, who is our advocate with the Father; that by these two immutable things we might have strong consolation, that we have not only a God to go to, but an advocate to introduce us to him, and to speak for us. Believing in Christ is sometimes expressed by rejoicing in him; for it is a complacency of soul in the methods which infinite wisdom has taken, of bringing God and man together by a mediator. “We are the circumcision, that rejoice in Christ Jesus,” Phil. iii. 3. not only rely upon him, but triumph in him. Paul is not only not ashamed of the cross of Christ, but he glories in it, Gal. vi. 14. And, when the eunuch is brought to believe in Christ with all his heart, he goes on his way rejoicing, highly pleased with what he has done.

What a pleasure, what a satisfaction is it, to lodge the great concerns of our souls and eternity (which, surely, we cannot but have some careful thoughts about) in such a skilful faithful hand as that of our Lord Jesus? and this we do by faith. To cast the burden on him who is able to save to the uttermost, and as willing as he is able, and thus to make ourselves easy? How is blessed Paul elevated at the thought of this? “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather is risen again,” Rom. viii. 34. And with what pleasure doth he reflect upon the confidence he had put in Jesus Christ? 2 Tim. i. 12. “I know whom I have believed, and he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day.” They that know what it is to be in pain for sin, and in care to obtain the favour of God, cannot but know what a pleasure it is to believe in Christ as the propitiation for our sins, and our intercessor with God.

How can we live a more pleasant life, than to “live by the faith of the Son of God,” Gal. ii. 20. to be continually depending on him, and deriving from him, and referring all to him; and as we have received him, so to walk in him?

It is in believing that we are filled with joy and peace, Rom. xv. 13.

Fourthly, To be religious, is to enjoy God in all our creature-comforts: and is not that pleasant? It is to take the common supports and conveniences of life, be they of the richest, or be they of the meanest, as the products of his providential care concerning us, and the gifts of his bounty to us, and in them to "taste and see that the Lord is good," Psal. xxxiv. 8. good to all, good to us, It is to look above second causes to the first, through the creature to the Creator, and to say, concerning every thing that is agreeable and serviceable to us, this I asked, and this I have, from the hand of my heavenly Father. What a noble taste and relish doth this put into all the blessings with which we are daily loaded, our health and ease, our rest and sleep, our food and raiment, all the satisfaction we have in our relations, peace in our dwellings, success in our callings? The sweetness of these is more than doubled, it is highly raised, when by our religion we are taught and enabled to see them all coming to us from the goodness of God as our great benefactor, and thus to enjoy them richly, 1 Tim. vi. 17. while those who look no further than the creature, enjoy them very poorly, and but as the inferior creatures do.

Carnal irreligious people, though they take a greater liberty in the use of the delights of sense than good people dare take, and therein think they have the advantage of them, yet I am confident they have not half the true delight in them that good people have; not only because all excesses are a force upon nature, and surfeits are as painful as hunger and thirst, but because, though they do not thus abuse God's good creatures, yet they deprive themselves of the comfort of receiving them from their father's hand, because they are not affected to him as obedient children. "They knew not that I gave them corn, and wine, and oil," Hos. ii. 8. They make use of the creature, but, as in Isa. xxii. 11. "they have not looked unto the maker thereof, nor had respect to him that fashioned it long ago," as good people do; and so they come short of the pleasure which good people have.

Is it not pleasant to taste covenant-love in common mercies? Very pleasant to see the hand of our heavenly Father spreading our table, filling our cup, making our houses safe,

and our beds easy? This they do, that by faith have their eyes ever towards the Lord, that by prayer fetch in his blessing upon all their enjoyments, and by praise give the glory of them to that mercy of his which endureth for ever. And when thus a continual regard is had to that mercy, an abundant sweetness is thereby infused into all the comforts of this life: for as the wrath and curse of God is the wormwood and the gall, Lam. iii. 19. in all the afflictions and miseries of this life; so his loving kindness is the honey and oil in all the comforts and enjoyments of this life: that is it that is better than life, Psal. lxiii. 3. 5. and which is abundantly satisfying; which puts gladness into the heart beyond the joy of harvest, Psal. iv. 6. 7. Then the nations are glad, and sing for joy, when not only the earth yields her increase, but with it God, even their own God, gives them his blessing, Psal. lxvii. 4, 6. And when the church is brought to such a sense of God's grace, as to cry out, "How great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty!" Zech. ix. 17. it follows, that then corn shall make the young men cheerful; intimating that we have no joy of our enjoyments, no true joy of them, till we are led by these streams to the fountain. "To the pure all things are pure," Tit. i. 14. and the more pure they are, the more pleasant they are.

Fifthly, To be religious, is to "cast all our cares upon God, and to commit all our ways and works to him, with an assurance that he will care for us:" and is not this pleasant? It is a very sensible pleasure to be eased of some pressing burden which we are ready to sink under; and care is such a burden: It is a "heaviness in the heart of man, which maketh it to stoop" Now, true religion enables us to "acknowledge God in all our ways," Prov. iii. 6. and then depend upon him to direct our steps, and follow his directions, not leaning to our own understanding: It is to refer ourselves, and the disposal of every thing that concerns us in this world, to God, and to his will and wisdom, with an entire acquiescence in his award and arbitration; "Here I am, let the Lord do with me as seemeth good in his eyes," 2 Sam. xv. 26.

To be truly godly, is to have our wills melted into the will of God in every thing, and to say *amen* to it, not only as a prayer, but as a covenant; "Father in heaven, thy will be done; not as I will, but as thou wilt." It is to be fully

reconciled to all the disposals of the divine providence, and methods of divine grace, both concerning others and ourselves : To be satisfied that " all is well that God doth," and will appear so at last, when the mystery of God shall be finished. And how doth the mind enjoy itself that is come to this ! How easy is it ! It is not only freed from racking anxieties, but filled with pleasing prospects : Fears are hereby silenced, and hopes kept up and elevated. Nothing can come amiss to those who have thus been taught by the principles of their religion to make the best of that which is, because it is the will of God ; which is making a virtue of necessity.

What uncomfortable lives do they live, who are continually fretting at that which cannot be helped, quarrelling with the disposals of providence when they cannot alter them, and thus, by contracting guilt as well as by indulging grief, doubling every burden ? But how pleasantly do they travel through the wilderness of this world, who constantly follow the pillar of cloud and fire, and accommodate themselves to their lot, whatever it is ? That like Paul, through Christ strengthening them, have learned in every estate to be content, " know how to want and how to abound?" Phil. iv. 11, 12, 13.

Religion brings the mind to the condition, whatever it is, and so makes it easy, because the condition, though it be not in every thing to our mind, it is according to God's mind, who in all occurrences " performeth the thing that is appointed for us," Job xxiii. 14. and will make all " work for good to them that love him." When the Psalmist had directed us to " delight ourselves always in the Lord," Psal. xxxvii. 4, 5 that is, to make our religion a constant pleasure to ourselves ; he directs us, in order thereunto, to commit our way unto the Lord, to trust also in him, that he will bring it to pass, so as that we shall have the desire of our hearts. And when Paul had encouraged us to be careful for nothing, but in every thing to make our requests known to God, he assures us that, if we do so, the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep our hearts and minds, Phil. iv. 6, 7.

Sixthly, To be religious, is to rejoice in the Lord always. Phil. iii. 1, & iv. 4. And is not that pleasant ? It is not only one of the privileges of our religion, that we may rejoice,

but it is made one of the duties of it : We are defective in our religion, if we do not live a life of complacency in God, in his being, his attributes, and relations to us. It should be a constant pleasure to us, to think that there is a God ; that he is such a one as the scripture has revealed him to be, a being infinitely wise and powerful, holy, just, and good ; that this God governs the world, and gives law to all the creatures ; that he is our owner and ruler ; that in his hand our breath is, in his hand our times, our hearts, and all our ways are. Thus certainly it is, and thus it must be ; and happy they who can please themselves with these thoughts ; as those must needs be a constant terror to themselves, who could wish it were otherwise.

They who thus delight in God, have always something, and something very commanding too, to delight in ; a fountain of joy that can never be either exhausted or stopped up, and to which they may always have access. How few are there who live many days and yet rejoice in them all ! Eccl. xi. 8. such a thing is supposed indeed, but it is never found true in any, but those who make God their joy, the gladness of their joy, as the Psalmist expresses it, Psal. xlvi. 4. their exceeding joy : And in him it is intended their joy should terminate, when we are bid to rejoice evermore, 1 Thessl. v. 16.

The conversion of the nations to Christ and his holy religion is often prophesied of in the Old Testament, under the notion of their being brought into a state of holy joy, Psal. xcvi. 11, & xcvi. 1, & c. 1. " Let the earth rejoice that the " Lord reigns, and let the multitude of isles be glad there- " of ; Rejoice ye gentiles with his people." The gospel is " glad tidings of great joy to all people," Rom. xv. 10. When Samaria received the gospel, there was great joy in that city, Acts viii. 8 so essential is joy to religion.

And the conversation of those who are joined to the Lord, when it is as it should be, is cheerful and joyful : They are called upon to walk in the light of the Lord, Psal. cxxxviii. 5. and to sing in the ways of the Lord, Isa ii. 5. and to serve the Lord their God with joyfulness and gladness of heart in the abundance of all things, Deut. xxviii. 47. yea, and in the want of all things too, Hab. iii. 17. though the fig-tree do not blossom, and there be no fruit in the vine. Has God now accepted thee and thy works in Jesus Christ ?

Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, Eccl. ix. 7. It is the will of God that his people should be a cheerful people, that his Israel should rejoice in every good thing which the Lord their God giveth them, Deut. xxvi. 11. so that it is their own fault if they have not a continual feast, and be not made to rejoice with the out-goings of every morning and every evening; for the compassions of that God, in whom they rejoice, are not only constant, but new and fresh daily.

Seventy. To be religious, is to make a busines of praising God: And is not that pleasant? It is indeed very unpleasant, and much against the grain, to be obliged continually to praise one that is not worthy of praise; but what can be more pleasant, than to praise him to whom all praise is due, and ours particularly? to whom we and all the creatures lie under all possible obligations; who is worthy of, and yet exalted far above all blessing and praise; from whom all things are, and therefore to whom all things ought to be?

There is little pleasure in praising one, whom none praise who are wise and good, but only the fools in Israel; but, in praising God, we concur with the blessed angels in heaven, and all the saints, and do it in concert with them, who the more they know him, the more they praise him “ Bless ‘the Lord, ye his angels, and all his hosts;” and therefore, with what pleasure may I cast in my mite into such a treasury! “ Bless the Lord, O my soul.”

There is little pleasure in praising one, who will not regard our praises, nor take notice of our expressions of esteem and affection: but when we offer to God the sacrifice of praise continually, according to the obligation which our religion lays upon us, that is, the “ fruit of our lips, giving ‘thanks to his name,” Heb. xiii. 15. we offer it to one that takes notice of it, accepts it, is well pleased with it, smells a favour of rest from it, Gen. viii. 21 and will not fail to meet those with his mercies, that follow him with their praises: for he hath said, that they that offer praise glorify him; such a favourable construction doth he put upon it, and such an high stamp upon coarse metal.

Now, what is it that we have to do in religion but to praise God? We are taken into covenant with God, that we should be to him for a name, and for a praise,” Jer. xiii. 11. are called into his marvellous light, that we should “ shew

" forth the praises of him that called us," 1 Pet. ii. 9. and how can we be more comfortably employed? They are therefore blessed that dwell in God's house, for " they will be still praising him," Psal. lxxxiv. 4. And it is a good thing, good in itself, and good for us, it is very pleasant, to " give thanks unto the Lord, and to shew forth his praises," Psal. cxxxv. 3, and xcii. 1. for we cannot do ourselves a greater honour, or fetch in a greater satisfaction, than by " giving unto the Lord the glory due unto his name." It is not only a heaven upon earth, but it is a pledge and earnest of a heaven in heaven too; for if we be here every day blessing God, Psal. clxv. 2. we shall be praising him for ever and ever; for thus all that shall go to heaven hereafter, begin their heaven now. Compare the hellish pleasure which some take in profaning the name of God, and the heavenly pleasure which others take in glorifying it, and tell me which is preferable.

Eighthly, To be religious, is " to have all our inordinate appetites corrected and regulated :" And is not that pleasant? To be eased from pain is a sensible pleasure; and to be eased from that which is the disease and disorder of the mind, is a mental pleasure. Those certainly live a most unpleasant uncomfortable life, that are slaves to their appetites, and indulge themselves in the gratifications of sense, though never so criminal; that lay the reins in the neck of their lusts, and withhold not their hearts from any joy. The drunkards and unclean, though they are said to give themselves to their pleasures, yet really they estrange themselves from that which is true pleasure, and subject themselves to a continual pain and uneasiness.

The carnal appetite is often overcharged and that is a burden to the body, and its distemper: when enough is as good as a feast, I wonder what pleasure it can be to take more than enough; and the appetite the more it is indulged, the more humoursome and troublesome it grows; it is surfeited, but not satisfied; it doth but grow more impetuous and more imperious. It is true of the body, what Solomon says of a servant, Prov. xxix. 21. " He that delicately bringeth up his servant from a child, shall have him become his son," nay his master, " at the length." If we suffer the body to get dominion over the soul, so that the interests of the soul must be damaged, to gratify the inclinations of

the body, it will be a tyrant, as an usurper generally is, and will rule with rigour: and as God said to the people, 1 Sam. viii. 18. when by Samuel he had shewed them the manner of the king that they chose, when they rejected his government, " You will cry out in that day because of your king " which ye have chosen you, and the Lord will not hear;" so it is with those that bring themselves into disorders, diseases and terrors by the indulgence of their lusts, who can pity them? they are well enough served for " setting such a " king over them. Who hath wo? who hath sorrow?" Prov. xxiii. 29. None so much as they that tarry long at the wine, though they think themselves to have the monopoly of pleasure. The truth is, they that live in these pleasures are dead while they live, 1 Tim v. 6. and, while they fancy themselves to take the greatest liberty, really find themselves in the greatest slavery; for they are " led captive " by Satan at his will," 2 Pet. ii. 19. and of " whom a " man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage."

And if the carnal appetite have not gained such a complete possession, as quite to extinguish all the remains of reason and conscience: those noble powers, since they are not permitted to give law, will give disturbance: and there are few that have so full an enjoyment of the forbidden pleasures of sense, but that they sometimes feel the checks of reason, and the terrors of conscience, which mar their mirth, as the hand-writing on the wall did Belshazzar's, and make their lives uncomfortable to them, and justly so, which makes them the more so.

Now, to be religious, is to have the exorbitant power of those lusts and appetites broken, and, since they will not be satisfied, to have them mortified, and brought into a quiet submission to the commanding faculties of the soul, according to the direction of the divine law; and thus the peace is preserved, by supporting good order and government in the soul.

Those certainly live the most easy, healthful, pleasant lives, that are most sober, temperate, and chaste; that allow not themselves to eat of any forbidden tree, though pleasant to the eye; that live regularly, and are the masters, not the servants, of their own bellies, 2 Cor ix. 27. that " keep " under their bodies, and bring them into subjection," to religion and right reason; and by laying the axe to the root,

and breaking vicious habits, dispositions, and desires, in the strength of divine grace, have made the restraining of vicious acts very easy and pleasant: Rom. viii. 13. "If through the spirit we mortify the deeds of the body," we live, we live pleasantly.

Ninthly, To be religious, is "to have all our unruly passions likewise governed and subdued;" and is not that pleasant? Much of our torment ariseth from our intemperate heats, discontent at the providence of God, fretfulness at every cross occurrence, fear of every imaginary evil, envy at those that are in better state than ourselves, malice against those that have injured us, and an angry resentment of every the least provocation: these are thorns and briers in the soul; these spoil all our enjoyments, both of ourselves, and of our friends, and of our God too; these make mens lives unpleasant, and them a terror to themselves, and to all about them.

But when, by the grace of God, these roots of bitterness are plucked up, which bear so much gall and wormwood, and we have learned of our Master to be "meek and lowly in heart," Matth. xi. 29. we find rest to our souls, we enter into the pleasant land. There is scarce any of the graces of a Christian, that have more of a present tranquillity and satisfaction, both inherent in them, and annexed to them, than this of meekness. "The meek shall eat and be satisfied," Psal. xxii. 26. they shall "inherit the earth," Mat. v. 5. they shall "delight themselves in the abundance of peace," Psal. xxxvii. 11. and they shall "increase their joy in the Lord," Isa. xxix. 19. which nothing diminisheth more than ungoverned passion; for that grieves the spirit of grace, the comforter, and provokes him to withdraw, Eph. iv. 30, 31.

How pleasant is it for a man to be master of his own thoughts, to have a calmnes and serenity in his own mind, as those have, that have rule over their own spirits, and thereby are kept in peace, peace! That will break an angry man's heart, that will not break a meek man's sleep.

Tenthly, To be religious, is to dwell in love to all our brethren, and to do all the good we can in this world: and is not that pleasant! Love is the fulfilling of the law; it is the second great commandment, to love our neighbour as ourselves, Rom. xiii. 10. All our duty is summed up in one

word, which, as it is a short word, so it is a sweet word, *love*. Behold "how good and how pleasant it is to live in " holy love," Psal. cxxxiii. 1. It is not only pleasing to God, and amiable in the eyes of all good men, but it will be very comfortable to ourselves; for they that "dwell in " love, dwell in God, and God in them," 1 John iv. 16,

Religion teacheth us to be easy to our relations, and to please them well in all things; neither to give nor resent provocations; to bear with their infirmities; to be courteous and obliging to all with whom we converse; to keep our temper, and the possession and enjoyment of our own souls, whatever affronts are given us: and can any thing contribute more to our living pleasantly?

By love we enjoy our friends, and have communion with them in all their comforts, and so add to our own; "Re- " joicing with them that do rejoice," 1 Thess. iii. 9. By love we recommend ourselves to their love; and what more delightful than to love, and be beloved? Love is the very element of a pure and sanctified mind, the sweet air it breathes in, the cement of the best society, which contributes so much to the pleasure of human life. The sheep of Christ, united in flocks by the bond of holy love, lie down together in the green pastures, by the still waters, where there is not only plenty, but pleasure. The apostle exhorting his friends to be of good comfort, 2 Cor. xiii. 11. and to go on cheerfully in their Christian course, exhorts them, in order to that, to "be of one mind, and to live in peace;" and then "the God of love and peace will be with them."

And what pleasure comparable to that of doing good? It is some participation of the pleasure of the eternal mind, who delights to shew mercy, and to do good: Nay, besides the divinity of this pleasure, there is a humanity in it; the nature of man, if it be not debauched and vitiated, cannot but take pleasure in making any body safe and easy. It was a pleasure to Job, to think that he had "caused the widow's " heart to sing for joy, had been eyes to the blind, and feet "to the lame, and a father to the poor," and that they had been "warmed with the fleece of his sheep," Job xxix. 13, 15, 16. & xxxi. 20. The pleasure that a good man hath in doing good, confirms that saying of our Saviour's, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive," Acts xx. 35.

Eleventhly, To be religious, is to "live a life of communi-

on with God :" And is not that pleasant ? Good Christians, being taken into friendship, have " fellowship with the " Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ," 1 John iii. 3 and make it their business to keep up that holy converse and correspondence. Herein consists the life of religion, to converse with God, to receive his communications of mercy and grace to us, and to return pious and devout affections to him ; and can any life be more comfortable ? Is there any conversation that can possibly be so pleasant as this to a soul that knows itself, and its own powers and interests ?

In reading and meditating upon the word of God, we hear God speaking with a great deal of condescension to us and concern for us ; speaking freely to us, as a man doth to his friend, and about our own business ; speaking comfortably to us in compassion to our distressful case : And what can be more pleasant to those who have a value for the favour of God, and are in care about the interests of their own souls ? Psal. cxii. 6. " When their judges are over- " thrown in stony places, they shall hear my words for " they are sweet : The words of God will be very sweet to those who see themselves overthrown by sin, and so they will be to all that love God. With what an air of pleasure doth the spouse say, " It is the voice of my beloved," and he speaks to me ! Cant. ii. 8. 10.

In prayer and praise we speak to God, and we have liberty of speech; have leave to " utter all our words before " the Lord," as Jephthah did his in Mizpeh, Judges xi. 11. we speak to one whose ear is open, is bowed to our prayers, nay, to whom the prayer of the upright is a delight. Prov. xv. 8. which cannot but make it very much a delight to them to pray. It is not only an ease to a burdened spirit to unbosom itself to such a friend as God is, but a pleasure to a soul that knows its own extraction, to have such a boldness, as all believers have to enter into the holiest.

Nay, we may as truly have communion with God in providences as in ordinances, and in the duties of common conversation, as in religious excercises ; and thus that pleasure may become a continual feast to our souls. What can be more pleasant, than to have a God to go to, whom we may " acknowledge in all our ways," and whom our eyes are ever towards ; Psal. xxv. 15. to see all our comforts coming to us from his hand, and all our crosses too ; to refer ourselves,

and all events that are concerning us, to his disposal, with an assurance that he will order all for the best? What a pleasure is it to behold the beauty of the Lord in all his works, and to taste the goodness of the Lord in all his gifts, in all our expectations to see "every man's judgement proceeding from him;" to make God our hope, and God our fear, and God our joy, and God our life, and God our all? This is to live a life of communion with God.

Twelfthly, To be religious, is to "keep up a constant believing prospect of the glory to be revealed?" It is to set eternal life before us as the mark we aim at, and the prize we run for, and to "seek the things that are above," Col. iii. 1. And is not this pleasant? It is our duty to think much of heaven, to place our happiness in its joys, and thitherward to direct our aims and pursuits; and what subject, what object can be more pleasing! We have need, sometimes, to frighten ourselves from sin, with the terrors of eternal death; but it is much more a part of our religion, to encourage ourselves in our duty, with the hopes of that eternal life which God hath given us, that "life which is in "his Son," 1 John v. 11.

What is Christianity, but "having our conversation in "heaven," Phil. iii. 20 trading with the new Jerusalem, and keeping up a constant correspondence with that better country, that is, the heavenly, as the country we belong to, and are in expectation of, to which we remit our best effects and best affections; where our head and home is, and where we hope and long to be?

Then we are as we should be, when our minds are in a heavenly frame and temper; then we do as we should do, when we are employed in the heavenly work, as we are capable of doing it in this lower world: and is not our religion then a heaven upon earth? If there be a fulness of joy and pleasure in that glory and happiness, which is grace and holiness perfected; there cannot but be an abundance of joy and pleasure in that grace and holiness, which is glory and happiness begun. If there will be such a complete satisfaction in vision and fruition, there cannot but be a great deal in faith and hope, so well founded, as that of the saints is. Hence we are said, "Believing to rejoice with joy unspeakable," 1 Pet. i. 8. and to be "filled with joy and peace in believing," Rom. xv. 13.

It is the character of all God's people, that they are born from heaven, and bound for heaven, and have laid up their treasure in heaven; and they that know how great, how rich, how glorious, and how well secured that happiness is to all believers, cannot but own, that, if that be their character, it cannot but be their unspeakable comfort and delight.

Now, lay all this together, and then tell me, whether religion be not a pleasant thing indeed, when even the duties of it themselves are so much the delights of it: and whether we do not serve a good master, who has thus made our work its own wages, and has graciously provided two heavens for those who never deserved one.

C H A P. III.

The pleasantness of Religion proved, from the provision that is made for the comfort of those that are religious, and the privileges they are entitled to.

WE have already found by inquiry, (O that we could all say we had found by experience!)—that the very principles and practices of religion themselves have a great deal of pleasantness in them, and the one half of that has not been told us; and yet the comfort that attends religion, and follows after it, cannot but exceed that which is inherent in it, and comes with it. If the work of righteousness be peace, much more is the effect of righteousness so, Isa. xxxii. 17. If the precepts of religion have such an air of sweetnes in them, what then have the comforts of it? Behold, happy is the people, even in this world, whose God is the Lord.

We must conclude, that they that walk in the ways of holy wisdom, have, or may have, true peace and pleasure; for God hath both taken care for their comfort, and given them cause to be comforted: so that, if they do not live easily and pleasantly, it is their own fault.

First, The God whom they serve, hath, in general, taken care for their comfort, and has done enough to convince

them, that it is his will they should be comforted; that he not only gives them leave to be cheerful, but would have them to be so: for what could have been done more to the satisfaction of his family, than he has done in it?

1. There is a purchase made of peace and pleasure for them, so that they come to it fairly, and by a good title. He that purchased them a peculiar people to himself, took care they should be a pleasant people, that their comforts might be a credit to his cause, and the joy of his servants in his work might be a reputation to his family. We have not only "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," Rom v. 1, 2, 3. but peace in our own consciences too; not only peace above, but peace within; and nothing less will pacify an offended conscience, than that which satisfied an offended God. Yet this is not all; we have not only inward peace, but we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, and triumph over, nay, we triumph in tribulation.

Think what a vast expence (if I may so say) God was at, of blood and treasure, to lay up for us, and secure to us, not only a future bliss, but present pleasure, and the felicities not only of our home, but of our way. Christ had trouble, that we might have peace; pain, that we might have pleasure; sorrow, that we might have joy. He wore the crown of thorns, that he might crown us with roses, and a lasting joy might be upon our heads. He put on the spirit of heaviness that we might be arrayed with the garments of praise. The garden was the place of his agony, that it might be to us a garden of Eden; and there it was that he indented with his persecutors for the disciples, upon his surrendering himself, saying in effect to all agonies, as he did to them, "If ye seek me, let these go their way," John xviii. 8. if I be resigned to trouble, let them depart in peace

This was that which made wisdom's ways pleasantness, the everlasting righteousness which Christ, by dying, wrought out, and brought in. This is the foundation of the treaty of peace, and consequently the fountain of all those consolations which believers are happy in. Then it is, that all the seed of Israel glory, when they can each of them say, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength," Isa. xlvi. 24, 25. and then Israel shall dwell safely, in a holy security, when they have learned to call Christ by this name, "The Lord our righteousness," Jer. xxiii. 6. If Christ had not

gone to the Father, as our High Priest, with the blood of sprinkling in his hand; we could never have rejoiced, but must have been always trembling.

Christ is our peace, Eph. ii. 14. 17. not only as he made peace for us with God, but as he preached it to them "that were afar off, and to them that were nigh;" and has engaged that his people, whenever they may have trouble in the world, shall have peace in him, John xvi. 33. upon the assurance of which they may be of good cheer, whatever happens. It is observable, that in the close of that ordinance which Christ instituted in "the night wherein he was betrayed," to be a memorial of his sufferings, he both sung a hymn of joy, and preached a sermon of comfort; to intimate that which he designed in dying for us, was to give us "ever-lasting consolation, and good hope through grace," 2 Thess. ii. 16. and that we should aim at, in all our commemorations of his death.

Peace and comfort are bought and paid for: If any of those who were designed to have the benefit of this purchase, deprive themselves of it, let them bear the blame; but let him have the praise who intended them the kindness, and who will take care, that though his kindness be deferred, it shall not be defeated: For, though his disciples may be sorrowful for a time, "their sorrow shall be turned into joy," John xvi. 20.

2 There are promises made to believers of peace and pleasure; the benefits Christ bought for them are conveyed to them, and settled upon them in the covenant of grace, which is well ordered in all things, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. for the comfort and satisfaction of those, who have made that covenant "all their salvation, and all their desire." Here it is that light is sown for the righteous, and it will come up again in due time; the promises of that covenant are the wells of salvation, out of which they draw water with joy; the breasts of consolation, out of which, by faith, they suck, and are satisfied, Isa. xxii. 3. and xvi. 12.

The promises of the Old Testament, that point at gospel-times, speak mostly of this as the blessing reserved for those times, that there should be great joy and rejoicing; Isa. xxv. 1. & ix. 1. "The desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose;" Arise, shine, for the light is come: For the design of the gospel was to make religion a more pleasant thing

than it had been, by freeing it both from the burdensome services which the Jews were under, and from the superstitious fears which the heathen kept themselves and one another in awe with; and by enlarging the privileges of God's people, and making them easier to come at.

Every particular believer is interested in the promises made to the church, and may put them in suit, and fetch in the comfort contained in them, as every citizen has the benefit of the charter, even the meanest. What a pleasure may one take in applying such a promise as that "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee?" or that, "All things shall work for good to them that love God?" These and such as these, "guide our feet in the ways of peace;" and as they are a firm foundation on which to build our hopes, so they are a full fountain from which to draw our joys. By the "exceeding great and precious promises, we partake of "a divine nature," 2 Pet. i. 4. of this instance of it as much as any, a comfortable enjoyment of ourselves; and by all the other promises that promise is fulfilled, Isa. lxv. 14, 15. "My servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry; my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty; my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed; my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart;" and the encouragement given to all the church's faithful friends is made good, "rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her," Isa. lxvi. 10.

3. There is provision made for the application of that which is purchased and promised to the saints. What will it avail that there is wine in the vessel, if it be not drawn out? that there is a cordial made up, if it be not administered? Care is therefore taken, that the people of God be assisted in making use of the comforts treasured up for them in the everlasting covenant.

A religious life, one may well expect, should be a very comfortable life; for infinite wisdom has devised all the means that could be to make it so. "What could have been done more for God's vineyard," Isa. v. 4. to make it flourishing as well as fruitful, than what he has done in it? There is not only an overflowing fulness of oil in the good olive, but golden pipes (as in the prophet's vision, Zech. iv. 12.) for the conveyance of that oil to the lamps, to keep them burning. When God would himself furnish a para-

dise for a beloved creature, there was nothing wanting that might contribute to the comfort of it; in it was planted "every tree that was pleasant to the sight, and good for food," Gen. ii. 8, 9. So in the gospel there is a paradise planted for all the faithful offspring of the second Adam: A Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey, a pleasant land, a rest for all the spiritual seed of Abraham. Now, as God put Adam into paradise, and brought Israel into Canaan; so he has provided for the giving of possession to all believers, of all that comfort and pleasure that is laid up for them. As, in the garden of Eden, innocence and pleasure were twisted together; so, in the gospel of Christ, grace and peace, "righteousness and peace have kissed each other," Psal. lxxxv. 10. and all is done that could be wished, in order to our entering into this rest, this blessed sabbatism," Heb. iv. 3, 9. So that, if we have not the benefit of it, we may thank ourselves; God would have comforted us, and we would not be comforted, our souls refused it.

Four things are done with this view, that those who live a godly life, may live a comfortable pleasant life; and it is a pity they should receive the grace of God herein in vain.

(1.) The blessed Spirit is sent to be the Comforter; he doth also enlighten, convince, and sanctify; but he hath his name from this part of his office, John xiv. 16. "he is the "Comforter." As the son of God was sent to be "the "Consolation of Israel." Luke ii. 25. to provide matter for comfort; so the Spirit of God was sent to be the Comforter, to apply the consolation which the Lord Jesus has provided. Christ came to make peace, and the Spirit to speak peace, and to make us to hear joy and gladness, even such as will cause broken bones themselves to rejoice, Psal. li. 8. Christ having wrought out the salvation for us, the work of the Spirit is to give us the comfort of it; hence the joy of the saints is said to be the "joy of the Holy Ghost," 1 Thess i. 6. because it is his office to administer such comforts as tend to the filling of us with joy.

God by his Spirit moving on the face of the waters, made the world according to the word of his power; and by his Spirit moving on the souls of his people, even when they are a perfect chaos, he "creates the fruit of the lips, peace," Isa. lvii. 19 the production of the word of his promise; and if he did not create it, it would never be: And we must

not only attend to the word of God speaking to us, but submit to the Spirit of God working upon us with the word.

The Spirit, as a Comforter, was given not only for the relief of the saints in the suffering ages of the church, but to continue with the church always to the end, for the comfort of believers, in reference to their constant sorrows both temporal and spiritual ; and what a favour is this to the church ! no less needful, no less advantageous than the sending of the Son of God to save us, and for which, therefore, we should be no less thankful. Let this article never be left out of our songs of praise, but let us always give thanks to him, who not only sent his Son to make satisfaction for us, for his mercy endureth for ever, but sent his Spirit to give satisfaction to us, for his mercy endureth for ever; sent his Spirit not only to work in us the disposition of children towards him; but also to witness to our adoption, and seal us to the day of redemption.

The Spirit is given to be our teacher, and to lead us into all truth ; and, as such, he is a comforter: For by rectifying our mistakes, and setting things in a true light, he silenceth our doubts and fears, and sets things in a pleasant light. The Spirit is our remembrancer, to put us in mind of that which we do know ; and, as such, he is a comforter ; for, like the disciples, we distrust Christ in every exigence, because we “forget the miracles of the loaves,” Mat. xvi. 9. The Spirit is our sanctifier ; by him sin is mortified, and grace wrought and strengthened ; and, as such, he is our comforter ; for nothing tends so much to make us easy, as that which tends to make us holy. The Spirit is our guide, and we are said to be led by the Spirit ; and, as such, he is our comforter : for, under his conduct, we cannot but be led into ways of pleasantness, to the green pastures, and still waters.

(2.) The Scriptures are written “that our joy may be full,”¹ John i. 4. that we may have that joy which alone is filling, and hath that in it which will fill up the vacancies of other joys, and make up their deficiencies ; and that we may be full of that joy, may have more and more of it, may be wholly taken up with it, and may come at length to the full perfection of it in the kingdom of glory: These things are written to you, not only that you may receive the word with joy, at first, when it is a new thing to you, but that

your joy may be full and constant. The word of God is the main pipe, by which comfort is conveyed from Christ, the fountain of life, to all the saints. That book which the Lamb, that was slain, took out of the right hand of him that sat on the throne, is that which we are by faith to feed upon and digest, and to fill our souls with ; and we shall find that it will, like Ezekiel's roll, Ezek. iii. 3. " be in our " mouths as honey for sweetness," and the opening of its seals will put a " new song into our mouth," Rev. v. 9.

Scripture-light is pleasant, much more sweet, more pleasant, than for the eyes to behold the sun. The manner of its conveyance is such, as makes it abundantly more so ; for God speaks to us after the manner of men, in our own language. The comforts which the scripture speaks to us, are the sure mercies of David, such as we may depend upon ; and it is continually speaking. The scriptures we may have always with us, and whenever we will, we may have recourse to them ; so that we need not be to seek for cordials at any time. The word is nigh thee, Rom x. 8. in thy house, and in thy hand ; and it is thy own fault if it be not in thy mouth, and in thy heart. Nor is it a spring shut up, or a fountain sealed ; those that compare spiritual things with spiritual, will find the scripture its own interpreter, and spiritual pleasure to flow from it as easily, and plentifully, to all that have spiritual senses exercised, as the honey from the comb.

All the saints have found pleasure in the word of God, and those who have given up themselves to be led and ruled by it. It was such a comfort to David in his distresses, that, if he had not had that for his delight he would have perished in his affliction, Psal. cxix 92. Nay, he had the joy of God's word to be his continual entertainment, Psal. cxix. 54. " Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my " pilgrimage"—Thy words were found, saith Jeremiah, and I did eat them, feast upon them with as much pleasure, as ever any hungry man did upon his necessary food, or epicure upon his dainties : I perfectly regaled myself with them ; and " thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my " heart," Jer. xv. 16. And we not only come short of their experiences, but frustrate God's gracious intentions, if we do not find pleasure in the word of God ; for, " whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written " for our learning, that we through patience and comfort " of the scriptures, might have hope," Rom. xv. 4.

(3.) Holy ordinances were instituted for the furtherance of our comfort and to make our religion pleasant unto us. The conversation of friends with each other is reckoned one of the greatest delights of this world ; now ordinances are instituted for the keeping up of our communion with God, which is the greatest delight of the soul that is allied to the other world. God appointed to the Jewish church a great many feasts in the year (and but one fast, and that but for one day) on purpose for this end, that they might rejoice before the Lord their God, they and their families, Deut. xvi. 11.

Prayer is an ordinance of God, appointed for the fetching in of that peace and pleasure which is provided for us. It is intended to be not only the ease of our hearts, by casting our burden upon God, as it was to Hannah, 1 Sam. i. 18. who, when she had prayed, “ went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad ;” but to be the joy of our hearts, by putting the promises in suit, and improving our acquaintance with heaven ; “ Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full,” John xvi. 24. There is a throne of grace erected for us to come to ; a mediator of grace appointed, in whose name to come ; the Spirit of grace given to help our infirmitieS, and an answere of peace promised to every prayer of faith ; and all this, that we might fetch in not only sanctifying, but comforting grace in every time of need, Heb. iv. 16. God’s house, in which wisdom’s children dwell, is called a house of prayer ; and thither God brings them, on purpose to make them joyful, Isa. lvi. 7.

Singing of psalms is a gospel-ordinance, that is designed to contribute to the pleasantnes of our religion ; not only to express, but to excite, and to increase our holy joy : in singing to the Lord, we make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation, Psal. xcv. 2. When the apostle had warned all Christians to take heed of drunkennes, be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess ; lest they should think that thereby he restrained them from any mirth that would do them good, he directs them instead of the song of the drunkard, when the heart is merry with wine, to entertain themselves with the songs of angels, Eph. v. 18, 19. Speaking to yourselves (when you are disposed to please yourselves) in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and mak-

ing melody in your hearts to the Lord. There is no more of substance in this ordinance, but the word and prayer put together: but the circumstance of the voice and tune being a natural means of affecting our hearts, both with the one and with the other; God, in condescension to our state, hath been pleased to make a particular ordinance of it, to shew how much it is his will that we should be cheerful, Jam. v. 13. "Is any merry? let him sing psalms." Is any vainly merry? let him suppress the vanity and turn the mirth into a right channel; he need not banish or abjure the mirth, but let it be holy, heavenly mirth, and in that mirth let them sing psalms. Nay, is any afflicted, and merry in his afflictions? let him shew it by singing psalms, as Paul and Silas did in the stocks, Acts xvi. 25.

The Lord's day is appointed to be a pleasant day, a day of holy rest, nay, and a day of holy joy; a thanksgiving-day, Psal. cxviii. 24. "This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it." The psalm and song for the Sabbath-day begins thus, "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord," Psal. xcii. 1. So far were the primitive Christians carried in this notion, that the Lord's day was designed for holy triumph and exultation, that they thought it improper to kneel in any act of worship on that day.

The Lord's supper is a spiritual feast; and a feast (Solomon saith, Eccl. x. 19.) was made for laughter, and so was this for holy joy. We celebrate the memorials of his death, that we may rejoice in the victories that he obtained, and the purchases he made by his death; and may apply to ourselves the privileges and comforts, which by the covenant of grace are made ours. There we cannot but be glad and rejoice in him, where we "remember his love more than wine," Cant. i. 4.

(4) The ministry is appointed for the comfort of the saints; and their guides in the ways of wisdom are instructed, by all means possible, to make them ways of pleasantness, and to encourage them to go on pleasantly in those ways. The priests of old were ordained for men, Heb. iii. 1, 2. and were therefore taken from among men, that they might have compassion upon the mourners. And the prophets had this particularly in their commission, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God, speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem," Isa. xl. 1.

Gospel-ministers, in a special manner, are appointed to be the helpers of the joy of the Lord's people; to be Barnabas's, sons of consolation; to strengthen the weak hands, and the feeble knees, and to say to them who are of a "fearful heart, be strong," Isa. xxxv. 3, 4. The tabernacles of the Lord of hosts being amiable, the care of all that serve in those tabernacles must be to make them appear so; that they who compass the altars of God, may find him God their exceeding joy.

Thus hath God taken care for the comfort of his people, so that he is not to be blamed if they be not comforted: but that is not all,

Secondly, There are many particular benefits and privileges which they are entitled to, who walk in the ways of religion, that contribute very much to the pleasantness of those ways. By the blood of Christ, those benefits and privileges are procured for them, which speaks them highly valuable; and by the covenant of grace they are secured to them, which speaks them unalienable.

1. Those that walk in wisdom's ways are "discharged from the debts of sin," and that is pleasant: They are privileged from arrests, Rom. viii. 33. "Who shall lay any thing to their charge?" while it is God that justifies them, and will stand by his own act, against hell and earth: And, he is always near that justifies them, Isa. l. 8. and so is their advocate, that pleads for them nearer than their accuser, (though he stand at their right hand to resist them) and able to cast him out, and all his accusations.

Surely, they put a force upon themselves, that are merry and pleasant under the guilt of sin; for, if conscience be awake, it cannot but have a fearful looking for of wrath: But, if sin be done away, the burden is removed, the wound is healed, and all is well; Son, be of good cheer, Mat. ix. 2. though sick of a palsey, yet be cheerful, for thy sins are forgiven thee; and therefore, not only they shall not hurt thee, but God is reconciled to thee, and will do thee good: Thou mayest enjoy the comforts of this life, and fear no snare in them; mayest bear the crosses of this life, and feel no sting in them; and mayest look forward to another life without terror or amazement.

The pain which true penitents have experience of, in their reflections upon their sins, makes the pleasure and satisfaction they have in the assurance of the pardon of them

doubly sweet ; as the sorrow of a woman in travail is not an allay, but rather a foil to the joy, that a child is born upon it into the world. No pain more acute than that of broken bones, to which the sorrows of a penitent sinner are compared ; but when they are well set, and well knit again, they are not only made easy, but they are made to rejoice, to which the comforts of a pardoned sinner are compared.

“ Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice,” Psal. li. 8. All our bones, when kept, that none of them were broken, must say, Lord, who is like unto thee ? But there is a moré sensible joy for one displaced bone reduced, than for the multitude of bones that were never hurt ; as for one lost sheep brought home, than for ninety and nine that went not astray : such is the pleasure which they have, that know their sins are pardoned.

When God’s prophets must speak comfortably to Jerusalem, they must tell her that her iniquity is pardoned, Isa xl. 2. Such a pleasure there is in the sense of the forgiveness of sins, that it enables us to make a light matter of temporal afflictions, particularly that of sickness, Isa. xxxiii. 24. “ The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick ; for the people that dwelleth therein shall be forgiven their iniquity : ” And to make a great matter of temporal mercies when they are thus sweetened and secured, particularly that of recovery from sickness, Isa. xxviii. 17. “ Thou hast in love to my soul, cured my body, and delivered it from the pit of corruption ; for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.” If our sins be pardoned, and we know it, we may go out and come in in peace, nothing can come amiss to us ; we may lie down and rise up with pleasure, for all is clear between us and heaven : Thus, “ blessed is the man whose iniquity is forgiven.”

2. They have “ the Spirit of God witnessing with their spirits, that they are the children of God,” Rom. viii. 16. and that is pleasant. Adoption accompanies justification ; and if we have an assurance of the “ forgiveness of our sins according to the riches of God’s grace,” Eph. i, 5. 7. we have an assurance of this further comfort, that we were “ predestinate unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ.” The same evidence, the same testimony that is given of our being pardoned, serves as an evidence and testimony of our being preferred, our being thus preferred. Can

the children of princes and great men please themselves with the thoughts of the honours and expectations that attend that relation? and may not the children of God think with pleasure of the adoption they have received, Gal. v. 6. the Spirit of adoption? and that spirit is witness to their adoption. And the pleasure must be the greater, and make the stronger impression of joy, when they remember, that they were by nature not only strangers and foreigners, but children of wrath, and yet thus highly favoured.

The comfort of relations is none of the least of the delights of this life: But what comfort of relations comparable to this of being related to God as our father; and to Christ, as our elder brother; and to all the saints and angels too, as belonging to the same family, which we are happily brought into relation to? The pleasure of claiming and owning this relation, is plainly intimated in our being taught to cry, Abba, Father, Rom. viii. 15. Why should it be thus doubled, and in two languages, but to intimate to us the unaccountable pleasure and satisfaction, with which good Christians call God Father? it is the string they harp upon, Abba, Father.

With what pleasure doth David's own spirit witness to this? "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my "Lord," Psal. xvi. 2. and it is more to me that God is mine, than if all the world were mine: But when, with our spirits, the spirit of God witnesseth this too, saying to thy soul, Yea, he is thy God, and he owns thee as one of his family; witness what he has wrought both in thee, and for thee, by my hand: what joy doth this fill the soul with! joy unspeakable! especially considering that, as the prophet speaks, in the place, in the same heart and conscience, where it was said (and by the spirit too, when he convinced as a spirit of bondage) "Ye "are not my people, even there it shall be said unto them," by the spirit when he comforts as a spirit of adoption, "Ye are the sons of the living God," Hos. i. 10.

3. They have an access with boldness to the throne of grace, and that is pleasant. Prayer not only fetcheth in peace and pleasure, but it is itself a great privilege; and not only an honour, but a comfort; one of the greatest comforts of our lives, that we have a God to go to at all times, so that we need not fear coming unseasonably, or coming too often; and in all places, though as Jonah in the fishes belly, or as

David in the depths, or in the ends of the earth. Psal. cxxx.
1. & lxi. 2.

It is a pleasure to one who is full of care and grief to unbosom himself ; and we are welcome to pour out our complaint before God, and to shew before him our trouble, Psal. cxlii. 1, 2. and to one who wants, or fears wanting, to petition one who is able, and willing to supply these wants. And we have great encouragement to ‘‘make our requests known unto God ;” we have an “access with confidence,” Eph. iii. 12. not an access with difficulty, as we have to great men, not an access with uncertainty of acceptance, as the Ninevites. “Who can tell if God will return to us ?” But we have an access with an assurance : whatsoever we ask in faith, according to his will, “we know that we have ‘‘the petitions that we desired of him,” 1 John v. 15.

It is a pleasure to talk to one we love, and that we know loves us, and, though far above us, yet takes notice of what we say, and is tenderly concerned for us : What a pleasure is it then to speak to God ? to have not only a liberty of access, but a liberty of speech, freedom to utter all our mind, humbly, and in faith ; “boldness to enter into the holiest, “by the blood of Jesus,” Heb. x. 19, 20. and not with fear and trembling, as the high priest, under the law, entered into the holiest ; but boldness to pour out our hearts before God, Psal. lxii. 8. as one who, though he knows our case better than we ourselves, yet will give us the satisfaction of knowing it from us, according to our own shewing. Beggars, who have good benefactors, live as pleasantly as any other people : It is the case of God’s people ; they are beggars, but they are beggars to a bountiful benefactor, who is “rich in mercy to all who call upon him.” Blessed are they that “wait daily at the posts of wisdom’s doors,” Prov. viii. 34. If the prayer of the upright be God’s delight, it cannot but be theirs, Cant. ii. 14.

4. They have a sanctified use of all their creature comforts, and that is pleasant. “The Lord knows the way of “the righteous,” and takes cognizance of all their concerns, Psal. xxxvii. 23. The sleeps, yea, and the stops too, of a good man are ordered by the Lord ; both his successes when he goes forwards, and his disappointments when he goes backwards : He “blesseth the work of their hands,” and his blessing “makes rich, and adds no sorrow with it,” Prov.

x. 27. more is implied than is expressed, it adds joy with it, infuseth a comfort into it.

What God's people have, be it little or much, they have it from the love of God, and with his blessing; and then, "behold all things are clean *and sweet* to them," Luke x. 41. They come from the hand of a Father, by the hand of a Mediator, not in the channel of common providence, but by the golden pipes of the promises of the covenant. Even the unbelieving husband, though not sanctified himself, yet is "sanctified by the believing wife," 1 Cor. vii. 14. and so is the comfort of other relations; for to those who please God, every thing is pleasing, or should be so, and is made so by his favour. And hence it is, Psal. xxxvii. 16. that a "little that a righteous man has," having a heart to be content with it, and the divine skill of enjoying God in it, is better to him than the "riches of many wicked" were to them; and that "a dinner of herbs where love is," and the "fear of the Lord," is better, and yields abundantly more satisfaction, than "a stalled ox, and hatred and trouble therewith," Prov. xv. 16, 17.

5. They have the testimony of their own consciences for them in all conditions, and that is pleasant. A good conscience is not only a brazen wall; but a continual feast; and all the melody of Solomon's instruments of music of all sorts, were not to be compared to that of the bird in the bosom, when it sings sweet. If Paul has a conscience void of offence, though he be as sorrowful, yet he is always rejoicing; nay, and even when he is "pressed above measure," 2 Cor. i. 8, 12. and has "received a sentence of death within himself, his rejoicing is this, even the testimony of his conscience" concerning his integrity.

As nothing is more painful and unpleasant, than to be smitten and reproached by our own hearts, to have our consciences fly in our faces, and give us our own; so there is nothing more comfortable, than to be upon good grounds reconciled to ourselves, to "prove our own work," Gal. vi. 4. by the touchstone of God's word, and to find it right; for then have we "rejoicing in ourselves alone, and not in another: For if our hearts condemn us not," 1 John iii. 21. "then have we confidence towards God; may lift up our face without spot" unto him, and comfortably appeal to his omniscience: "Thou, O Lord, knowest me, thou

haſt “ ſeen me, and tried my heart towards thee,” Jer. xii. 3.

This will not only make us easy under the censures and reproaches of men, as it did Job: “ my heart ſhall not re-“ proach me,” though you do; and Paul: “ it is a very “ ſmall thing with me to be judged of man’s judgement;” But it will be a continual delight to us, to have our own hearts ſay, Well done. For the voice of an enlightened, well informed conſcience is the voice of God, it is his de-puty in the ſoul: The thoughts of the sober heathen be-tween themſelves, when they did not accuse, yet the ut-most they could do was but to excuse, which is making the best of bad; but they who have their hearts ſprinkled from an evil conſcience by the blood of Christ, Rom. ii. 15. are not only excused, but encouraged and commended; for their praife is not of men, but of God.

It is easy to imagine the holy, humble pleasure that a good man has, in the just reflection upon the ſuccesful reſiſtance of a strong and threatening temptation; the ſeaſonable ſuppreſſing and croſſing of an unruly appetite or paſſion, and a check given to the tongue when it was about to ſpeak unadviſedly. What a pleasure is it to look back upon any good word ſpoken, or any good work done, in the ſtrength of God’s graſce, to his glory, and any way to the advantage of our bretheren, either for ſoul or body! With what a ſweet ſatisfaction may a good man lie down in the cloſe of the Lord’s Day, if God has enabled him, in ſome good meaſure, to “ do the work of the day in the day, according as the “ duty of the day requires?” We may then “ eat our “ bread with joy, and drink our wine with a merry heart,” when we have ſome good ground to hope, that God now accepteth our works through Jesus Christ, Eccles. ix. 7.

6. They have the earneſts and foretaſtes of eternal life and glory, and that is pleaſant indeed. They have it not only ſecured to them, but dwelling in them, in the firſt-fruitſ of it, ſuch as they are capable of in their preſent im-perfect ſtate, 1 John v. 13. “ These things are written unto “ you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye “ may know, not only that you ſhall have, but that you “ have eternal life; you are ſealed with that holy ſpirit of “ promise,” Eph. i. 13, 14. marked for God, which is the ear-neſt of our inheritance, not only a ratification of the grant, but part of the full payment.

Canaan, when we come to it, will be a land flowing with milk and honey ; " In God's presence there is a fulness of " joy, and pleasures for evermore," Psal. xvi. 11. But, lest we should think it long ere we came to it, the God whom we serve has been pleased to send to us, as he did to Israel, some clusters of the grapes of that good land to meet us in the wilderness; which if they were sent us in excuse of the full enjoyment, and we were to be put off with them, that would put a bitterness into them ; but, being sent us in earnest of the full enjoyment, that puts a sweetness into them, and makes them pleasant indeed.

A day in God's courts, an hour at his table in communion with him, is very pleasant, better than a thousand days, than ten thousand hours, in any of the enjoyments of sense; but this very much increaseth the pleasantness of it, that it is the pledge of a blessed eternity, which we hope to spend within the veil, in the vision and fruition of God. Sabbaths are sweet, as they are earnests of the everlasting sabbatism, or keeping of a sabbath (as the apostle calls it, Heb. iv. 9.) which remains for the people of God.—Gospel feasts are therefore sweet, because earnests of the everlasting feast, to which we shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. The joys of the Holy Ghost are sweet, as they are earnests of that joy of our Lord, into which all Christ's good and faithful servants shall enter. Praising God is sweet, as it is an earnest of that blessed state, in which we shall not rest day or night from praising God. The communion of saints is sweet, as it is an earnest of the pleasure we hope to have in the " general assembly, and church of the first-
" born," Heb. xii. 23.

They who travel wisdom's ways, though sometimes they find themselves walking in the low and darksome valley of the shadow of death, where they can see but a little way before them, yet at other times they are led with Moses to the top of Mount Pisgah, and thence have a pleasant prospect of the land of promise, and the glories of that good land; not with such a damp upon the pleasure of it as Moses had, Deut xxxiv. 4 " Thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but thou " shalt not go over thither ;" but such an addition to the pleasure of it as Abraham had, when God said to him, Gen. xiii. 14, 15. " All the land which thou seest, to thee will " I give it " Take the pleasure of the prospect, as a pledge of the possession shortly.

C H A P. IV.

The Doctrine further proved by Experience.

HAVING found religion in its own nature pleasant, and the comforts and privileges so with which it is attended; we shall next try to make this truth more evident, by appealing to such as may be thought competent witnesses in such a case. I confess, if we appeal to the natural man, the mere animal; (as the word signifies, 1 Cor. ii. 14) that looks no further than the things of sense, and judgeth by no other rule than sense, and "receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him;" such a one will be so far from consenting to this truth, and concurring with it, that he will contradict and oppose it. Our appeal must be to those who have some spiritual senses exercised; for otherwise "the brutish man knows not, neither doth the fool understand this," Psal. xcii. 6.

We must therefore be allowed to look upon convinced sinners, and comforted saints. Wicked people whom the Spirit hath rowled out of a sinful security, and godly people whom the Spirit has put to rest in a holy serenity, are the most competent proper witnesses to give evidence in this case; and to their experience we appeal.

First, Ask those who have tried the ways of sin and wickedness, of vice and profaneness, and begin to pause a little, and to consider whether the way they are in be right; and let us hear what are their experiences concerning those ways: And our appeal to them is in the words of the apostle, "What fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed?" Rom. vi. 21. Not only, What fruit will ye have at last, when the end of these things is death? or, as Job xxi. 21. "What pleasure hath he in his house after him, when the number of his months is cut off in the midst?" but, What fruit, what pleasure had ye then, when you were in the enjoyment of the best of it?

Those that have been running to an excess of riot, that have laid the reins in the neck of their lusts, have rejoiced with the "young man in his youth, and walked in the way of their hearts, and the sight of their eyes," have taken a boundless liberty in the gratifications of sense, and have

made it their business to extract out of this world, whatever may pass under the name of pleasure: but when they begin to think (which they could not find in their hearts to do while they were going on in their pursuit) ask them now what they think of those pleasures which pretend to vie with those of religion; and they will tell you:

1. That "the pleasure of sin was painful and unsatisfying" in the enjoyment," and which then they had no reason to boast of. It was a sordid pleasure, and beneath the dignity of a man, and which could not be had, but by yielding up the throne in the soul to the inferior faculties of sense, and allowing them the dominion over reason and conscience, which ought to command and give law. It was the gratifying of an appetite, which was the disease of the soul, and which would not be satisfied, but, like the daughters of the horse-leech, still cry, give, give.

What poor pleasure hath the covetous man in the wealth of the world? It is the lust of the eye that is thereby humoured; for "what good hath the owner thereof, save the beholding thereof with his eyes?" 1 John ii. 16 and what a poor satisfaction is that? And yet even that is no satisfaction neither; for he that loveth silver, will find, that the more he has, the more he would have, so that he shall not be satisfied with silver; nay, it fastens upon the mind a burden of care and perplexity, so that "the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep," Eccl. v. 10, 11, 12.

Drunkenness passeth for a pleasant sin, but it is a brutish pleasure; for it puts a force upon the powers of nature, disturbs the exercise of reason, and puts men out of the possession and enjoyment of their souls; and so far is it from yielding any true satisfaction, that the gratifying of this base appetite is but bringing oil to a flame: "When I awake, I will seek it yet again," is the language of the drunkard; Prov. xxiii. 35.

Contention and revenge pretend to be pleasant sins too, *cst vindicta bonum vita jucundis ipsa*; but it is so far from being so, that it is, of all other sins, the most vexatious: It kindles a fire in the soul, puts it into a hurry and disorder; where they are, there is confusion and every evil work. The lusts, from whence not only wars and fightings come, Jam. iy. 1. but other sins are said to war in the members;

they not only war against the soul, 1 Pet ii. 11. and threaten the destruction of its true interests, but they war in the soul, and give disturbance to its present peace, and fill it with continual alarms.

They that have made themselves slaves to their lusts, will own, that it was the greatest drudgery in the world, and therefore is represented in the parable of the prodigal, by a young gentleman hiring himself to one that "sent him in-
" to his field to feed swine," Luke xv. 16. where he was made a fellow commoner with them, and "would fain
" have filled his belly with the husks," that they did eat; such a disgrace, such a dissatisfaction is there in the pleasures of sin; besides the diversity of masters which sinners are at the back of, and their disagreement among themselves; for they that are disobedient to that God who is one, are deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, and therein led captive by Satan, their sworn enemy, at his will, Tit. iii. 3.

2. That the pleasure of sin was very bitter and tormenting in the reflection. We will allow that there is a pleasure in sin for a season, Heb. xi. 25. but that season is soon over, and is succeeded by another season that is the reverse of it; the sweetness is soon gone, and leaves the bitterness behind in the bottom of the cup; the wine is red, and gives its colour, its flavour very agreeable; but at the last it "bites
" like a serpent, and stings like an adder," Prov. xxiii. 32. Sin is that strange woman, whose flatteries are charming, but "her end bitter as wormwood," Prov. v. 3, 4.

When conscience is awake, and tells the sinner he is very guilty; when his sins are set in order before him in their true colour, and he sees himself defiled and deformed by them: when his own wickedness begins to correct him, and his backslidings to reprove him, and his own heart makes him "loath himself for all his abominations," Jer. ii. 19. where is the pleasure of his sin then? As the thief is ashamed when he is discovered to the world, so are the drunkards, the unclean, when discovered to themselves; and say, "Where shall I cause my shame to go?" there is no remedy but I must lie down in it. If the pleasure of any sin would last, surely that of ill got gain would, because there is something to shew for it; and yet though that wickedness be sweet in the sinner's mouth, though he "hide it un-

" der his tongue, yet in his bowels it is turned into the gall
" of asps," Job. xx. 11, &c. He hath swallowed down
riches, but shall be forced to vomit them up again.

Solomon had skimmed the cream of sensual delights, and pronounced not only vanity and vexation concerning them all, even the best, but concerning those of them that were sinful, the forbidden pleasures into which he was betrayed; that the reflection upon them filled him with horror and amazement: "I applied my heart," saith he, "to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness;" so he now calls the loosenes he had taken: he cannot speak bad enough of them; for "I find more bitter than death, the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands," Eccl. vii. 26.

And is such pleasure as this worthy to come in competition with the pleasures of religion, or to be named the same day with them? What senseless creatures are the sensual, that will not be persuaded to quit the pleasures of brutes, when they shall have in exchange the delights of angels?

Secondly, Ask those that have tried the ways of wisdom, what are their experiences concerning those ways. "Call now if there be any that will answer you, and to which of the saints will you turn?" Job. v. 1. Turn you to which you will, and they will agree to this, that "wisdom's ways are pleasantness, and her paths peace." However about some things they may differ in their sentiments, in this they are all of a mind, that God is a good master, and his service not only perfect freedom, but perfect pleasure.

And it is a debt which aged and experienced Christians owe both to their master and to their fellow-servants, both to Christ and Christian, to bear their testimony to this truth; and the more explicitly and solemnly they do it, the better. Let them tell others "what God has done for their souls," and how they have "tasted that he is gracious," Psal. lxvi. 16. Let them own to the honour of God and religion, that, as in 1 Kings viii. 56. there "has not failed one word of God's good promise," by which he designed to make his servants pleasant; that what is said of the pleasantness of religion, is really so: let them "set to their seal that it is true," 1 John i. 1. Let it have their *probatum est*; we have found it so.

The ways of religion and godliness are the good old ways, Jer. vi. 16. Now, if you would have an account of the way you have to go, you must inquire of those that have travelled it; not those who have occasionally stept into it now and then, but those whose busness had led them to frequent it. Ask the ancient travellers, whether they have found rest to their souls in this way; and there are few you shall inquire of, but they will be ready to own these four things from experience:

1. That they have found "the rules and dictates of religion very agreeable both to right reason, and to their true interest," and therefore pleasant. They have found the word nigh them, and accomodated to them, and not at such a mighty distance as they were made to believe. They have found "all God's precepts concerning all things to be right," and reasonable, and highly equitable; and, when they did but shew themselves men, they could not but confess, and subscribe "to the law, that it was good," Rom. vii. 16. and there is a wonderful decorum in it.

The laws of humility and meekness, sobriety and temperance, contentment and patience, love and charity; these are agreeable to ourselves when we are in our right mind: They are the rectitude of our nature, the advancement of our powers and faculties, the composure of our minds, and the comfort of our lives, and carry their own letters of commendation along with them. If a man understood himself, and his own interest, he would comport with these rules, and govern himself by them, though there were no authority over him to oblige him to it. All that have throughly tried them, will say, they are so far from being chains of imprisonment to a man, and as fetters to his feet, that they are as chains of ornament to him, and as the girdle to his loins.

Ask experienced Christians, and they will tell you what abundance of comfort and satisfaction they have had in keeping sober, when they have been in temptation to excesses; in doing justly, when they might have gained by dishonesty as others do, and no-body know it; in forgiving an injury, when it was in the power of their hand to revenge it; in giving alms to the poor, when perhaps they straitened themselves by it; in submitting to an affliction, when the circumstances of it were very aggravating; and

in bridling their passion under great provocations. With what comfort does Nehemiah reflect upon it, that though his predecessors in the government had abused their power, yet so did not I, (saith he, Neh. v. 15.) because of the fear of God? And with what pleasure doth Samuel make his appeal, 1 Sam. xii. 3. "Whose ox have I taken, or whom have I defrauded?" and Paul his; "I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel." If you would have a register of experiences to this purpose, read the 119th Psalm, which is a collection of David's testimonies to the sweetness and goodness of God's law, the equity and excellency of it, and the abundant satisfaction that is to be found in a constant conscientious conformity to it.

2. That they have found the exercises of devotion to be very pleasant and comfortable; and, if there be an heaven upon earth, it is in communion with God in his ordinances; in hearing from him, in speaking to him, in receiving the tokens of his favour and communications of his grace, and returning pious affections to him, pouring out the heart before him, lifting up the soul to him.

All good Christians will subscribe to David's experience, Psal. lxxiii. 28: "It is good for me to draw near to God;" the nearer the better; and it will be best of all, when I come to be nearest of all, within the veil, and will join with him in saying, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul!" Psal. cxvi. 7. to God as to thy rest, and repose in him. I have found that satisfaction in communion with God, which I would not exchange for all the delights of the sons of men, and the peculiar treasures of kings and provinces.

What a pleasure did those pious Jews in Hezekiah's time find in the solemnities of the Passover, who, when they had kept seven days according to the law in attending on God's ordinances, "took counsel together to keep other seven days; and they kept other seven days with gladness," 2 Chron. xxx. 23. And, if Christ's hearers had not found an abundant sweetnes and satisfaction in attending on him, they would never have continued their attendance three days in a desert place, as we find they did, Matth. xv. 32. No wonder then that his own disciples, when they were spectators of his transfiguration, and auditors of his discourse with Moses and Elias in the holy mount, said, "Master, it is good for us to be here;" here let us make tabernacles, Matth. xvii. 4.

I appeal to all, that know what it is to be inward with God in an ordinance, to worship him in the Spirit, whether they have not found abundant satisfaction in it? They will say with the spouse, Cant. ii. 3 “ I sat down under his shadow with delight, and his fruit was sweet unto my taste :” And with the noble Marquis of Vico, “ Let their money perish with them, that esteem all the wealth and pleasure of this world worth one hour’s communion with God in Jesus Christ.” They will own, that they never had that true delight and satisfaction in any of the employments or enjoyments of this world, which they have had in the service of God, and in the believing relishes of that loving-kindness of his, which is better than life, Psal. lxiii. 3, 5. These have put gladness into their hearts, more than the joy of harvest, or theirs that divide the spoil. If in their preparations for solemn ordinances they have gone forth weeping, bearing precious seed ; yet they have come again with rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them,” Psal. cxxvi. 5, 6.

3. That they have found the pleasure of religion sufficient to overcome the pains and trouble of sense, and to take out the sting of them, and take off the terror of them. This is a plain evidence of the excellency of spiritual pleasures, that religious convictions will soon conquer sensual delights, and quite extinguish them, so that they become as songs to a heavy heart ; for a wounded spirit who can bear ? But it has often been found, that the pains of sense have not been able to extinguish spiritual delights, but have been conquered and quite overbalanced by them. Joy in spirit has been to many a powerful allay to trouble in the flesh.

The pleasure that holy souls have in God, as it needs not to be supported by the delights of sense, so it fears not being suppressed by the grievances of sense. They can rejoice in the Lord, and joy in him as the God of their salvation, even then, when the “ fig-tree doth not blossom, and there is no fruit in the vine,” Hab. iii. 17, 18. for even then, when in the world they have tribulation, Christ has provided that in him they should have satisfaction.

For this we may appeal to the martyrs, and other sufferers for the name of Christ : How have their spiritual joys made their bonds for Christ easy, and made their prisons their delectable orchards, as one of the martyrs called his ?

Animated by these comforts, they have not only taken patiently, but "taken joyfully the spoiling of their goods, " knowing in themselves that they have in heaven a better "and a more enduring substance," Heb. x. 34 Ask Paul, and he will tell you, 2 Cor. vi. 4, 5 that even then when he was troubled on every side, when without were fightings, and within were fears, yet he was filled with comfort, and was exceeding joyful in all his tribulation; and that as his sufferings for Christ did increase, his consolation in Christ increased proportionably, 2 Cor i. 5. And though he expects no other but to finish his course with blood, yet he doubts not but to finith his course with joy.

Nay, we may appeal to the sick-beds and death-beds of many good Christians for the proof of this; when wearisome nights have been appointed to them, yet God's "statautes have been their songs, their songs in the night," Psal. cxix. 54. I have pain said one, but I bless God I have peace; weak and dying, said another, but *sat lucis intus*, light and comfort enough within. The delights of sense forsake us, when we most need them to be a comfort to us; when a man is "chastened with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain. he abborreth bread and dainty meat," and cannot relish it, Job. xxxiii. 19, 20. But then the bread of life and spiritual dainties have the sweetest relish of all. Many of God's people have found it so: this is my "comfort in mine affliction, that thy word hath quickened me," Psal. cxix. 50. This has made all their bed in their sickness, and made it easy.

The pleasantness of wisdom's ways hath sometimes been remarkably attested by the joys and triumphs of dying Christians, in reflecting upon that divine grace which hath carried them comfortably through this world, and is then carrying them more comfortably out of it to a better. "What is that light which I see?" said an eminent divine upon his death bed; "It is the sun shine," said one that was by: No, replied he, "it is my Saviour's shine; O the joys! O the comforts that I feel! Whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell; but I see and feel things that are unutterable, and full of glory. O let it be preached at my funeral, and tell it when I am dead and gone, that God deals familiarly with man. I am as full of comfort

"as my heart can hold." Mr. Joseph Allein's life, and Mr. John Janeway's have remarkable instances of this.

4. They have found, that "the closer they have kept to religion's ways, and the better progress they have made in those ways, the more pleasure they have found in them." By this it appears, that the pleasure takes its excellency from the religion; that the more religion prevails, the greater the pleasure is. What disquiet and discomfort wisdom's children have, is owing, not to wisdom's ways; those are pleasant, but to their deviations from those ways, or their slothfulness and trifling in these ways; those indeed are unpleasant, and sooner or later will be found so.

If good people are sometimes drooping and in sorrow, it is not because they are good, but because they are not so good as they should be; they do not live up to their profession and principles, but are too much in love with the body, and hanker too much after the world: though they do not turn back to Sodom, they look back towards it, and are too mindful of the country from which they came out; and this makes them uneasy, this forfeits their comforts, and grieves their comforter, and disturbs their peace, which would have been firm to them, if they had been firm to their engagements. But, if we turn aside out of the ways of God, we are not to think it strange if the consolations of God do not follow us.

But if we "cleave to the Lord with full purpose of heart," then we find the "joy of the Lord our strength." Have we not found those duties most pleasant, in which we have taken most pains, and most care? and that we have had the most comfortable sabbath-visits made to our souls then, when we have been most "in the Spirit on the Lord's day?" Rev. i. 10.

And the longer we continue, and the more we mend our pace in these ways, the more pleasure we find in them. This is the excellency of spiritual pleasures, and recommends them greatly, that they increase with use; so far are they from withering or going to decay. The difficulties which may at first be found in the ways of religion wear off by degrees, and the work of it grows more easy, and the joys of it more sweet.

Ask those that have backslidden from the ways of God, have left their first love, and begin to bethink themselves,

and to remember whence they are fallen, whether they had not a great deal more comfort when they kept close to God, than they have had since they turned aside from him; and they will say with that adulteress, when she found the way of her apostacy hedged up with thorns, "I will go, and re-
turn to my first husband; for then it was better with me
than now," Hos. ii. 7. There is nothing got by departing from God, and nothing lost by being faithful to him.

C H A P. V.

The doctrine illustrated by the similitude used in the Text, of a pleasant way or journey.

THE practice of religion is often, in scripture, spoken of as a way, and our walking in that way: it is the way of God's commandments, it is a high-way, the king's high-way, the king of kings high-way; and those that are religious are travelling in that way. The school-men commonly call Christians in this world *viatores*, travellers when they come to heaven, they are *comprehensores*, they have then attained, are at home; here they are in their journey, there at their journey's end. Now, if heaven be the journey's end, the prize of our high calling, and we are sure, if we so run as we ought, that we shall obtain that, it is enough to engage and encourage us in our way, though it be never so unpleasant; but we are told *ex abundanti*, that we have also a pleasant road.

Now, there are twelve things which help to make a journey pleasant; and there is something like to each of them which may be found in the way of wisdom, and those who walk in that way.

First, It helps to make a journey pleasant, to go upon a good errand. He that is brought up a prisoner in the hands of the ministers of justice, whatever conveniences he may be accommodated with, cannot have a pleasant journey, but a melancholy one: and that is the case of a wicked man; he is going on, in this world, towards destruction; the way he is in, though wide and broad, leads directly to it; and, while he persists in it, every step he takes is so much nearer hell: and therefore he cannot have a pleasant journey; it is

absurd and indecent to pretend to make it so : though the way may seem right to a man, yet there can be no true pleasure in it, while “ the end thereof is the ways of death, and “ the steps take hold on hell,” Prov. v. 5.

But he that goes into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, whatever difficulties may attend his journey, yet the errand he goes on is enough to make it pleasant : And on this errand they go that travel wisdom’s ways ; they look for a kingdom which cannot be moved, and are pressing forwards in the hopes of it. Abraham went out of his own country, not knowing whither he went, Heb. xi. 8. but those that set out and hold on in the way of religion, know whither it will bring them, that it leads to life, Mat. vii. 14. eternal life ; and therefore in the way of righteousness is life, Prov. xii. 28 because there is such a life at the end of it.

Good people go upon a good errand, for they go on God’s errand, as well as on their own ; they are serving and glorifying him, contributing something to his honour, and the advancement of the interests of his kingdom among men ; and this makes it pleasant : And that which puts so great a reputation upon the duties of religion, as that by them God is served and glorified, cannot but put so much the more satisfaction into them. With what pleasure doth Paul appeal to God, as the God whom “ he served with his spirit “ in the gospel of his son ?” Rom. i. 9.

Secondly, It helps to make a journey pleasant, to have strength and ability for it. He that is weak, and sickly, and lame, can find no pleasure in the pleasantest walks ; how should it be, when he takes every step in pain ? But a strong man rejoiceth to run a race, while he that is feeble trembles to set one foot, before another. Now, this makes the ways of religion pleasant, that they who walk in those ways are not only cured of their natural weakness, but are filled with spiritual strength ; they travel not in their own might, but in the greatness of his strength, who is mighty to save, Isa. Ixiii. 1.

Were they to proceed in their own strength, they would have little pleasure in the journey, every little difficulty would foil them, and they would tire presently ; but they go forth, and go on in the strength of the Lord God, Psal. lxxi. 16. and upon every occasion, according to his promise, he re-

news that strength to them, and they “ mount, up with wings like eagles,” they go on with cheerfulness and alacrity, they run and are not weary, they walk and do not faint, Isa. xl. 31. God, with his comforts, enlargeth their hearts ; and then they not only go but run the way of his commandments, Psal. cxix. 32.

That which to the old nature is impracticable and unpleasant, and which therefore is declined, or gone about with reluctance, to the new nature is easy and pleasant : And this new nature is given to all the saints, which puts a new life and vigour into them, “ strengthens them with all “ might in the inner man, Col. i. 11 unto all diligence in doing work, patience in suffering work, and perseverance in both ; and so all is made pleasant. They are strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, Eph. vi. 10. and this not only keeps the spirit willing, even then when the flesh is weak, but makes even the lame man to leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb to sing, Isa. xxxv. 6. I can do all things through Christ strengthening me, Phil. iv. 13.

Thirdly, It helps to make a journey pleasant, to have daylight. It is very uncomfortable travelling in the night, in the black and dark night ; “ He that walketh in darkness,” says our saviour, “ knows not whither he goes,” John xii. 35. right or wrong, and that is uncomfortable : And in another place, “ If a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, be-“ cause there is no light in him,” John xi. 10. And this is often spoken of as the miserable case of wicked people, “ They know not, neither will they understand, they walk on “ in darkness, Psal. lxxxii. 5. They are in continual danger, and so much the more, if they be not in continual fear.

But wisdom’s children are all “ children of the light, and “ of the day,” 1 Thess. v. 5. They were darkness, but are now “ light in the Lord, and walk as children of the light,” Eph. ii. 8. Truly the light is sweet, even to one who sits still, but much more so to one who is in a journey ; and doubly sweet to those who set out in the dark, as we all did. But this great light is risen upon us, not only to please our eyes, but to “ guide our feet into the paths of peace,” Luke i. 79. And then they are indeed paths of peace, when we are guided into them, and guided in them by the light of the gospel of Christ. And all that walk in the light of

gospel-conduct, cannot fail to walk in the light of gospel-comforts.

And it adds to the pleasure of having day-light in our travels, if we are in no danger of losing it, and of being benighted: And this is the case of those who walk in the light of the Lord; for the Sun of righteousness, that is risen upon them with healing under his wings, shall no more go down, but shall be their everlasting light, Isa. ix. 20.

Fourthly, It helps to make a journey pleasant, to have a good guide, whose knowledge and faithfulness one can confide in. A traveller, though he has day light, yet may miss his way, and lose himself, if he have not one to shew him his way, and go before him, especially if his way lie, as ours does, through a wilderness, where there are so many by-paths; and though he should not be guilty of any fatal mistake, yet he is in continual doubt and fear, which makes his journey uncomfortable.

But this is both the safety and the satisfaction of all true Christians, that they have not only the gospel of Christ for their light, both a discovering and directing light, but the Spirit of Christ for their guide: It is promised, "that he shall lead them into all truth," John xvi. 13. shall "guide them with his eye," Psal. xxxii. 8. Hence they are said to "walk after the Spirit, and to be led by the Spirit," Rom. viii. 1, 14. as God's Israel were led through the wilderness of old by a pillar of cloud and fire, and the Lord was in it.

This is that which makes the way of religion such a highway, as that the way-faring men, though fools, shall not err therein, Isa. xxxv. 8. There are fools indeed, wicked ones, who walk after the flesh, that miss their way, and wander endlessly; "The labour of the foolish wearieh every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city," Eccl. x. 15 but those fools that shall not err therein are weak ones, the foolish things of the world, who in a sense of their own folly are so wise, as to give up themselves entirely to the conduct of the Spirit, both by conscience and the written word; and, if they have done this in sincerity, they know whom they have depended upon to "guide them by his counsel, and afterwards to receive them to his glory," Psal. lxxiii. 24. These may go on their journey pleasantly, who are promised, that whenever they are in doubt, or in danger of mistaking, or being mis-

led, they shall "hear a voice saying to them, This is the way, walk in it," Isa. xxx. 2.

Fifthly, It helps to make a journey pleasant, to be under a good guard, or convoy, that one may travel safely. Our way lies through an enemy's country, and they are active subtle enemies ; the road is infested with robbers that lie in wait to spoil and to destroy ; we travel by the lions dens, and the mountains of the leopards ; and our danger is the greater, that it ariseth not from flesh and blood, but spiritual wickednesses, 1 Pet. v. 8. Satan, by the world and the flesh, way-lays us, and seeks to devour us ; so that we could not with any pleasure go on our way, if God himself had not taken us under his special protection.

The same spirit that is a guide to these travellers, is their guard also ; for whoever are sanctified by the Holy Ghost, are by him "preserved in Christ Jesus," Jude 1. preserved blameless ; and shall be "preserved to the heavenly kingdom," 2 Tim. iv. 18 so as that they shall not be robbed of their graces and comforts, which are their evidences for and earneſts of eternal life ; they are kept "by the power of God, through faith unto salvation," 1 Pet. i. 5. and therefore may go on cheerfully.

The promises of God are a writ of protection to all Christ's good subjects in their travels, and give them such a holy security, as lays a foundation for a constant serenity. Eternal truth itself hath assured them, that no evil shall befall them, Psal. xci. 10. nothing really and destructively evil, no evil but what God will bring good to them out of : God himself hath engaged to be their keeper, and to preserve their going out and coming in, from henceforth and for ever, which looks as far forwards as eternity itself ; and by such promises as these, and that grace which is conveyed through them to all active believers, "God carries them, as upon eagles wings, to bring them to himself," Deut. xxxii. 11.

Good angels are appointed for a guard to all that walk in wisdom's ways, to bear them in their arms where they go, Psal. xci, 11. and to pitch their tents round about them where they rest, Psal. xxxiv. 7. and so to keep them in all their ways. How easy may they be that are thus guarded, and how well pleased under all events ! "as Jacob was,

" who went on his way, and the angels of God met him,"
Gen. xxxii. 1.

Sixthly, It helps to make a journey pleasant, to have the way tracked by those that have gone before in the same road, and on the same errand. Untrodden paths are unpleasant ones; but, in the way of religion, we are both directed and encouraged by the good examples of those that have chosen the way of truth before us, and have walked in it. We are bidden to follow them, who are now through faith and patience (those travelling graces of a Christian) inheriting the promises, Heb. vi. 12.

It is pleasant to think that we are walking in the same way with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, with whom we hope shortly to sit down in the kingdom of God. How many holy, wise, good men have governed themselves by the same rules that we govern ourselves by, with the same views, have lived by the same faith that we live by, looking for the same blessed hope, and have by it " obtained a good report?" Heb. xi. 2. And we "go forth by the footsteps of the flock," Cant. i. 8.

Let us therefore, to make our way easy and pleasant, "take the prophets for an example," Jam. v. 10. And "being compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses," that are like the cloud in the wilderness that went before Israel, not only to shew them the way, but to smooth it for them; let us run with patience, and cheerfulness, the "race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus," the most encouraging pattern of all, who has "left us an example, that we should follow his steps," Heb. xii. 1. And what more pleasant than to follow such a leader, whose word of command is, Follow me!

Seventhly, It helps to make a journey pleasant, to have good company: this deceives the time, and takes off the tediousness of a journey as much as any thing; *amicus pro vehiculo*. It is the comfort of those who walk in wisdom's ways, that though there are but few walking in those ways, yet there are some, and those the wisest and best, and more excellent than their neighbours; and it will be found there are more ready to say, "We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you," Zech. viii. 23.

The communion of saints contributes much to the pleasantness of wisdom's ways. We have many fellow-travel-

lers, that quicken one another, by the fellowship they have one with another, as "companions in the kingdom and " patience of Jesus Christ," Rev. i. 9. It was a pleasure to them, who were going up to Jerusalem to worship, that their numbers increased in every town they came to, and so they went from strength to strength, they grew more and more numerous, "till every one of them in Zion appeared " before God," Psal. lxxxiv, 7. and so it is with God's spiritual Israel, to which we have the pleasure of seeing daily additions of such as shall be saved.

They that travel together make one another pleasant by familiar converse; and it is the will of God that his people should by that means encourage one another, and strengthen one another's hands; "They that fear the Lord shall speak often one to another," Mal. iii. 17. exhort one another daily, and communicate their experiences: And it will add much to the pleasure of this, to consider the kind notice God is pleased to take of it; He hearkens, and hears, and a book of remembrance is written for those that fear the Lord, and think on his name.

Eighthly, It helps to make a journey pleasant, to have the way lie through green pastures, and by the still waters; and so the ways of wisdom do. David speaks his experience herein, Psal. xxiii. 2. that he was led into the green pastures, the verdure whereof was grateful to the eye; and by the still waters, whose soft and gentle murmurs were music to the ear: And he was not driven through these, but made to lie down in the midst of these delights, as Israel when they encamped at Elim, where there were "twelve wells " of water, and three-score and ten palm trees," Exod. xv. 27.

Gospel ordinances, in which we deal much in our way to heaven, are very agreeable to all the children of God, as these green pastures, and still waters; they call the sabbath a delight, and prayer a delight, and the word of God a delight. These are their pleasant things, Isa. lxiv. 11. There is a river of comfort in gospel ordinances, the "streams whereof make glad the city of God, the holy " place of the tabernacles of the most High," Psal. xlvi. 4. and along the banks of this river their road lies.

Those that turn aside from the ways of God's commandments, are upbraided with the folly of it, as leaving a

pleasant road for an unpleasant one. Will a man, a traveller, be such a fool as to leave my fields, which are smooth and even, for a rock that is rugged and dangerous, or for the snowy mountains of Lebanon? Jer. xviii. 14. in the margin, "Shall the running waters be forsaken for the strange cold waters?" Thus are men enemies to themselves, and the foolishness of man perverteth his way.

Ninthly, It adds to the pleasure of a journey, to have it fair over head. Wet and stormy weather takes off very much of the pleasure of a journey; but it is pleasant travelling when the sky is clear, and the air calm and serene: And this is the happiness of them that walk in wisdom's ways, that all is clear between them and heaven; there are no clouds of guilt to interpose between them and the Sun of righteousness, and to intercept his refreshing beams; no storms of wrath gathering that threaten them.

Our reconciliation to God, and acceptance with him, makes every thing pleasant. How can we be melancholy, if heaven smile upon us? "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God," Rom. v. 1, 2. and peace from God, peace made for us, and peace spoken to us; and then we rejoice in tribulation. Those travellers cannot but rejoice all the day, "who walk in the light of God's countenance," Psal. lxxxix. 15.

Tenthly, It adds likewise to the pleasure of a journey, to be furnished with all needful accommodations for travelling. They that walk in the way of God, have wherewithal to bear their charges; and it is promised them that they shall want no good thing, Psal. xxxiv. 10. If they have not an abundance of the wealth of this world, which perhaps will but overload a traveller, and be an incumbrance rather than any furtherance, yet they have good bills; having access by prayer to the throne of grace wherever they are, and a promise that they shall receive what they ask; and access by faith to the covenant of grace, which they may draw upon, and draw from, as an inexhaustible treasury. Jehovah Jireh, The Lord will provide.

Christ our "Melchizedec brings forth bread and wine," as Gen. xiv. 18. for the refreshment of the poor travellers, that they may not faint by the way. 1 Kings xix. 8. when Elijah had a long journey to go, he was victualled accord-

ingly; God will give grace sufficient to his people for all their exercises, 2 Cor. xii. 9. "Strength according to the 'day; Verily they shall be fed." And since travellers must have baiting places, and resting places, Christ has provided rest at noon, Cant. i. 7. in the heat of the day, for those that are his; and rest at night too: "Return to thy 'rest, O my soul."

Eleventhly, It adds something to the pleasure of a journey, to sing in the way, This takes off something of the fatigue of travelling, exhilarates the spirits; pilgrims used it; and God has put a song, a new song, into the mouths of his people, Psal. xl. 3. even praises to their God, and comfort to themselves. He hath given us cause to be cheerful, and leave to be cheerful, and hearts to be cheerful, and has made it our duty to rejoice in the Lord always.

It is promised to those, who are brought to praise God, by hearing the words of his mouth, that they shall sing in the ways of the Lord, Psal. cxxxviii. 5. and good reason, for great is the glory of the Lord. How pleasantly did the released captives return to their own country, when they came with singing unto Zion! Isa. li. 11. And much more Jehoshaphat's victorious army, when they came to Jerusalem, "with psalteries and harps to the house of the 'Lord; for the Lord had made them to rejoice over their "enemies," 2 Chr. xx. 28. With this the travellers may revive one another; "O come, let us sing unto the Lord."

Twelfthly, It helps to make a journey pleasant, to have a good prospect. The travellers in wisdom's ways may look about them with pleasure, so as no travellers ever could; for they can call all about them their own, even the "world, " and life, and death, and things present, and things to "come;" in this state, all is yours, if you be Christ's, 1 Cor. iii. 22. The whole creation is not only at peace with them, but at their service.

They can look before them with pleasure; not with anxiety and uncertainty, but a humble assurance; not with terror, but joy. It is pleasant in a journey, to have a prospect of the journey's end; to see that the way we are in leads directly to it, and to see that it cannot be far off; every step we take is so much nearer it, nay, and we are within a few steps of it: We have a prospect of being shortly with Christ

in paradise ; yet a little while, and we shall be at home, we shall be at rest ; and whatever difficulties we may meet with in our way, when we come to heaven all will be well eternally well.

C H A P. VI.

The Doctrine vindicated from what may be objected against it.

“ **S**UFFER me a little, (saith Elihu to Job, Job. xxxvi. 2.) “ and I will shew thee that I have yet to speak on “ God’s behalf,” something more to say in defence of this truth, against that which may seem to weaken the force of it. We all ought to concern ourselves for the vindication of godliness, and to speak what we can for it ; for we know that it is every where spoken against. And there is no truth so plain, so evident, but there have been those who have objected against it : The prince of darkness will raise what mists he can to cloud a truth, that stands so directly against his interest ; but great is the truth, and will prevail.

Now, as to the truth of the pleasantness of religion,

Fir^t, It is easy to confront the reproaches of the enemies of religion, that put it into an ill name. There are those who make it their business, having perverted their own ways, to pervert the right ways of the Lord, and cast an odium upon them ; as Elymas the sorcerer did, with design to turn away the deputy from the faith. Acts xiii. 8, 10. They are like the wicked spies, that brought up an evil report upon the promised land, Numb. xiii. 23. as a land that did eat up the inhabitants thereof ; and neither could be conquered nor was worth conquering.

The scoffers of the latter days speak ill of religion, as a task and a drudgery ; they dress it up in frightful formidable colours, but very false ones, to deter others from piety, and to justify themselves in their own impiety. They suggest, that Christ’s yoke is heavy, and his commandments grievous, and that to be religious is to bid adieu to all pleasure and delight, and to turn tormentors to ourselves ; that God is a hard master, “ reaping where he has not sown, and “ gathering where he has not strawed,” Matth. xxv. 24.

There were those of old who thus reproached the ways of God, and slandered religion; for they said, "It is vain to serve God," Mal. iii. 13: there is neither credit nor comfort in it; and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinances, and (observe their invidious description of religion) that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts? as if to be religious was to walk mournfully, whereas indeed it is to walk cheerfully.

Now, in answer to these calumnies, we have this to say, that the matter is not so. They who say thus of religion, "speak evil of the things which they know not," 2 Pet. ii. 12 while "what they know naturally as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves," Jude 10. The devil, we know, was a liar from the beginning, and a false accuser of God and religion, and in this particularly represented God to our first parents, Gen. iii. 5, as having dealt hardly and unjustly with them in tying them out from the tree of knowledge; as if he envied them the happiness and pleasure they would attain to by eating of that tree: and the same method he still takes to alienate men's minds from the life of God, and the power of godliness. But we know, and are sure, that it is a groundless imputation; for wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

Secondly, It is easy also to set aside the misrepresentations of religion, which are made by some who call themselves its friends, and profess kindness for it. As there are enemies of the Lord who blaspheme, 2 Sam. xii. 14, so there are among the people of the Lord those who give them great occasion to do so, as David did. How many wounds doth religion receive in the house of her friends? false friends they are, or foolish ones, unworthy to be called wisdom's children, for they do not justify her as they ought; but, through mistake and indulgence of their own weakness, betray her cause, instead of pleading it, and witnessing to it; and confirm people's prejudices against it, which they should endeavour to remove.

Some who profess religion are morose and sour in their profession, peevish and ill humoured, and make the exercises of religion a burden and task, and terror to themselves and all about them, which ought to sweeten the spirit, and

make it easy, and candid, and compassionate to the infirmities of the weak and feeble of the flock.

Others are melancholy and sorrowful in their profession and go mourning from day to day, under prevailing doubts, and fears, and disquietments about their spiritual state. We know, some of the best of God's servants have experienced trouble of mind to a great degree.

But as to the former, it is their sin; and let them bear their own burden, but let not religion be blamed for it: and as to the latter, though there are some very good people that are of a sorrowful spirit, yet we will abide by it, that true piety has true pleasure in it notwithstanding.

But, (1.) God is sometimes pleased for wise and holy ends, for a time, to suspend the communication of his comforts to his people, and to hide his face from them, to try their faith, that it may be "found to praise, and honour, " and glory at the appearing of Christ," 1 Pet. i. 6, 7. and so much the more for their being a while in heaviness through manifold temptations. Thus he corrects them for what has been done amiss by them, and takes this course to mortify what is amiss in them; even winter seasons contribute to the fruitfulness of the earth. Thus he brings them to a closer and more humble dependence upon Christ for all their comfort, and teacheth them to live entirely upon him. And though for a small moment he thus forsakes them, Isa. liv. 7, 8. it is but to magnify his power so much the more in supporting them, and to make his returns the sweeter, for he will gather them with everlasting loving kindness. Light is sown for them, and it will come up again.

(2.) This, as it is their affliction, God's hand must be acknowledged in it, his righteous hand; yet there is sin in it, and that is from themselves. Good people have not the comforts they might have in their religion; and whose fault is it? they may thank themselves, they run themselves into the dark, and then shut their eyes against the light. "My " wounds stink and corrupt," saith David, Psal. xxxviii. 5. The wounds of sin which I gave myself are unhealed, not bound up, or mollified with ointment. And why? Is it for want of balm in Gilead, or a physician there? No, he owns it is because of my foolishness; I did not take the right method with them. God speaks joy and gladness to

them, but they turn a deaf ear to it; like Israel in Egypt, that hearkened not to Moses for “anguish of spirit and sore ‘bondage,’ Exod. vi. 9. But let not the blame be laid upon religion, which has provided comfort for their souls; but let them bear the blame whose souls refuse to be comforted, or who do not take the way appointed for comfort, who do not go through with their repenting and believing. David owns, the reason why he wanted comfort, and was in pain, and in a toss, was because he kept silence: he was not so free with God as he might, and should have been; but when he said, “I will confess my transgression unto the Lord,” he was forgiven, and all was well, Psal. xxxii. 3, 4, 5.

Those do both God and Christ, and themselves, and others, a deal of wrong, who look upon him with whom they have to do in religion, as one that seeks an occasion against them, and counts them for his enemies, and is extreme to mark what they think, or say, or do amiss; whereas he is quite otherwise, is slow to anger, swift to shew mercy, and willing to make the best of those whose hearts are upright with him, though they are compassed about with infirmity: he “will not always chide; he doth not delight in the death of them that die,” but would rather they should “turn and live,” Ezek. xxxiii. 11. Nor doth he delight in the tears of them that weep, doth not afflict willingly, nor “grieve the children of men,” Lam. iii. 33. much less his own children, but would rather they should be upon good grounds comforted. Religion then clears itself from all blame, which some may take occasion to cast upon it, from the uncomfortable lives which some lead that are religious.

But, *thirdly*, It will require some more pains to reconcile this truth of the pleasantness of religion’s ways, with that which the word of God itself tells us of, the difficulties which the ways of religion are attended with. We value not the misapprehensions of some, and the misrepresentations of others, concerning religion’s ways; but we are sure the word of God is of a piece with itself, and doth not contradict itself. Our master hath taught us to call the way to heaven a narrow way, *os̄os tethlimmene*, an afflicted way, a distressed way.; and we have in scripture many things that speak it so. And it is true; but that doth not contradict this doctrine, that the ways of wisdom are pleasant: for

the pleasantness that is in wisdom's ways is intended to be a balance, and it is very much an over-balance, to that in them which is any way distasteful or incommodious. As for the imaginary difficulties which the sluggard dreams of, "a lion in the way, a lion in the street," we do not regard them: but there are some real difficulties in it, as well as real comforts; for "God hath set the one over against the other," Eccl. vii. 14. that we might study to comport with both, and might sing, and sing unto God of both, Psal. ci. 1.

We will not, we dare not make the matter better than it is, but will allow there is that in religion which at first view may seem unpleasant; and yet doubt not but to shew that it is reconcileable to, and consistent with, all that pleasure which we maintain to be in religion, and so to take off all exceptions against this doctrine. *Amicæ scripturarum lites, utinam & nostræ!* It were well if we could agree with one another, as well as scripture doth with itself.

There are four things which seem not well to consist with this doctrine, and yet it is certain they do.

First, It is true, that to be religious, is to live a life of repentance; and yet religion's ways are pleasant notwithstanding. It is true, we must mourn for sin daily, and reflect with regret upon our manifold infirmities; sin must be bitter to us, and we must even loath and abhor ourselves for our corruptions that dwell in us, and the many actual transgressions that are committed by us. We must renew our repentance daily, and every night must make some sorrowful reflections upon the transgressions of the day. But then,

1. It is not our walking in the way of wisdom that creates us this sorrow, but our trifling in that way, and our turning aside out of it. If we would keep close to these ways, and pass forwards in them as we ought, there would be no occasion for repentance. If we were as we should be, we should be always praising God, and rejoicing in him; but we make other work for ourselves by our own folly, and then complain that religion is unpleasant; and whose fault is that? If we would be always loving and delighting in God, and would live a life of communion with him, we should have no occasion to repent of that; but if we leave the fountain of living waters, and turn aside to broken cif-

terns, or the brooks in the summer, and see cause, as doubtless we shall, to repent of that, we may thank ourselves.

What there is of bitterness in repentance, is owing, not to our religion, but to our defects and defaults in religion; and it proves not that there is bitterness in the ways of God, but in the ways of sin, which make a penitential sorrow necessary for the preventing of a sorrow a thousand times worse, for sooner or later sin will have sorrow. If repentance be bitter, we must say, not that this comes of being godly, but this comes of being sinful. Jer. iv. 18. "This is "thy wickedness because it is bitter." If by sin we have made sorrow necessary, it is certainly better to mourn now, than mourn at the last. Prov. v. 11. To continue impenitent, is not to put away sorrow from thy heart, but to put it off to a worse place.

2. Even in repentance, if it be right, there is a true pleasure, a pleasure accompanying it. Our Saviour hath said of them who thus mourn, not only that they shall be comforted, but that they are blessed, Mat. v. 4. When a man is conscious to himself that he has done an ill thing, and what is unbecoming him and may be hurtful to him, it is incident to him to repent of it. Now religion hath found a way to put a sweetness into that bitterness. Repentance, when it is from under the influence of religion, is nothing but bitterness and horror, as Judas's was; but repentance, as it is made an act of religion, as it is one of the laws of Christ, is pleasant, as it is the raising of the spirit, and the discharging of that which is noxious and offensive.

Our religion has not only taken care, that penitents be not overwhelmed with an excess of sorrow, 2 Cor ii. 7. and swallowed up by it; that their sorrow do not work death, as the sorrow of the world doth; but it has provided, that even this bitter cup should be sweetened; and therefore we find that, under the law, the sacrifices for sin were commonly attended with expressions of joy; and while the priests were sprinkling the blood of the sacrifices to make atonement, 2 Chron xxix. 24, 25 the Levites attended with psalteries and harps, for so was the commandment of the Lord by his prophets. Even the day to afflict the soul is the day of atonement; and when we receive the atonement, we "joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ," Rom. v. 1. In giving consent to the atonement we take the comfort of it.

In sorrowing for the death of some dear friend or relation, thus far we have found a pleasure in it, that it hath given vent to our grief which our spirits were full of; so, in sorrow for sin, the shedding of just tears is some satisfaction to us. If it is a pleasure to be angry, when a man thinks, with Jonah, he doth well to be angry; much more is it a pleasure to be sorry, when a man is sure he doth well to be sorry. The same word in the Hebrew, signifies both consolari and penitere, both to comfort and to repent, because there is comfort in true repentance.

3. Much more after repentance, there is a pleasure attending it, and flowing from it. It is a way of pleasantness, for it is the way of pleasantness. To them that mourn in Zion, that sorrow after a godly sort, God hath appointed "beauty for ashes, and the oil of joy for mourning." Isa. lxi. 3. And the more the soul is humbled under the sense of sin, the more sensible will the comfort of pardon be; it is wounding in order to be healed. The jubilee trumpet sounded in the close of the day soul-affliction, Lev. xxv. 9. which proclaimed the acceptable year of the Lord, the year of release; and an acceptable year it is indeed, to those who find themselves tied and bound with the cords of their sins.

True penitents go weeping, it is true, but it is to seek the Lord of Hosts, Jer. I. 4, 5. To seek him as their God, and to enter into covenant with him: And let their hearts rejoice that seek the Lord, Psal. cv. 3. for they shall find him, and find him their bountiful rewarder. They sorrow not as those that have no hope, but good hope that their iniquities are forgiven; and what joy can be greater than that of a pardon to one condemned?

Secondly, It is true, that to be religious is to take care, and to take pains, and to labour earnestly, Luke xiii. 25. and yet wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness. It is true, we must strive to enter into this way, must be in an agony, so the word is. There is a violence which the kingdom of heaven suffers, and the violent take it by force, Mat. xi. 12. And, when we are in that way, we must run with patience, Heb. xii. 1. The bread of life is to be eaten in the sweet of our face; we must be always upon our guard, and keep our hearts with all diligence. Business for God and our souls is what we are not allowed to be slothful in, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Rom. xii. 11. We are soldiers of

Jesus Christ, and we must endure hardness, must war the good warfare till it be accomplished, 2 Tim. ii. 3.

And yet even in this contention there is comfort. It is work indeed, and work that requires care; and yet it will appear to be pleasant work, if we consider how we are enabled for it, and encouraged in it.

1. How we are enabled for it, and strengthened with strength in our souls to go on in it, and go through with it. It would be unpleasant, and would go on very heavily, if we were left to ourselves, to travel in our own strength; but if we be actuated and animated in it by a better spirit, and mightier power than our own, it is pleasant. If God "work in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure," Phil. ii. 12, 13. we shall have no reason to complain of the difficulty of our work; for God ordains peace for us, true peace and pleasure, by "working all our works in us," Isa. xvi. 12.

We may sing at our work, if our minds be by the Spirit of God brought to it, our hands strengthened for it, and our infirmities helped, Rom. viii. 26. and particularly our infirmities in prayer; that by it we may fetch in strength for every service, strength according to the day. Daniel at first found God's speaking to him a terror, he could not bear it; but when one like "the appearance of a man came and touched him," (who could be no other but Christ the Mediator) and put strength into him, saying, "Peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong," it was quite another thing with him, then nothing more pleasant; "Let my Lord speak, for thou hast strengthened me," Dan. x. 17, 18, 19.

Though the way to heaven be up hill, yet, if we be carried on in it as upon eagles wings, it will be pleasant; and those are so that wait upon the Lord, for to them it is promised that they shall renew their strength. That is pleasant work, though against the grain to our corrupt natures, for the doing of which we have not only a new nature given us, inclining us to it, and making us habitually capable of application to it, but actual supplies of grace sufficient for the doing of it, promised us, 2 Cor xii. 9, 10. by one who knows what strength we need, and what will serve, and will neither be unkind to us, nor unfaithful to his own word.

And it is observable, that when God, though he eased not Paul of the thorn in the flesh, yet said that good word to him, "My grace is sufficient for thee," immediately it follows, therefore "I take pleasure in infirmities, in re-
" proaches, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am
" weak, then I am strong." Sufficient grace will make our work pleasant, even the hardest part of it.

2. How we are encouraged in it. It is true, we must take pains, but the work is good work, and is to be done, and is done by all the saints from a principle of holy love, and that makes it pleasant 1 John v. 3. as Jacob's service for Rachel was to him, because he loved her. It is an unspeakable comfort to industrious Christians, that they are working together with God, and he with them; that their master's eye is upon them, and a witness to their sincerity; he sees in secret, and will reward openly, Mat. vi. 6. God now accepteth their works, similes upon them, and his Spirit speaks to them "good words, and comfortable words," Zech. i.-13. witnesseth to their adoption. And this is very encouraging to God's servants, as it was to the servants of Boaz, to have their master come to them, when they were hard at work reaping down his own fields, and with a pleasant countenance say to them, "The Lord be with you," Ruth ii. 4. Nay, the Spirit faith more to God's labourers, "The Lord is with you."

The prospect of the recompence of reward is in a special manner encouraging to us in our work, and makes it pleasant, and the little difficulties we meet with in it to be as nothing. It was by having an eye to this, that Moses was encouraged not only to bear the reproach of Christ, but to "esteem it greater riches than the treasures of Egypt," Heb. xi. 26. In all labour there is profit; and if so, there is pleasure also in the prospect of that profit, and according to the degree of it. We must work, but it is to work out our salvation, a great salvation, which, when it comes, will abundantly make us amends for all our toil. We must strive, but it is to enter into life, eternal life. We must run, but it is for an incorruptible crown, the prize of our high calling. And we do not run at an uncertainty, nor "fight
" as those that beat the air;" for to him that "sows righ-
" teousness there is a sure reward," Prov. xi. 18. and the

assurance of that harvest will make even the seed-time pleasant.

Thirdly, It is true, that to be religious, is to "deny ourselves in many things that are pleasing to sense;" and yet wisdom's ways are pleasantness for all that. It is indeed necessary, that beloved lusts should be mortified and subdued, corrupt appetites crossed and displeased, which, to the natural man, is like "plucking out a right eye, and cutting off a right hand," Mat. v. 29. There are forbidden pleasures that must be abandoned, and kept at a distance from: the flesh must not be gratified, nor provision made to fulfil the lusts of it, Rom. xiii. 14 but on the contrary we must keep under the body, and bring it into subjection, Cor. ix. 27. we must crucify the flesh, must kill it and put it to a painful death. The first lesson we are to learn in the school of Christ, is to deny ourselves, Mat. xvi. 24. and this must be our constant practice; we must use ourselves to deny ourselves, and thus take up our cross daily.

Now, will not this spoil all the pleasure of a religious life? No, it will not; for the pleasures of sense, which we are to deny ourselves in, are comparatively despicable, and really dangerous.

1. These pleasures we are to deny ourselves in are comparatively desppicable: How much soever they are valued and esteemed by those who live by sense, and know no better, they are looked upon with a generous contempt by those who live by faith, and are acquainted with spiritual and divine pleasures. And it is no pain to deny ourselves in these pleasures, when we know ourselves entitled to better, more rational, and noble, and agreeable, the delights of the blessed spirits above.

The garlic and onions of Egypt were doated upon by those that knew not how to value either the manna of the wilderness, or the milk and honey of Canaan, Numb. xi. 5. So the base and sordid pleasures of sense are relished by the depraved and vicious appetites of the carnal mind; but when a man has learned to put a due estimate upon spiritual pleasures, those that are sensual have lost all their sweetness, and are become the most insipid things in the world; have no pleasure in them, in comparison with that far greater pleasure which excelleth.

Is it any diminution to the pleasure of a grown man, to deny himself the toys and sports which he was fond of when he was a child? No, when he became a man, he "put away those childish things;" he is now past them, he is above them, for he is acquainted with those entertainments that are manly and more generous. Thus mean and little do the pleasures of sense appear to those that have learned to delight themselves in the Lord.

2. They are really dangerous, they are apt to take away the heart. If the heart be set upon them, they blind the mind, debauch the understanding and conscience, and in many quench the sparks of conviction, and of that holy fire, which comes from heaven, and tends to heaven. They are in danger of drawing away the heart from God; and the more they are valued and covered, the more dangerous they are of piercing us through with many sorrows, and of drowning us in destruction and perdition. To deny ourselves in them, is but to avoid a rock, upon which multitudes have fatally split themselves.

What diminution is it to the pleasure of a safe and happy way on sure ground, which will certainly bring us to our journey's end, to deny ourselves the false and pretended satisfaction of walking in a fair but dangerous way, that leads to destruction; Is it not much pleasanter travelling on a rough pavement, than on a smooth quicksand? Where there is a known peril, there can be no true pleasure; and therefore the want of it is no loss or uneasiness.

What pleasure can a wise or considerate man take in those entertainments, in which he has continual reason to suspect a snare and a design upon him, any more than he that was at a feast could relish the dainties of it, when he was aware of a naked sword hanging directly over him by a single thread? The foolish woman, indeed calls the stolen waters sweet, and bread eaten in secret pleasant, Prov. v. 17, 18. But those find no difficulty or uneasiness in denying them, who know "that the dead are there, and her guests are already in the depths of hell." Therefore, however the corrupt heart may find some reluctance in refusing those forbidden pleasures, we may say of it, as Abigail did of David's denying himself the satisfaction of being revenged on Nabal, Afterwards this shall be no grief unto us, nor offence of heart, 2 Sam. xxv. 31.

Fourthly, It is true, that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God, Acts xiv. 23 that we must not only deny ourselves the pleasures of sense, but must sometimes expose ourselves to its pains ; we must take up our cross when it lies in our way, and bear it after Christ : We are told, that all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution, at least they must expect it, and get ready for it ? bonds and afflictions abide them, losses in their estates, balks in their preferment, reproaches and contempts, banishments and deaths must be counted, upon : And will not this spoil the pleasure of religion ? No, it will not ; for,

1. It is but light affliction at the worst, that we are called out to suffer, and but for a moment, compared with the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory that is reserved for us, 2 Cor. iv. 17 with which the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared, Rom. viii. 18. All these troubles do but touch the body, the outward man, and the interests of that, they do not at all affect the soul ; they break the shell, or pluck off the husk ; but do not bruise the kernal.

Can the brave and courageous soldier take pleasure in the toils and perils of the camp, and in jeopardising his life in the high places of the field, in the eager pursuit of honour, and in the service of his prince and country ; and shall not those who have the interests of Christ's kingdom near their hearts, and are carried on by a holy ambition of the honour that comes from God, take a delight in suffering for Christ when they know that those sufferings tend to his honour, and their own hereafter ? They that are persecuted for righteousness sake, that are reviled, and have all manner of evil said against them falsely, because they belong to Christ, are bidden not only to bear it patiently, but to rejoice in it, and to be exceeding glad, " for great is their reward in heaven," Mat. v. 11, 12. Every reproach we endure for Christ, will be a pearl in our crown shortly.

2. As those afflictions abound for Christ, so our " confessions in Christ do much more abound," 2 Cor. i. 4, 5. The more the waters increased, the higher was the ark lifted up ; the more we suffer in God's cause, the more we partake of his comforts ; for he will not be wanting to those whom he calls out to any hardships more than ordinary for his name's

sake. The Lord was with Joseph in the prison, when he lay there for a good conscience; and those went from the council “ rejoicing, that were counted worthy to suffer “ shame for Christ’s name;” were honoured to be dis-
honoured for him, Acts v. 41.

Thus the extraordinary supports and joys which they experience, that patiently suffer for righteousness sake, add much more to the pleasantness of the ways of wisdom, than the sufferings themselves do, or can derogate from it: for the sufferings are human, the consolations are divine; they suffer in the flesh, but they rejoice in the spirit; they suffer for a time, but they rejoice evermore, and “ this their joy “ no man taketh from them.”

C H A P. VII.

The application of the Doctrine.

CONCERNING this doctrine of the pleasantness of religion’s ways, I hope we may now say as Eliphaz doth of his principle, “ Lo, this, we have searched it, so it “ is,” Job. v. 27. it is incontestibly true; and therefore we may conclude as he doth, “ Hear it, and know thou it for “ thy good;” know thou it for thyself; so the margin reads it; apply it to thyself, believe it concerning thyself, not only that it is good, but that it is good for me to draw near to God, Psal. lxxiii. 28 And then only we hear things, and know them for our good, when we hear them, and know them for ourselves.

Three inferences, by way of counsel and exhortation we shall draw from this doctrine.

First, Let us all then be persuaded, and prevailed with, to enter into, and to walk in these paths of wisdom, that are so very pleasant. This is what I principally intend in opening and proving this truth; most people would rather be courted than threatened to their duty. Much might be said to frighten you out of the ways of sin and folly, but I would hope to gain the same point another way, by alluring you into the ways of wisdom and holiness. This comes to invite you to a feast which the Lord of hosts hath, in the

gospel, made to all nations, Isa. xxv. 6 and to all in the nations, and to you among the rest (for none are excluded, that do not by their unbelief exclude themselves) a feast of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined ; delights for souls infinitely transcending the delicacies of sense. You are welcome to this feast ; come, for all things are now ready ; " Come, eat of wisdom's bread, " and drink of the wine that she has mingled," Prov. ix. 5.

Is a life of religion such a sweet and comfortable life, why then should not we be religious? If such as these be the ways of wisdom, why should not we be travellers in those ways? Let this recommend to us a life of sincere and serious godliness, and engage us to conform to all its rules, and give up ourselves to be ruled by them. It is not enough to have a good opinion of religion, and to give it a good word ; that will but be a witness against us, if we do not set ourselves in good earnest to the practice of it, and make conscience of living up to it.

I would here, with a particular and pressing importunity, address myself to you that are young ; to persuade you, now in the days of your youth, now in the present day, to make religion your choice and your business : And I assure you, if you do so, you will find it your delight, God, by his grace, convince you of the real comforts that are to be had in real godliness, that you may be drawn cheerfully to Christ with these cords of a man, and held fast to him with these bands of love. My son (saith Solomon to his little scholar, Prov. xxiv. 13, 14.) eat thou honey because it is good ; and the honey comb, which is sweet to thy taste ; (he doth not forbid him the delights of sense, he may use them soberly and moderately, and with due caution ; but remember that) " so shall the knowledge of wisdom be to thy soul, when thou hast found it :" Thou hast better pleasures than these to mind and pursue, spiritual and rational ones ; and, instead of being made indifferent to those, we should rather be led to them, and quickened in our desires after them, by these delights of sense, which God gives us to engage us to himself and his service.

The age of youth is the age of pleasure. You think you may now be allowed to take your pleasure ; O that ye would take it, and seek it there where alone it is to be had, and that is in a strict observance of the laws of virtue and god-

linefs! Would you live a pleasant life, begin betimes to live a religious life; and the sooner you begin, the more pleasant it will be; it is best travelling in a morning. Would you rejoice, O young people, in your youth? "and " have your hearts to cheer you in the days of your youth," Eccl. xi. 9. do not walk in the way of your corrupt and carnal hearts, but in the way of God's commandments; for he knows what is good for you, better than you do yourselves: Do not walk in the sight of your eyes, for the eyes are apt to fly upon that which is not, Prov. xxiii. 5. but live by faith, that faith which being the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen, will lead you to that which is; " for wisdom makes those that love " her to inherit substance, and fills their treasures," Prov. viii. 21. and thence ariseth their true satisfaction.

That which I would persuade you to is, to walk in the way of wisdom, to be sober minded, to be thoughtful about your souls and your everlasting state, and get your minds well principled, and well affected, and well inclined; " Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom, and, " with all thy gettings, get understanding," Prov. iv. 7. That which I would persuade you with, is the pleasantness of this way; you cannot do better for yourselves than by a religious course of life. " My son, if thine heart be " wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine," Prov. xxiii. 15, 16. yea. my reins shall rejoice if thy lips (out of the abundance of thine heart) speak right things: But that is not all; not only my heart shall rejoice, but thy own shall.

I wish you would see, and seriously consider, the two rivals that are making court to you for your souls, for your best affections, Christ and Satan; and act wisely in disposing of yourselves, and make such a choice as you will afterwards reflect upon with comfort. You are now at the turning time of life; turn right now, and you are made for ever. Wisdom saith, Prov. ix. 4, 16. Who so is simple, let him turn in to me, and she will cure him of his simplicity; Folly saith, Who so is simple, let him turn in to me, and she will take advantage of his simplicity: Now let him come whose right your hearts are, and give them him, and you shall have them again more your own.

That you may determine well between these two competitors for the throne in your souls :

1st, See the folly of carnal sinful pleasures, and abandon them. You will never be in love with the pleasures of religion, till you are persuaded to fall out with forbidden pleasures. The enjoyment of the delights of sense suits best with that age, the appetite towards them is then most violent : Mirth, sport, plays, dainties are the idols of young people ; they are therefore called youthful lusts. Eccl. xii. 1. The days will come, the evil days, when they themselves will say they have no pleasure in them ; like Barzillai, 2 Sam. xix. 35. who, when he is old, can no more relish what he eats and what he drinks O that reason, and wisdom, and grace, might make you as dead to them now, as time and days will make you after a while !

Will you believe one that tried the utmost of what the pleasures of sense could do towards making a man happy : " He said of laughter, It is mad ; and of mirth, What doth it ? and that sorrow is better than laughter," Eccl. ii. 2. and vii. 3. Moses knew what the pleasures of the court were, and yet chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to continue in the snare of them, Heb. xi. 25. And you must make the same choice ; for you will never cordially embrace the pleasures of religion, till you have renounced the pleasures of sin : Covenant against them, therefore, and watch against them.

If you would live, " and go in the way of understanding, you must forsake the foolish," Prov. ix. 6. take heed of the way both of the evil man, and of the strange woman ; " Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away," Prov. ii. 12, 16. Look upon sinful pleasures as mean, and much below you ; look upon them as vile, and much against you ; and do not only despise them, but dread them, and hate even the garments spotted with the flesh.

2dly, Be convinced of the pleasure of wisdom's ways, and come and try them. You are, it may be, prejudiced against religion as a melancholy thing ; but as Philip said to Nathaniel, John i. 46. " Come and see." Believe it possible that there may be a pleasure in religion, which you have not yet thought of. When religion is looked upon at a distance, we see not that pleasure in it, which we shall

certainly find when we come to be better acquainted with it. Peter Martyr, in a sermon, illustrated this by this comparison (and it proved a means of the conversion of the Marquis of Vico): He that looks upon persons dancing at a distance, would think they were mad; but let him come nearer, and observe how they take every step by rule, and keep time with the music, he will not only be pleased with it, but inclined to join with them.

Come and take Christ's yoke upon you, and you will find it easy. Try the pleasure there is in the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ, and in converse with spiritual and eternal things; try the pleasure of seriousness and self-denial, and you will find it far exceeds that of vanity and self indulgence. Try the pleasure of meditation on the word of God, of prayer, and praise, and Sabbath sanctification, and you will think you have made a happy change of the pleasure of vain and carnal mirth for these true delights.

Make this trial by these four rules:

1. "That man's chief end is to glorify God, and enjoy him." Our pleasures will be according to that which we pitch upon and pursue as our chief end. If we can mistake so far, as to think it is our chief end to enjoy the world and the flesh, and our chief business to serve them, the delights of sense will relish best with us: But, if the world was made for man, certainly man was made for more than the world; and, if God made man, certainly he made him for himself: God then is our chief good; it is our business to serve and please him, and our happiness to be accepted of him.

And if so, and we believe so, nothing will be a greater pleasure to us, than that which we have reason to think will be pleasing to him. If we do, indeed, look upon God as our chief good, we shall make him our chief joy, our exceeding joy. Psal. xciii. 4. If we consider that we were made capable of the pleasure of conversing with God in this world, and seeing him and enjoying him in another; we cannot but think that we wretchedly disparage ourselves, when we take up with the mean and sordid pleasures of sense as our felicity, especially if we forego all spiritual and eternal pleasures for them; as certainly we do, and give up all our expectations of them, if we place our happiness in these present delights: And we are guilty of a greater absurdity than that which

profane Esau was guilty of, who for a mess of pottage sold his birthright, Heb. xii. 26.

2. That the soul is the man; and that is best for us, that is best for our souls. Learn to think meanly of this flesh, by which we are allied to the earth and the inferior creatures; it is formed out of the dust, it is dust, and it is hastening to the dust; and then the things that gratify it will not be much esteemed as of any great moment: "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats, but God shall destroy both it and them;" and therefore let us not make idols of them.

But the soul is the noble part of us, by which we are allied to heaven and the world of spirits; those comforts therefore which delight the soul, are the comforts we should prize most, and give the preference to, for the soul's sake. Rational pleasures are the best for a man.

3. That the "greatest joy is that which a stranger doth not intermeddle with," Prov. xiv. 10. The best pleasure is that which lies not under the eye and observation of the world, but which a man has and hides in his own bosom; and by which he enjoys himself, and keeps not only a peaceable, but a comfortable possession of his own soul, though he doth not by laughter, or other expressions of joy, tell them the satisfaction he has. Christ had meat to eat which the world knew not of, John iv 32. and so have Christians to whom he is the bread of life.

4. That all is well that ends everlasting well. That pleasure ought to have the preference, which is of the longest continuance. The pleasures of sense are withering and fading, and leave a sting behind them to those that placed their happiness in them; but the pleasures of religion will abide with us: In these is continuance, Isa. Ixiv 5. they will not turn with the wind, nor change with the weather, but are meat which endures to everlasting life.

Reckon that the best pleasure which will remain with you, and stand you in stead when you come to die; which will help to take off the terror of death, and allay its pains. The remembrance of sinful pleasures will give us killing terrors, but the remembrance of religious pleasures will give us living comforts in dying moments. They that live over Belshazzar's revels, may expect to receive the summons of death with the same confusion that he did, when "the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another."

other," Dan. v. 6. but they that live over Hezekiah's devotions, may receive them with the same composure that he did, when with a great deal of satisfaction he looked back upon a well spent life: "Now, Lord, remember how I have 'walked before thee in truth, and with an upright heart," Isa. xxxviii. 3.

Secondly, "Let us, that profess religion, study to make it 'more and more pleasant to ourselves.' We see how much is done to make it so, let us not receive the grace of God herein in vain. Let them, that walk in wisdom's ways, taste the sweetness of them and relish it. Christ's service is perfect freedom, let us not make a drudgery of it, nor a toil of such a pleasure. We should not only be reconciled to our duty, as we ought to be to our greatest afflictions, and to make the best of it; but we should rejoice in our duty, and sing at our work. if God intended that his service should be a pleasure to his servants, let them concur with him herein, and not walk contrary to him.

Now, in order to the making of our religion pleasant to us, more and more so, I shall give seven directions.

1. "Let us always keep up good thoughts of God, and 'carefully watch against hard thoughts of him.'" As it is the original error of many that are loose and careless in religion, that they think God altogether such a one as themselves, Psal. l. 21. as much a friend to sin as themselves, and as indifferent whether his work be done or no; so it is the error of many that are severe in their religion, that they think God, like themselves, a hard master; they have such thoughts of him, as Job had in an hour of temptation, when he looked upon God as "seeking occasions against him, numbering his steps, and watching over his sins, and taking him for his enemy," Job xiii. 24 and xiv. 16. as if he were extreme to mark iniquities, and implacable to those that had offended, and not accepting any service that had in it the least defect or imperfection.

But the matter is not so, and we do both God and ourselves a great deal of wrong, if we imagine it to be so. What could have been done more than God has done, to convince us that he is gracious, and merciful, slow to anger, and ready to forgive sin when it is repented of? (I said, I will confess mine iniquity unto thee; and thou forgavest, Psal. xxxii. 5) and as ready to accept the services that

come from an upright heart. He will not always chide, nor contend for ever. So far is he from taking advantages against us, that he makes the best of us : Where the spirit is willing, he accepts that, and overlooks the weakness of the flesh. Let us deal with him accordingly : Look upon God as love, and the God of love ; and then it will be pleasant to us to hear from him, to speak to him, to converse with him, and to do him any service.

It is true, God is great, and glorious, and jealous, and to be worshipped with reverence and holy fear ; but is he not our Father, a tender gracious Father ? have we not an Advocate with the Father ? was not God, in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, 2 Cor. v. 19. and to all his attributes and relations to us, by shewing himself willing to be reconciled to us, notwithstanding our provocations ? See him, therefore, upon a throne of grace, and come boldly to him, and that will make your service of him pleasant.

2. Let us dwell much, by faith, upon the promises of God. What pleasant lives should we lead, if we were but more intimately acquainted with those declarations which God has made of his good will to man, and the assurances he has given of his favour, and all the blessed fruits of it, to those who serve him faithfully ? The promises are many, and exceeding great and precious, suited to our case, and accommodated to every exigence ; there are not only promises to grace, but promises of grace, grace sufficient ; and these promises all yea and amen in Christ.

What do these promises stand in our bibles for, but to be made use of ? Come then, and let us apply them to ourselves, and insert our own names in them by faith ; what God said to Abraham, " I am thy shield," Gen. xv. 1. I am *El-shaddai*, " a God all sufficient," Gen. xvii. 1. what he said to Joshua, " I will never fail thee nor forsake thee," Josh. i. 5. he faith to me. What he faith to all that love him, " that all things shall work for good to them," Rom. viii. 28. and to all that fear him, that no good thing shall be wanting to them, Psal. xxxiv. 10. he faith to me ; and why should not I take the comfort of it ?

These promises and the like, are wells of salvation, from which we may draw water with joy ; and breasts of consolation from which we may suck, and be satisfied ; they will be both our strength and our song in the house of our pil-

grimage. So well ordered is the covenant of grace in all things, and so sure, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. that if having laid up our portion in it, and so made it all our salvation, we would but fetch our maintenance from it, and so make it all our desire and delight, we should have in it a continual feast, and should go on our way rejoicing. See Psal. cxix. 111.

3. Let us order the affairs of our religion with discretion. Many make religion unpleasant to themselves, and discouraging to others, by their imprudent management of it; making that service to be a burden by the circumstances of it, which in itself would be a pleasure; doing things out of time, or tasking themselves above their strength, and undertaking more than they can go through with, especially at first, which is like "putting new wine into old bottles," Mat. ix. 17. or like "over-driving the flocks one day," Gen. xxxiii. 13. If we make the yoke of Christ heavier than he has made it, we may thank ourselves that our drawing in it becomes unpleasant. Solomon cautions us, Eccl. vii. 16. against being righteous overmuch, and making ourselves overwise, as that by which we may destroy ourselves, and put ourselves out of conceit with our religion; there may be over-doing in well-doing, and then it becomes unpleasant.

But let us take our religion as Christ hath settled it, and we shall find it easy. When the ways of our religion are ways of wisdom, then they are ways of pleasantness; for the more wisdom, the more pleasantness; that wisdom which dwells with prudence. Wisdom will direct us to be even and regular in our religion, to take care that the duties of our general and particular calling, the business of our religion, and our necessary business in the world, do not interfere or intrench upon one another. It will direct us to time duty aright; for every thing is beautiful and pleasant in its season, Eccl. iii. 11. and work is then easy when we are in a frame for it.

4. Let us live in love, and keep up Christian charity, and the spiritual communion of saints; if we would be of good comfort, we must be of one mind, 2 Cor. xiii. 11. and therefore the apostle presseth brotherly love upon us, with an argument taken from the consolations in Christ, Phil. ii. 1. i.e. the comfort that is in Christianity: As ever you hope to have the comfort of your religion, submit to that great law of it, "Walk in love;" for behold how good and how

pleasant it is, how good in itself, and pleasant to us, for brethren to dwell together in unity.

The more pleasing we are to our brethren the more pleasant we shall be to ourselves.

Nothing makes our lives more uncomfortable than strife and contention: "Wo is me that I dwell among those that hate peace," Psal. cxx. 5. it is bad being among those that are disposed to quarrel and worse having in ourselves a disposition to quarrel. The resentments of contempt put upon us are uneasy enough, and contrivances to revenge it much more so. And nothing makes our religion more uncomfortable than strifes and contentions about that. We forfeit and lose the pleasure of it, if we entangle ourselves in perverse disputings about it.

But by holy love we enjoy our friends, which will add to the pleasure of enjoying God in this world. Love itself sweetens the soul and revives it, and, as it is the loadstone of love, it fetcheth in the further pleasure and satisfaction of being beloved, and so it is a heaven upon earth; for what is the happiness and pleasure of heaven, but that there love reigns in perfection? Then we have moⁿ peace in our bosoms, when we are most peaceably disposed towards our brethren.

5. Let us be much in the exercise of holy joy, and employ ourselves much in praise. Joy is the heart of praise, as praise is the language of joy; let us engage ourselves to these, and quicken ourselves in these. God has made these our duty, by these to make all the other parts of our duty pleasant to us; and for that end we should abound much in them, and attend upon God with joy and praise. Let us not crowd our spiritual joys into a corner of our hearts, nor our thankful praises into a-corner of our prayers, but give both scope and vent to each.

Let us live a life of delight in God, and love to think of him as we do of one whom we love and value. Let the flowing in of every stream of comfort lead us to the fountain; and, in every thing that is grateful to us, let us taste that the Lord is gracious. Let the drying up of every stream of comfort drive us to the fountain; and let us rejoice the more in God for our being deprived of that which we used to rejoice in.

Let us be frequent and large in our thanksgivings. It

will be pleasant to us to recount the favours of God, and thus to make some returns for them; though poor and mean, yet such as God will graciously accept. We should have more pleasure in our religion, if we had but learned in every thing to give thanks, 1 Thess. v. 18. for that takes out more than half the bitterness of our afflictions, -that we can see cause even to be thankful for them; and it infuseth more than a double sweetnes into our enjoyments, that they furnish us with matter for that excellent heavenly work of praise; " Sing praises unto his name, for it is " pleasant; comfortable, as well as comely," Psal. cxxxv. 3.

6. Let us act in a constant dependence upon Jesus Christ Religion would be much more pleasant, if we did but cleave more closely to Christ in it, and do all in his name: The more precious Christ is to us, the more pleasant will every part of our work be; and therefore believing in Christ is often expressed by our rejoicing in him, Phil. iii. 5. We may rejoice in God, through Christ, as the Mediator between us and God; may rejoice in our communion with God, when it is kept up through Christ; may rejoice in hope of eternal life, when we see this life in the Son: " He that hath the Son of God, hath life," i. e. he has comfort, 1 John v. 11, 12.

There is that in Christ, and in his undertaking and performances for us, which is sufficient to satisfy all our doubts, to silence all our fears, and to balance all our sorrows. He was appointed to be the consolation of Israel, and he will be so to us, when we have learnt not to look for that in ourselves, which is to be had in him only, and to make use of his mediation in every thing wherein we have to do with God. When we rejoice in the righteousness of Christ, and in his grace and strength; rejoice in his satisfaction and intercession; rejoice in his dominion and univerſal agency and influence, and in the progress of his gospel, and the conversion of souls to him, and please ourselves with prospects of his ſecond coming; we have then a joy, not only which no man taketh from us, but which will increase more and more: And of the increase of Christ's government, and therefore of that peace, there shall be no end, Isa. ix. 7. Our songs of joy are then most

pleasant, when the burden of them is, none but Christ, none but Christ.

7. Let us converse much with the glory that is to be revealed. They that by faith send their hearts and best affections before them to heaven, while they are here on this earth, may in return fetch thence some of those joys and pleasures that are at God's right hand. That which goes up in vapours of holy desire, though insensible, in groanings which cannot be uttered, will come down again in dews of heavenly consolations, that will make the soul as a watered garden.

Let us look much to the end of our way, how glorious it will be, and that will help to make our way pleasant. This abundantly satisfies the saints, and is the fatness of God's house on earth, Psal. xxxvi. 3, 9. This makes them now to drink of the river of God's pleasures, that with him is the fountain of life, whence all these streams come, and in his light they hope to see light, everlasting light. By frequent meditations on that rest which remains for the people of God, Heb. iv. 3. we now enter into that rest and partake of the comfort of it.

Our hopes of that happiness through grace would be very much strengthened, and our evidences for it cleared up insensibly, if we did but converse more with it, and the discoveries made of it in the scripture. We may have fore-tastes of heavenly delights while we are here on earth, clusters from Canaan while we are yet in this wilderness; and no pleasure comparable to that which these afford. That is the sweetest joy within us, which is borrowed from the joy set before us; and we deprive ourselves very much of the comfort of our religion, in not having our eye more to that joy. We rejoice most triumphantly, and with the greatest degrees of holy glorying, when we "rejoice in "hope of the glory of God," Rom vi. 2. In this our heart is glad, and our glory rejoiceth," Psal. xvi. 4.

Thirdly, Let us make it appear, that we have, indeed, found wisdom's ways to be pleasantness, and her paths peace. If we have experienced this truth, let us evidence our experiences, and not only in word, but in deed, bear our testimony to the truth of it. Let us live as those that believe the sweetnes of religion, not because we are told it, but because we have tasted it, 1 John i. 1.

If so be then (to borrow the apostle's words, 1 Pet. ii. 3.) " we have tasted that the Lord is gracious," if we have, indeed, found it a pleasant thing to be religious;

1. Let our hearts be much enlarged in all religious exercises, and all instances of gospel obedience. The more pleasant the service of God is, the more we should abound in it. When God enlargeth our hearts with his consolations, he expects that we should run the way of his commandments, that we should exert ourselves in our duty with more vigour, and press forward the more earnestly towards perfection.

This should make us forward to every good work, and ready to close with all opportunities of serving God, and doing good. That which we take a pleasure in, we need not to be twice called to. If indeed the hearts of those rejoice that seek the Lord, as in Psal. cv. 3. then when God saith, seek ye my face, how steadily should our hearts answer at the first word, " Thy face, Lord, will we seek?" Psal. xxvii. 8. and how glad will they be, when it is said unto us, " Let us go to the house of the Lord?" Psal. cxxii. 1. This should make us forward to acts of charity, that there is a pleasure in doing good; and we shall reflect with comfort upon it, that we have done something that will turn to the honour of God, and our own account.

This should make us lively in our duty; the heart fixed in hearing the word, and in prayer and praise. Those that take delight in music, how doth it engage them? how do all the marks of a close application of mind appear in their countenance and carriage? And shall not we, by our attending on the Lord without distraction, make it to appear, that we attend upon him with delight, and are in our element when we are in his service? Let this be my rest for ever; here let me dwell all the days of my life, Psal. xxvii. 4.

This should keep us constant and unwearied in the work and service of God. What is really our delight, we are not soon weary of. If we delight in approaching to God, we will seek him daily, and make it our daily work to honour him. If meditation and prayer be sweet, let them be our daily exercise; and let this bind our souls with a bond to God, and the " sacrifice as with cords to the horns of the altar." With this we should answer all temptations to

apostacy ; Shall I quit so good a master, so good a service ?
 " Intreat me not to leave Christ, or to turn from following
 " after him ; for it is good to be here Here let us make
 " tabernacles," Matth. xvii. 4. Whither else shall we go,
 but to him that has the words of eternal life ?

2. Let our whole conversation be cheerful, and melancholy be banished. Are the ways of religion pleasant ? let us be pleasant in them, both to ourselves, and to those about us As for those who are yet in a state of sin and wrath, they have reason to be melancholy, let the sinners in Zion be afraid ; be afflicted, joy is forbidden fruit to them, What have they to do with peace ? Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy as other people, for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God, Hos. ix. 1.

But those who, through grace, are called out of darkness into a marvellous light, have cause to be cheerful, and should have hearts to be so. " Arise, shine, for thy light is come," Isa. Ix. 1. Is the sun of righteousness risen upon us ? let us arise and look forth as the morning with the morning. That comfort which Christ directs to our souls, let us reflect back upon others. And as our light is come, so is our liberty. Art thou " loosed from the bands of thy neck ? O captive daughter of Zion awake, awake, put on thy strength, put on thy beautiful garments, and shake thyself from the dust, arise and sit down," O Jerusalem, Isa. lii. 1, 2.

Though vain and carnal mirth is both a great sin, and a great snare, yet there is a holy cheerfulness and pleasantness of conversation which will not only consist very well with serious godliness, but greatly promotes it in ourselves, and greatly adorns it, and recommends it to others. A merry heart (Solomon faith) doth good like a medicine, Prov. xvii. 22. and maketh fat the bones ; while a broken spirit doth hurt like a poison, and drieth the bones. Christians should endeavour to keep up a cheerful temper, and not indulge themselves in that which is sadning and disquieting, to the spirit ; and they should shew it in all holy conversation, that those they converse with may see they did not renounce pleasure, when they embraced religion.

I am sure, none have so much reason to rejoice as good people have, nor so much done for them to encourage their joy ; and therefore to allude to that of Jonadab to Amnon,

"Why art thou, being the king's son, lean from day to day?"
 2 Sam. xiii. 4. Are we in prosperity? therefore let us be cheerful, in gratitude to the God of our mercies, who expects that we should serve him with joyfulness, and gladness of heart, in the abundance of all things, Deut. xxviii. 47. and justly takes it ill if we do not.

*Tristis es, & felix? sciat hoc fortuna caveto,
 Ingratum dicet te (lupe) si scierit Mart.*

Are we in affliction? yet let us be cheerful, that we may make it appear our happiness is not laid up in the creature, nor our treasures on earth. If it is the privilege of Christians to rejoice in tribulation, let them not throw away their privilege, but glory in it, and make use of it. Let the joy of the Lord, that hath infused itself into our hearts, diffuse itself into all our converse. Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, Eccl. ix 7. and drink thy wine, nay, if thou shouldst be reduced to that, drink fair water, with a merry heart, if thou hast good ground to hope that, in Christ Jesus, God now accepteth thy works; and this joy of the Lord will be thy strength.

3. Let us look with contempt upon the pleasures of sense, and with abhorrence upon the pleasures of sin. The more we have tasted of the delights of heaven, the more our mouths should be put out of taste to the delights of this earth. Let not those who have been feasted with the milk and honey of Canaan, hanker after the garlic and onions of Egypt.

Let us keep at a distance from all forbidden pleasures. There is a hook under those baits, a snake under the green grass; a rock under those smooth waters, on which multitudes have split. We must so dread the drunkard's pleasures, as not to "look upon the wine when it is red," Prov. xxiii. 31. so dread the pleasures of the adulterer, as not to "look upon a woman to lust after her," Mat. v. 28. for these pleasures of sin not only are but for a season, but at the last they "bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder." Either spiritual pleasures will deaden the force of the pleasures of sin, or the pleasures of sin will spoil the relish of spiritual pleasures.

Let us keep up a holy indifference even to the lawful delights of sense, and take heed of loving them more than God. The eye that has looked at the sun is dazzled to every

thing else : have we beheld the beauty of the Lord ? let us see and own, how little beauty there is in other things. If we be tempted to do any thing unbecoming us, by the allurements of pleasure; we may well say, offer these things to those that know no better ; but we do, and will never leave " fountains of living waters, for cisterns of puddle water "

4. Let not our hearts envy sinners. Envy ariseth from an opinion that the state of others is better than our own, which we grudge and are displeased at, and wish ourselves in their condition. Good people are often cautioned against this sin ; " Be not envious against evil men, nor desire to " be with them," Prov. xxiv. 1. Psal. xxxvii. 1. for if there be all this pleasure in religion, and we have experienced it, surely we would not exchange conditions with any sinner, even in his best estate.

Envy not sinners their outward prosperity, their wealth and abundance, which puts them into a capacity of having all the delights of sense wound up to the heights of pleasure-ableness. Though they lie " upon beds of ivory," Amos vi. 4, 5, 6. and " stretch themselves upon their couches, and " eat the lambs out of the flocks, and the calves out of the " midst of the stall ; though they chant to the sound of the " viol, drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the " chief ointments ;" yet those have no reason to envy them, whose souls dwell at ease in God, who are fed with the bread of life, the true manna, angels food, and drink of the water of life freely, and make melody with their hearts to the Lord, and are made to hear from him joy and gladness, and have received the anointing of the Spirit. If we have relished the delights of religion, we will say as David, Let us not eat of their dainties, Psal. cxli. 4.

Envy not sinners the liberty they take to sin ; that they can allow themselves in the full enjoyment of these pleasures, which we cannot think of without horror. But have we not then the enjoyment of those pleasures which are infinitely better, and which they are strangers to ? We cannot have both ; and, of the two, are not ours, without dispute, preferable to theirs ? and why then should we envy them ? Their pleasures are enslaving, ours enlarging ; theirs debasing to the soul, ours ennobling ; theirs surfeiting, ours satisfying ; theirs offensive to God, ours pleasing to him ; theirs

will end in pain and bitterness, ours will be perfected in endless joys: and what reason then have we to envy them?

5 Let not our spirits sink, or be dejected, under the afflictions of this present time. We disparage our comforts in God, if we lay too much to heart our crosses in the world: And therefore, hereby let us evidence, that, being satisfied of God's loving kindness, we are satisfied with it. Let us look upon that as sufficient to balance all the unkindnesses of men. They that value themselves upon God's smiles, ought not to vex themselves at the world's frowns. The light of God's countenance can shine through the thickest clouds of the troubles of this present time; and therefore we should walk in the light of the Lord, even then, when as to our outward condition we sit in darkness.

We manifest that we have found true delight and satisfaction in the service of God, and communion with him, when the pleasure of that will make the bitterest cup of affliction, that our Father puts into our hand, not only passable, but pleasant; so that, like blessed Paul, when we are as sorrowful, yet we may be always rejoicing, and may take pleasure in infirmities and reproaches, because, though for the present they are not joyous but grievous, yet, when afterwards they yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness, they become not grievous, but truly joyous. Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest.

6. Let the pleasure we have found in religion, dispose us to be liberal and charitable to the poor and distressed. The pleasing sense we have of God's bounty to us, by which he has done so much to make us easy, should engage us bountifully to distribute to the necessities of saints, according to our ability; not only to keep them from perishing, but to make them easy; and that they may rejoice as well as we. Cheerfulness that enlargeth the heart, should open the hand too. Paul observes it concerning the churches of Macedonia, who were ready to give for the relief of the poor saints at Jerusalem, that it was the abundance of their joy, their spiritual joy, their joy in God, that abounded unto the riches of their liberality, 2 Cor. viii. 2.

When the people of Israel are commanded to rejoice in every good thing which God had given them, Deut. xxvi.

11, 12. they are commanded also to give freely to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat, and be filled. And when upon a particular occasion they are directed to eat the fat, and drink the sweet, Neh. viii. 10. at the same time they are directed to send portions to them for whom nothing is prepared : and then the joy of the Lord will be their strength. By our being charitable, we should show that we are cheerful ; that we cheerfully taste God's goodness in what we have, and trust his goodness for what we may hereafter want.

7. Let us do what we can, to bring others to partake of the same pleasures in religion that we have tasted, especially those that are under our charge. It adds very much to the pleasure of an enjoyment, to communicate of it to others ; especially when the nature of it is such, that we have never the less, but the more rather, for others sharing in it. What good tidings we hear that are of common concern, we desire that others may hear them, and be glad too. He that has but found a lost sheep, " calls his friends and neighbours to rejoice with him," Luke xv. 6. much more he that has found Christ, and found comfort in him ; who can say, not only, come and rejoice with me, but, come and partake with me : for yet there is room enough for all, though never so numerous ; enough for each, though never so necessitous and craving.

When Samson had found honey in the carcass of the lion, Judges xiv. 8. he brought some of it to his parents, that they might partake with him : thus, when we have found a " day in God's courts better than a thousand," we should invite others into those courts, by telling them what " God has done for our souls," Psal lxvi. 16. and how willing he is to do the same for theirs, if they in like manner apply themselves to him. When Andrew, with a surprising pleasure, had found the Messiah, John i. 41, 45. he cannot rest till he has brought his brother Peter to him ; nor Philip, till he hath brought his friend Nathaniel. They that are feasted with the comforts of God's house, should not covet to eat their morsel alone, but be willing to communicate of their spiritual things.

8. Let us be willing to die, and leave this world. We have reason to be ashamed of ourselves, that we who have not only laid up our treasure above, but fetch our pleasures

thence, yet are as much in love with our present state, and as loth to think of quitting it, as if our treasure, and pleasure, and all, were wrapt up in the things of sense and time. The delights of sense entangle us, and hold us here; “These are the things that make us loth to die,” as one once said, viewing his fine house and gardens. And are these things sufficient to incur our stay here, when God calls to “arise, and depart, for this is not our rest?” Mic. ii. 10.

Let us not be afraid to remove from a world of sense to a world of spirits, since we have found the pleasures of sense not worthy to be compared with spiritual pleasures. When in old age, which is one of the valleys of the shadow of death, we can no longer relish the delights of the body, but they become sapless and tasteless, as they were to Barzillai; yet we need not call those evil days, and years in which we have no pleasure, if we have walked and persevered in wisdom’s ways; for, if so, we may then in old age, look back with pleasure on a life well spent on earth, as Hezekiah did, and look forward with more pleasure, upon a life to be better spent in heaven.

And when we have received a sentence of death within ourselves, and see the day approaching, the pleasure we have in loving God, and believing in Christ, and in the expressions of holy joy and thankfulness, should make even a sick-bed and a death-bed easy. The faints shall be joyful in glory, and shall “sing aloud upon their beds,” Psal. cxlii. 5. those beds to which they are confined, and from which they are removing to their graves, their beds in the darkness. Our religion, if we be faithful to it, will furnish us with living comforts in dying moments, sufficient to balance the pains of death, and take off the terror of it; and to enable us to triumph over it, “O death! where is thy sting?” Let us then evidence our experiences of the pleasures of religion, by living above the inordinate love of life, and fear of death.

Lastly, Let us long for the perfection of these spiritual pleasures in the kingdom of glory. When we come thither, and not till then, they will be perfected. While we are here, as we know and love but in part, so we rejoice but in part; even our spiritual joys here have their damps and allays; we mix tears and tremblings with them: but, in

heaven, there is a fulness of joy without mixture, and pleasures for evermore without period or diminution. Christ's servants will there enter into the joy of their Lord, and it shall be everlasting joy, Isa. xxxv. 10.

And what are the pleasures in the way of wisdom, compared with those at the end of the way? If a complacency in the divine beauty and love be so pleasant while we are in the body, and are absent from the Lord; what will it be when we have put off the body, and go to be present with the Lord? If a day in God's courts, and a few minutes spent there in his praises, be so pleasant; what will an eternity within the veil be, among them that dwell in his house above, and are still praising him? If the earnest of our inheritance be so comfortable, what will the inheritance itself be? Now, wherever there is grace, it will be aiming at, and pressing towards, its own perfection; it is a "well of water springing up to eternal life," John iv. 14. This therefore we should be longing for. Our love to God in this world is love in motion, in heaven it will be love at rest. O when shall that sabbatism come, which remains for the people of God? Here we have the pleasure of looking towards God; O when shall we come, and appear before him! Our Lord Jesus, when at his last passover, which he earnestly desired to eat with his disciples, he had drunk of the fruit of the vine, he speaks as one that longed to "drink it new in the kingdom of his Father," Mat. xxvi. 19. It is very pleasant to serve Christ here; but to "depart and to be with Christ, is far better. Now are we the sons of God," 1 John iii. 2. and it is very pleasant to think of that: but it doth not yet appear what we shall be; something there is in reserve, which we are kept in expectation of: we are not yet at home, but should long to be there, and keep up holy desires of that glory to be revealed, that we may be quickened, as long as we are here, to press "towards the mark for the prize of the high calling."

A CHU CH IN THE HOUSE,

A

S E R M O N

CONCERNING

FAMILY RELIGION.

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF SOME WHO
HEARD THE SUBSTANCE OF IT PREACHED
IN LONDON, APRIL 16, 1704.

I COR. xvi. 19.

—*With the Church that is in thine House.*

SOME very good interpreters, I know, understand this of a "settled, stated, solemn meeting of Christians at the house of Aquila and Priscilla, for public worship; and they were glad of houses to meet in, where they wanted those better conveniences, which the church was afterwards, in her prosperous days, accommodated with. When they had not such places as they could wish, they thankfully made use of such as they could get.

But others think it is meant only of their own family, and the strangers within their gates; among whom there was so much piety, and devotion, that it might well be called a church or religious house. Thus the ancients generally understand it. Nor was it only Aquila and Priscilla, whose

house was thus celebrated for religion here, and Rom. xvi. 5. but Nymphas also had a church in his house, Col. iv. 15. and Philemon, verse 2. Not but that others, to whom and from whom salutations are sent in Paul's epistles, made conscience of keeping up religion in their families; but these are mentioned, probably because their families were more numerous than most of those other families were, which made their family devotions more solemn, and consequently more taken notice of.

In this sense I shall choose to take it; from hence to recommend family religion to you, under the notion of a church in the house. When we see your public assemblies so well filled, so well frequented, we cannot but thank God, and take courage; your diligent attendance on the ministry of the word and prayers, is your praise, and I trust, through grace, it redounds to your spiritual comfort and benefit: But my subject at this time will lead me to inquire into the state of religion in your private houses, whether it flourish or wither there? whether it be upon the throne, or under foot there? Herein I desire to deal plainly and faithfully with your consciences, and I beg you will give them leave to deal so with you.

The pious and zealous endeavours both of magistrates and ministers for the reformation of manners, and the suppression of vice and prophaneness, are the joy and encouragement of all good people in the land, and a happy indication that God hath yet mercy in store for us: "If the Lord had been pleased to kill us, he would not have shewed us such things as these." Now, I know not any thing that will contribute more to the furtherance of this good work, than the bringing of family religion more into practice and reputation. Here the reformation must begin. Other methods may check the disease we complain of; but this, if it might universally obtain, would cure it. Salt must be cast into these springs, and then the waters would be healed.)

Many a time, no doubt, you have been urged to this part of your duty; many a good sermon perhaps you have heard, and many a good book has been put into your hands with this design, to persuade you to keep up religion in your families, and to assist you therein: But I hope a further attempt to advance this good work, by one who is a hearty

well-wisher to it, and to the prosperity of your souls and families, will not be thought altogether needless, and that by the grace of God it will not be wholly fruitless; at least it will serve to remind you of what you have received and heard to this purpose, that you may hold fast what is good, and repent of what is amiss, Rev. iii. 3.

The lesson then which I would recommend to you from the text is this :

That the families of Christians should be little churches.

Or thus, *That wherever we have a house, God should have a church in it.*

Unhappy contests there have been, and still are, among wise and good men, about the constitution, order, and government of churches: God by his grace heal these breaches, lead us into all truth, and dispose our minds to love and peace; that, while we endeavour herein to walk according to the light God hath given us, we may charitably believe that others do so too; longing to be there where we shall be all of a mind.

But I am now speaking of the churches concerning which there is no such controversy. All agree that masters of families, who profess religion and the fear of God themselves, should, according to the talents they are entrusted with, maintain and keep up religion and the fear of God in their families, as those that must give account; and that families, as such, should contribute to the support of Christianity in a nation, whose honour and happiness is to be a Christian nation. As nature makes families little kingdoms, and perhaps economics were the first and most ancient polities; so grace makes families little churches: and those were the primitive churches of the Old Testament, before “men began to call upon the name of the Lord in solemn assemblies, and the sons of God came together to present themselves before him”

Not that I would have these family-churches set up and kept up in competition with, much less in contradiction to, public religious assemblies, which ought always to have the preference: (The Lord loves the gates of Sion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob, Psal. lxxxvii. 2. and so must we; and must not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, under colour of exhorting one another daily at home;) far be it from us to offer any thing that may countenance the

invading of the office of the ministry, or laying it in common, and the usurping or superseding of the administration of sacraments: No, but these family churches (which are but figuratively so) must be erected and maintained in subordination to those more sacred and solemn establishments.

Now, that I may the more distinctly open to you, and press upon you this great duty of family religion, from the example of this and other texts of a church in the house, I shall endeavour, (1.) To shew you what this church in the house is, and when our families may be called churches. And, (2.) To persuade you, by some motives, thus to turn your families into churches. And then, (3.) To address to you upon the whole matter, by way of application.

I am, in the first place, to tell you what that family religion is, which will be as a church in the house, and wherein it doth consist; that you may see what it is we are persuading you to.

Churches are sacred societies, incorporated for the honour and service of God in Christ, devoted to God, and employed for him; so should our families be.

1. Churches are societies devoted to God, called out of the world, taken in out of the common to be inclosures for God: He hath set them apart for himself; and, because he hath chosen them, they also have chosen him, and set themselves apart for him. The Jewish church was separated to God for a peculiar people, a kingdom of priests.

Thus our houses must be churches; with ourselves we must give up our houses to the Lord, to be to him for a name, and a people. All the interest we have, both in our relations, and in our possessions, must be consecrated to God; as, under the law, all that the servant had was his masters for ever, after he had consented to have his ear bored to the door-post. When God effectually called Abram out of Ur of the Chaldees, his family put on the face of a particular church; for, in obedience to God's precept, and in dependence on God's promise, they took all the substance they had gathered, and the souls they had gotten, and put themselves and their all under a divine conduct and government, Gen xii. 5. His was a great family; not only numerous, but very considerable; the father of it was the father of all them that believe: But even little families, jointly and entirely given up to God, so become churches.

When all the members of the family yield themselves to God, "subscribe with their hands to be the Lord's," and "surname themselves by the name of Israel," and the master of the family, with himself, gives up all his right, title, and interest in his house, and all that belongs to it, unto God, to be used for him, and disposed of by him, here is a church in the house.

Baptism was ordained for the discipling of nations, Mat. xxviii. 19. that the kingdoms of the world, as such, might, by the conversion of their people to the faith of Christ, and the consecration of their powers and governments to the honour of Christ, become his kingdoms, Rev. xi. 15. Thus by baptism households likewise are discipled, as Lydia's, and the Jailor's, Acts vi. 15, 33. and in their family-capacity are given up to him, who is in a particular manner the God of all the families of Israel, Jer. xxx. 1. Circumcision was at first a family ordinance; and in that particular, as well as others, baptism doth somewhat symbolize with it: When the children of Christian parents are by baptism admitted members of the universal church, as their right to baptism is grounded upon, so their communion with the universal church, is, during their infancy, maintained and kept up chiefly by their immediate relation to these churches in the house; to them therefore they are first given back, and in them they are deposited, under the tuition of them, to be trained up till they become capable of a place and a name in particular churches of larger figure and extent. So that baptized families, that own their baptism, and adhere to it, and in their joint and relative capacity make profession of the Christian faith, may so far be called little churches.

More than once, in the Old Testament, we read of the dedication of private houses. It is spoken of as a common practice, Deut. xx. 5. "What man is there that hath built a new house, and hath not dedicated it?" i. e. taken possession of it: In the doing of which, it was usual to dedicate it to God by some solemn acts of religious worship. The thirtieth Psalm is intitled, a psalm or song at the dedication of the house of David. It is a good thing, when a man hath a house of his own, thus to convert it into a church, by dedicating it to the service and honour of God, that it may be a Bethel, a house of God, and not a Beth-aven, a house of vanity and iniquity. Every good Christian that is a householder,

no "doubt, doth this habitually and virtually; having first given his own self to the Lord, he freely surrenders all he hath to him: but it may be of good use to do it actually and expressly, and often to repeat this act of resignation; "this stone which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house," Gen. xviii. 22. Let all I have in my house, and all I do in it, be for the glory of God; I own him to be my great landlord, and I hold all from and under him; to him I promise to pay the rents, the quitrents, of daily praises and thanksgivings, and to do the services, the easy services, of gospel obedience. Let holiness to the Lord be written upon the house, and all the furniture of it; according to the word which God hath spoken, Zech. xiv. 20, 21. that every pot in Jerusalem, and Judah "shall be holiness to the Lord of hosts." Let God by his providence dispose of the affairs of my family, and by his grace dispose the affections of all in my family, according to his will, to his own praise. Let me and mine be only, wholly, and for ever his.

Be persuaded, brethren, thus to dedicate your houses to God, and beg of him to come and take possession of them. If you never did it, do it to-night with all possible seriousness and sincerity. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the king of glory shall come in." Bring the ark of the Lord into the tent you have pitched, and oblige yourselves, and all yours, to attend it. Look upon your houses as temples for God, places for worship, and all your possessions as dedicated things, to be used for God's honour, and not to be alienated or profaned.

2. Churches are societies employed for God, pursuant to the true intent and meaning of this dedication.

There are three things necessary to the well being of a church, and which are most considerable in the constitution of it. Those are doctrine, worship, and discipline. Where the truths of Christ are professed and taught, the ordinances of Christ administered and observed, and due care taken to put the laws of Christ in execution among all that profess themselves his subjects, and this under the conduct and inspection of a gospel-ministry; there is a church: and something answerable hereunto there must be in our families, to denominate them little churches.

Masters of families, who preside in the other affairs of the house, must go before their households in the things of God. They must be as prophets, priests, and kings, in their own families; and, as such, they must keep up family-doctrine, family-worship, and family-discipline: then is there a church in the house, and this is the family religion I am persuading you to.

First, Keep up family-doctrine. It is not enough that you and yours are baptised into the Christian faith, and profess to own the truth as it is in Jesus; but care must be taken, and means used, that you and yours be well acquainted with that truth, and that you grow in that acquaintance, to the honour of Christ, and his holy religion, and the improvement of your own minds, and theirs that are under your charge. You must dwell with your families as men of knowledge, 1 Pet. iii. 7. *i. e.* as men that desire to grow in knowledge yourselves and to communicate your knowledge for the benefit of others, which are the two good properties of those that deserve to be called men of knowledge.

That you may keep up family-doctrine,

1. You must read the scriptures to your families, in a solemn manner, requiring their attendance on your reading, and their attention to it; and inquiring sometimes whether they understand what you read? I hope, there are none of you without bibles in your houses, store of bibles, every one a bible: thanks be to God, we have them cheap and common, in a language that we understand. The book of the law is not such a rarity with us, as it was in Josiah's time. We need not fetch this knowledge from afar, nor send from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth, to seek the knowledge of God; no, the word is nigh us. When popery reigned in our land, English bibles were scarce things; a load of hay, it is said, was once given for one torn leaf of a bible. But now bibles are every one's money. You know where to buy them; or, if not able to do that, perhaps in this charitable city, you may know where to beg them. It is better to be without bread in your houses, than without bibles; for the words of God's mouth are, and should be to you, more than your necessary food.

But what will it avail you to have bibles in your houses,

if you do not use them? To have the great things of God's law and gospel written to you, if you count them as a strange thing? You look daily into your shop-books, and perhaps converse much with the news-books; and shall your bibles be thrown by as an almanack out of date? It is not now penal to read the scriptures in your families, as it was in the dawning of the day of reformation from popery, when there were those that were accused and prosecuted, for reading in a certain great heretical book, called an English bible. The Philistines do not now stop up these wells, as Gen. xxvi. 18. nor do the shepherds drive away your flocks from them, Exod. ii. 17. nor are they as a "spring shut up, or a fountain sealed:" but the gifts given to men have been happily employed in rolling away the stone from the mouth of these wells. You have great encouragements to read the scripture; for notwithstanding the malicious endeavours of atheists to vilify sacred things, the knowledge of the scripture is still in reputation with all wise and good men. You have also variety of excellent helps to understand the scripture, and to improve your reading of it; so that if you or yours perish for lack of this knowledge, as you certainly will if you persist in the neglect of it, you may thank yourselves, the guilt will lie wholly at your own doors.

Let me therefore with all earnestness press it upon you, to make the solemn reading of the scripture a part of your daily worship in your families. When you speak to God by prayer, be willing to hear him speak to you in his word, that there may be a complete communion between you and God. This will add much to the solemnity of your family-worship, and will make the transaction the more awful and serious, if it be done in a right manner; which will conduce much to the honour of God, and your own and your families edification. It will help to make the word of God familiar to yourselves, and your children and servants, that you may be ready and mighty in the scriptures, and may from thence be thoroughly furnished for every good word and work. It will likewise furnish you with matter and words for prayer, and so be helpful to you in other parts of the service. If some parts of scripture seem less edifying, let those be more frequently read that are most so. David's psalms are of daily use in devotion, and Solomon's proverbs in conversation; it will be greatly to your advantage to be well versed in them. And, I hope, I need not press any Christian to the study of

the New Testament, nor any Christian parents to the frequent instructing of their children in the pleasant and profitable histories of the Old Testament. When you only hear your children read the bible, they are tempted to look upon it as no more than a school book; but when they hear you read it to them in a solemn, religious manner, it comes, as it ought, with more authority. Those masters of families who make conscience of doing this daily, morning and evening, reckoning it part of that which the duty of every day requires, I am sure, have comfort and satisfaction in so doing, and find it contributes much to their own improvement in Christian knowledge, and the edification of those that dwell under their shadow; and the more, if those that are ministers expound themselves, and other masters of families read some plain and profitable exposition of what is read, or of some part of it.

It is easy to add, under this head, that the seasonable reading of other good books will contribute very much to family instruction. In helps of this kind, we are as happy as any people under the sun, if we have but hearts to use the helps we have, as those that must give an account shortly of them, among other the talents we are intrusted with.

2. You must also catechise your children and servants, so long as they continue in that age of life which needs this milk. Oblige them to learn some good catechism by heart, and to keep it in remembrance, and, by familiar discourse with them, help them to understand it, as they become capable. It is an excellent method of catechising, which GOD himself directs us to, Deut. vi. 7. To teach our children the things of GOD, by talking of them as we do sit in the house, and go by the way, when we lie down, and when we rise up. It is good to keep up stated times for this service, and be constant to them, as those that know how industrious the enemy is to sow tares, while men sleep. If this good work be not kept going forward, it will of itself go backward. Wisdom also will direct you to manage your catechising, as well as the other branches of family religion, so as not to make it a task and a burden, but as much as may be a pleasure to those under your charge, that the blame may lie wholly upon their own impiety, and not at all upon your imprudence, if they should say, Behold what a weariness is it!

This way of instruction by catechising, doth in a special manner belong to the church in the house ; for that is the nursery in which the trees of righteousness are reared, that afterwards are planted in the courts of our God. Public catechising will turn to little account without family catechising. The labour of ministers in instructing of youth, and feeding the lambs of the flock, therefore proves to many labour in vain, because masters of families do not do their duty, in preparing them for public instruction, and examining their improvement by it. As mothers are children's best nurses, so parents are, or should be, their best teachers. Solomon's father was his tutor, Prov, iv. 3. 4. And he never forgot the lessons his mother taught him. Prov. xxxi. 1.

The baptism of your children, as it laid a strong and lasting obligation upon them to live in the fear of God, so it brought you under the most powerful engagements imaginable to bring them up in that fear. The child you gave up to God to be dedicated to him, and admitted a member of CHRIST's visible church, was in God's name given back to you, with the same charge that Pharaoh's daughter gave to Moses' mother, Take this child, and nurse it for me ; and, in nursing it for God, you nurse it for better preferment than that of being called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, It is worth observing, that he to whom God first did the honour of entailing the seal of the covenant upon his seed, was eminent for this part of family religion ; "I know Abraham, " faith God, that he will command his children, and his " household after him, to keep the way of the LORD," Gen. xviii. 19. Those therefore who would have the comfort of God's covenant with them and their seed, and would share in that blessing of Abraham which comes upon the Gentiles, must herein follow the example of faithful Abraham. The entail of the covenant of grace is forfeited and cut off, if care be not taken with it to transmit the means of grace. To what purpose were they discipled, if they be not taught ? Why did you give them a Christian name, if you will not give them the knowledge of Christ and Christianity ? God has owned them as his children, and born unto him, Ezek. xvi. 20. and therefore he expects they should be brought up for him ; you are unjust to your God, unkind to your children, and unfaithful to your trust, if having by baptism en-

tered your children in CHRIST's School, and listed them under his banner, you do not make conscience of training them up in the learning of CHRIST's scholars, and under the discipline of his soldiers.

- Consider what your children are now capable of, even in the days of their childhood. They are capable of receiving impressions now, which may abide upon them while they live; they "are turned as clay to the seal," and now is the time to apply to them the seal of the living God. They are capable of honouring God now, if they be well taught, and by their joining, as they can, in religious services, with so much reverence and application as their age will admit, God is honoured, and you in them present to him living sacrifices, holy and acceptable. The hosannas even of children well taught, will be the perfecting of praise, and highly pleasing to the Lord Jesus.

- Consider what your children are designed for (we hope) in this world: they must be a "seed to serve the Lord," which shall be "accounted to him for a generation." They are to bear up the name of Christ in their day, and into their hands must be transmitted that good thing, which is committed to us. They are to be praising God on earth, when we are praising him in heaven. Let them then be brought up accordingly, that they may answer the end of their birth and being. They are designed for the service of their generation, and to do good in their day; consult the public welfare then, and let nothing be wanting on your parts to qualify them for usefulness, according as their place and capacity is.

Consider especially what they are designed for in another world. They are made for eternity. Every child thou hast, hath a precious and immortal soul, that must be forever either in heaven or hell, according as it is prepared in this present state; and perhaps it must remove to that world of spirits very shortly; and will it not be very sad, if, through your carelessness and neglect, your children should learn the ways of sin, and perish eternally in those ways? Give them warning, that, if possible, you may deliver their souls, at least that you may deliver your own, and may not bring their curse and God's too, their blood and your own too, upon your heads.

I know you cannot give grace to your children, nor is a religious conversation the constant consequent of a religious education : "the race is not always to the swift, nor the 'battle to the strong ;' but if you make conscience of doing your duty, by keeping up family doctrine, if you teach them the good and the right way, and warn them of by-paths if you reprove, exhort, and encourage them as there is occasion, if you pray with them and for them, and set them a good example, and at last consult their foul's welfare in the disposal of them, you have done your part, and may comfortably leave the issue and success with God.

Secondly, Keep up family worship. You must not only, as prophets, teach your families, but as priests, must go before them, in offering the spiritual sacrifice of prayer and praise. Herein likewise you must tread in the steps of faithful Abraham ; (whose sons you are while thus you do well) you must not only like him, instruct your household, but like him, you must with them "call on the name of the 'Lord the everlasting God,'" Gen. xxi. 33. Wherever he pitched his tent, "there he built an altar unto the Lord," Gen. xii. 7, 8, 13 vii. 18. Though he was yet in an unsettled state, but a stranger and a sojourner ; though he was among jealous and envious neighbours, for the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the lands ; yet wherever Abraham had a tent, God had an altar in it, and he himself served at that altar. Herein he has left us an example.

Families, as such, have many errands at the throne of grace, which furnish them with matter and occasion for family prayer every day ; errands which cannot be done so well in secret or public, but are fittest to be done by the family in concert, and apart from the other families. And it is good for those that go before the rest in family-devotion, ordinarily to dwell most upon the concerns of those that join in their family capacity, that it may indeed be a family prayer, not only offered in and by the family, but suited to it. In this and other services, we should endeavour not only to say something, but something to the purpose.

Five things especially you should have upon your heart in your family prayer, and should endeavour to bring something of each, more or less, into every prayer with your families.

1. You ought to make family acknowledgements of your dependence upon God and his providence, as you are a fa-

mily. Our great business in all acts of religious worship is, "to give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name;" and this we must do in our family worship. Give honour to God as the founder of families by his ordinance, because "it was not good for man to be alone;" as the founder of your families by his providence, for he it is that "buildeth the house, and setteth the solitary in families." Give honour to him as the owner and ruler of families; acknowledge that you and yours are his, under his government, and at his disposal, as the sheep of his pasture. Especially adore him as the God of all the families of Israel, in covenant-relation to them, and having a particular concern for them above others, Jer. xxxi. 1. Give honour to the great Redeemer, as the head of all the churches, even those in your houses; call him the master of the family, and the great upholder and benefactor of it; for he it is "in whom all the families of the earth are blessed," Gen. xii. 3. All family blessings are owing to Christ, and come to us through his hand and his blood. Own your dependence upon God, and your obligations to Christ, for all good things pertaining both to life and godliness, and make conscience of paying homage to your chief Lord, and never set up a title to any of your enjoyments in competition to his.

2. You ought to make family confessions of your sins against God; those sins you have contracted the guilt of in your family capacity. We read in scripture of the iniquity of the house, as of Eli's, 1 Sam. iii. 13, 14. Iniquity visited upon the children; sins that bring wrath upon families, and a curse that "enters into the house, to consume it with the timber thereof, and the stones thereof, Zech. v. 4. How sad is the condition of those families that sin together, and never pray together; that by concurring in frauds quarrels, and excesses, by strengthening one another's hands in impiety and profaneness, fill the measure of family guilt, and never agree together to do any thing to empty it!

And even religious families that are not polluted with gross and scandalous sins, yet have need to join every day in the solemn acts and expressions of repentance before God for their sins of daily infirmity. Their vain words and unprofitable converse among themselves; their manifold defects in relative duties, provoking one another's lusts and passions, instead of provoking one another to love and to

good works. These ought to be confessed and bewailed by the family together, that God may be glorified, and what has been amis may be amended for the future. It was not only in a time of great and extraordinary repentance that families mourned apart, Zech. xii. 11. but in the stated returns of the day of expiation the priest was particularly to "make atonement for his household," Lev. xvi. 17. In many things we all offend God, and one another, and a penitent confession of it in prayer together, will be the most effectual way of reconciling ourselves both to God, and to one another. The best families, and those in which piety and love prevail most, yet in many things come short, and do enough every day to bring them upon their knees at night.

3. You ought to offer up family thanksgivings for the blessings which you, with your families, receive from God. Many are the mercies which you enjoy the sweetness and benefit of in common; which, if wanting to one, all the family would be sensible of it. Hath not God "made a hedge of protection about you and your houses, and all that you have?" Job i. 10. Hath he not created a defence upon every dwelling place of Mount Zion, as well as upon her assemblies? Isa. iv. 5. The dreadful alarms of a storm, and the desolations made as by a fire once in an age, should make us sensible of our obligations to the divine providence, for our preservation from tempests and fire every day, and every night. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, and buried in the ruins of our houses. When the whole family comes together safe in the morning, from their respective retirements, and when they return safe at night, from their respective employments, there having been no disaster, no adversary, no evil occurrent, it is so reasonable, and (as I may say) so natural for them to join together in solemn thanksgivings to their greater Protector, that I wonder how any that believe a God, and a providence, can omit it. Have you not health in your family, sickness kept or taken from the midst of you? Doth not God bring plentifully into your hands, and increase your substance? Have you not your table spread, and your cup running over, and manna rained about your tents? And doth not the whole family share in the comfort of all this? Shall not then the voice of thanksgiving be in

those tabernacles, where the voice of rejoicing is ? Psal. cxviii. 15. Is the vine by the house side fruitful and flourishing, and the olive plants round the table green and growing ? Are family relations comfortable and agreeable, not broken, nor imbibited ? And shall not that God be acknowledged herein, who makes every creature to be that to us that it is ? Shall not the God of your mercies, your family mercies, be the God of your praises, your family praises, and that daily ?

The benefit and honour of your being Christian families, your having in God's house, and within his walls, a place, and a name, better than that of sons and daughters, and the salvation this brings to your house, furnisheth you with abundant matter for joint thanksgivings. You hath he known above all the families of the earth, and therefore he expects, in a special manner, to be owned by you. Of all houses, the house of Israel, the house of Aaron, and the house of Levi, have most reason to bless the Lord, and to say, that his mercy endureth for ever.

4. You ought to present your family petitions for the mercy and grace which your families stand in need of. Daily bread is received by families together, and we are taught not only to pray for it every day, but to pray together for it, saying, Our Father, give it us. There are affairs and employments which the family is jointly concerned in the success of, and therefore should jointly ask of God wisdom for the management of them, and prosperity therein. There are family cares to be cast upon God by prayer, family comforts to be sought for, and family crosses which they should together beg for the sanctification and removal of. Hereby your children will be more effectually possessed with a belief of, and regard to, the divine providence, than by all the instructions you can give them, which will look best in their eye, when thus reduced to practice by your daily acknowledging God in all your ways.

You desire that God will give wisdom and grace to your children, you travail in birth again till you see Christ formed in them, you pray for them ; it is well, but it is not enough ; you must pray with them ; let them hear you pray to God for a blessing upon the good instructions and counsels you give them ; it may perhaps put them upon praying for themselves, and increase their esteem both of you, and

of the good lessons you teach them. You would have your servants diligent and faithful, and this perhaps would help to make them so. Masters do not give to their servants that which is just and equal, if they do not continue in prayer with them.

There are some temptations which families, as such, lie open to: busy families are in temptation to worldliness, and neglect of religious duties; mixed families are in temptation to discord, and mutual jealousies; decaying families are in temptation to distrust, discontent, and indirect courses, to help themselves; they should therefore not only watch but pray together, that they be not overcome by the temptations they are exposed to.

There are family blessings which God hath promised, and for which he will be sought unto, such as those on the house of Obed-Edem for the Ark's sake; "or the mercy which Paul begs for the house of Onesiphorus," 2 Tim. i. 16. These joint blessings must be sued out by joint prayers. There is a special blessing which God commands upon families that dwell together in unity, Psal. cxxxiii. 1, 3. which they must seek for by prayer, and come together to seek for it, in token of that unity which qualifies for it. Where God commands the blessing, we must beg the Blessing. God by promise blesseth David's house, and therefore David by prayer blesseth it too, 2 Sam. vi. 20.

5. You ought to make family intercessions for others also. There are families you stand related to, or which by neighbourhood, friendship or acquaintance, you become interested in, and concerned for, and these you should recommend in your prayers to the grace of God, and your family, that are joined with you in the alliances, should join with you in those prayers. Evil tidings perhaps are received from relations at a distance, which are the grief of the family; God must then be sought unto by the family for succour and deliverance. Some of the branches of the family are perhaps in distant countries, and in dangerous circumstances, and you are solicitous about them; it will be a comfort to yourselves, and perhaps will be of advantage to them, to make mention of them daily in your family prayers. The benefit of prayer, will reach far, because he that hears prayer can extend his Hand of power and

mercy to the utmost corners of the earth, and to them that are afar off upon the sea.

In the public peace likewise, we and our families have peace; and therefore, if we forget thee, O Jerusalem, we are unworthy ever to stand in thy courts, or dwell within thy walls. Our families should be witnesses for us, that we pray daily for the land of our nativity, and the prosperity of all its interests; that praying every where, we make supplication for the King, and all in authority, 1 Tim. ii. 2, 8. That we bear upon our hearts the concerns of God's church abroad, especially the suffering parts of it. Thus keeping up a spiritual communion with all the families that in every place call on the name of the Lord Jesus.

In a word, Let us go by this rule in our family devotions; whatever is the matter of our care, let it be the matter of our prayer: and let us allow no care which we cannot in faith spread before God: and whatever is the matter of our rejoicing, let it be the matter of our thanksgiving; and let us withhold our hearts from all those joys, which do not dispose us for the duty of praise.

Under this head of family worship, I must not omit to recommend to you the singing of psalms in your families, as a part of daily worship, especially Sabbath worship. This is a part of religious worship, which participates both of the word and prayer; for therein we are not only to give glory to God, but to teach and admonish one another; it is therefore very proper to make it a transition, from the one to the other. It will warm and quicken you, refresh and comfort you, and perhaps, if you have little children in your houses, they will sooner take notice of it, than of any other part of your family devotion; and some good impressions may thereby be fastened upon them insensibly.

Thirdly, Keep up family discipline, that so you have a complete church in your house, though in little. Reason teacheth us, "that every man should bear rule in his own house," Esther i. 22. And since that, as well as other power, is of God, it ought to be employed for God; and they that so rule, must be just, ruling in his fear. Joshua looked further than the acts of religious worship, when he made that pious resolution, "as for me and my house, we

"will serve the Lord," Joshua xxiv. 15. For we do not serve him in sincerity and truth (which is the service he there speaks of, verie. 14.) if we and ours serve him only on our knees, and do not take care to serve him in all the instances of a religious conversation. Those only that have clean hands and a pure heart, are accounted "the generation of them that seek God," Psal. xxiv. 4, 6. And without this, those that pretend to seek God daily, do but mock him, Isa. lviii. 2.

The authority God hath given you over your children and servants, is principally designed for this end, that you may thereby engage them for God and godliness. If you use it only to oblige them to do your will, and so to serve your pride, and to do your business, and so to serve your worldliness, you do not answer the great end of your being invested with it: You must use it for God's honour, by it to engage them as far as you can, to do the will of God, and mind the business of religion. Holy David not only blessed his household, but took care to keep good order in it; as appears by that plan of his family discipline, which we have in the ci. psalm. A psalm which Mr. Fox tells us, that blessed martyr bishop Ridley often read to his family, as the rule by which he resolved to govern it.

You are made keeper of the vineyard; be faithful to your trust, and carefully watch over these that are under your charge, knowing you must give account.

1. Countenance every thing that is good and praiseworthy in your children and servants. It is as much your duty to commend and encourage those in your family that do well, as to reprove and admonish those that do amiss; and if you take delight only in blaming that which is culpable, and are backward to praise that which is laudable, you give occasion to suspect something of an ill nature not becoming a good man, much less a good Christian. It should be a trouble to us, when we have a reproof to give, but a pleasure to us to say with the apostle, 1 Cor. ii. 2. Now I praise you.

Most people will be easier led than driven, and we all love to be spoken fair: When you see any thing that is hopeful and promising in your inferiors, any thing of a towardly and tractable disposition, much more any thing of a pious affection to the things of God, you should therefore contrive to

encourage it. Smile upon them when you see them set their faces heavenwards, and take the first opportunity to let them know you observe it, and are well pleased with it, and do not despise the day of small things. This will quicken them to continue and abound in that which is good, it will hearten them against the difficulties they see in their way, and perhaps may turn the wavering, trembling scale the right way, and effectually determine their resolutions to cleave to the Lord. When you see them forward to come to family worship, attentive to the word, devout in prayer, industrious to get knowledge, afraid of sin, and careful to do their duty, let them have the praise of it ; for you have the comfort of it, and God must have all the glory. Draw them with the cords of a man, hold them with the bands of love, so shall your rebukes, when they are necessary, be more acceptable and effectual. The great Shepherd gathers the lambs in his arms, and carries them in his bosom, and gently leads them, and so should you.

2. Discountenance every thing that is evil in your children and servants. Use your authority for the preventing of sin, and the suppressing of every root of bitterness, lest it spring up, and trouble you, and thereby many be defiled. Frown upon every thing that brings sin into your families, and introduceth any ill words, or ill practices. Pride and passion, strife and contention, idleness and intemperance, lying and slandering, these are sins which you must not connive at, nor suffer to go without a rebuke. If you return to the Almighty, this among other things is required of you, that you put away iniquity, all iniquity, these and other the like iniquities, far from your tabernacles, Job xxii. 23. Make it to appear, that, in the government of your families, you are more jealous for God's honour, than for your own authority and interest ; and shew yourselves more displeased at that which is an offence to God, than at that which is only an affront or damage to yourselves.

You must indeed be careful not to provoke your children to wrath, lest they be discouraged; and, as to your servants, it is your duty to forbear or moderate threatening ; yet you must also, with holy zeal and resolution, and the meekness of wisdom, keep good order in your families, and set no wicked thing before your eyes, but witness against it. A little leaven leaventh the whole lump. Be afraid of hav-

ing wicked servants in your houses, lest your children learn their way, and get a satire to their souls. Drive away with an angry countenance all that evil communication which corrupts good manners, that your houses may be habitations of righteousness, and sin may never find shelter in them.

I come now, secondly, to offer some motives to persuade you thus to turn your families into little churches. And O that I could find out acceptable words, with which to reason with you so as to prevail ! “ Suffer me a little, and I will shew you what is to be said on God’s behalf,” which is worth your consideration.

First, If your families be little churches, “ God will come to you, and dwell with you in them ;” for he hath said concerning the church, “ This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell.” It is a very desirable thing to have the gracious presence of God with us in our families, that presence which is promised, where “ two or three are gathered together in his name.” This was it that David was so desirous of, Psal. ci. 2. “ O when wilt thou come unto me ? ” His palace, his court, would be as a prison, as a dungeon, to him, if God did not come to him, and dwell with him in it ; and cannot your hearts witness to this desire ? You that have houses of your own, would you not have God to come to you and dwell with you in them ? Invite him then, beg his presence, court his stay. Nay, he invites himself to your houses, by the offers of his favour and grace ; “ Behold he stands at your door and knocks : ” It is the voice of your beloved, open to him, and bid him welcome : meet him with your hosannas ; blessed is he who cometh. He cometh peaceably, he brings a blessing with him, a blessing which he will cause to rest upon the habitations of the righteous, Ezek. xliv. 30. He will command a blessing which shall amount to no less than life for evermore, Psal. xxxiii. 3. This presence and blessing of God will make your relations comfortable, your affairs successful, your enjoyments sweet, and behold by it all things are made clean to you. This will make your family comforts double comforts ; and your family crosses but half crosses ; it will turn a tent into a temple, a cottage into a palace. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, are the houses in which God dwells.

Now the way to have God’s presence in your houses with you is, to furnish them for his entertainment. Thus the

good Shunammite invited the prophet Elisha to the chamber she had prepared for him, by accommodating him there with "a bed and a table, a stool and a candlestick," 2 Kings iv. 10. Would you furnish your houses for the presence of God, it is not expected that you furnish them as his tabernacle was of old furnished, with blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen; but set up and keep up for him a throne and an altar, that from the altar you and yours may give glory to him, and from the throne he may give law to you and yours; and then you may be sure of his presence and blessing, and may solace yourselves from day to day in the comfort of it. God will be with you in a way of mercy, while you are with him in a way of duty: If you seek him he will be found of you: The secret of God shall be in your tabernacle, as it was on Job's, chap xxix. 4. as it is with the righteous, Psal. xxv. 14. Prov. iii. 32, 33.

Secondly. If you make your houses little churches, God will make them little sanctuaries; nay, he will himself be to you as a little sanctuary, Ezek xi. 16. The way to be safe in your house is, to keep up religion and the fear of God in your houses; so shall you dwell on high, and the "place of your defence shall be the munition of rocks," Isa. xxxiii. 16. The law looks upon a man's house as his castle, religion makes it truly so. If God's grace be the glory in the midst of the house, his providence will make a wall of fire round about it, Zech. ii. 5. Satan found it to his confusion, that God made a hedge about pious Job, about his house, and about all that he had on every side, so that he could not find one gap by which to break in upon him, Job i. 10. Every dwelling place of Mount Sion shall be protected, as the tabernacle was in the wilderness; for God hath promised, to "create upon it a cloud and smoke by "day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night, which "shall be a defence upon all the glory," Isa. iv. 5. If we thus "dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of our "life," by making our houses his houses, we shall be "hid "in his pavilion, in the secret of his tabernacle shall he "hide us," Psal. xxvii. 4, 5.

Wherever we encamp, under the banner of Christ, the angels of God will encamp round about us, and pitch their tents, where we pitch ours; and we little think how much we owe it to the ministration of the good angels, that we

and ours are preserved from the malice of evil angels, who are continually seeking to do mischief to good people. There are terrors that fly by night and by day, which they only that abide under the shadow of the Almighty can promise themselves to be safe from, Psal. xci. 1, 5. Would you insure your houses by the best policy of insurance, turn them into churches, and then they shall be taken under the special protection of him that keeps Israel, and neither slumbers nor sleeps ; and, if any damage come to them, it shall be made up in grace and glory. The way of duty is without doubt the way of safety.

Praying families are kept from more mischiefs than they themselves are aware of. They are not always sensible of the distinction which a kind providence makes between them and others ; though God is pleased sometimes to make it remarkable, as in the story which is credibly related of a certain village in the canton of Bern in Switzerland, consisting of ninety houses, which in the year 1584, was all destroyed by an earthquake, except one house, in which the good-man and his family were at that time together praying. That promise is sure to all the seed of faithful Abraham, Fear not, I am thy shield, Gen. xv. 1. wisdom herself hath past her word for it, Prov. i. 33. Who so hearkeneth to me, wherever he dwells safely, and shall be quite from all real evil itself, and from the amazing tormenting fear of evil. Nothing can hurt, nothing needs frighten, those whom God protects.

Thirdly, If you have not a church in your house, it is to be feared Satan will have a seat there. If religion do not rule in your families, sin and wickedness will rule there. I know where thou dwellest, (saith Christ to the angel of the church of Pergamos, Rev ii. 13.) even where Satan's seat is ; that was his affliction ; but there are many whose sin it is ; by their irreligion and immorality they allow Satan a seat in the houses, and that seat a throne. They are very willing that the strong man armed should keep his palace there, and that his goods should be at peace ; and the surest way to prevent this is by setting up a church in the house. It is commonly said, That where God hath a church, the devil will have his chapel ; but it may more truly be said in this case, Where God hath not a church, the devil will have his chapel. If the unclean spirit find

the house in this sense empty empty of good, though it be swept and garnished, he taketh to himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there.

Terrible stories have been told of houses haunted by the devil, and of the fear people have had of dwelling in such houses; verily those houses in which rioting and drunkenness reign, in which swearing and cursing are the language of the house, or in which the more spiritual wickedness of pride, malice, covetousness and deceit, have the ascendant, may truly be said to be haunted by the devil, and they are most uncomfortable houses for any man to live in : They are holds of foul spirits, and cages of unclean and hateful birds, even as Babylon the great will be when it is fallen, Rev xviii 2.

Now the way to keep sin out of the house is, to keep up religion in the house, which will be the most effectual antidote against Satan's poison. When Abraham thought concerning Abimelech's house, Surely the fear of God is not in this place, he concluded no less, but they will slay me for my wife's sake," Gen. xx. 11. Where no fear of God is, no reading, no praying, no devotion, what can one expect but all that is bad ? Where there is impiety, there will be immorality ; they that restrain prayer, cast of fear, Job, xv. 4. But, if religious worship have its place in the house, it may be hoped that vice will not have a place there. There is much of truth in that saying of good Mr. Dod, " Either " praying will make a man give over sinning, or sinning " will make a man give over praying " There remains some hope concerning those who are otherwise bad, as long as they keep up prayer. Though there be a struggle between Christ and Belial in your houses and the insults of sin and Satan are daring and threatening, yet as long as religion keeps the field, and the weapons of its warfare are made use of, we may hope the enemy will lose ground.

Fourthly, A church in the house will make it very comfortable to yourselves. Nothing more agreeable to a gracious soul, than constant communion with a gracious God ; it is the one thing it desires, to dwell in the house of the Lord ; here it is as in its element, it is its rest for ever. If therefore our houses be houses of the Lord, we shall for that reason love home, reckoning our daily devotions, the sweetest of our daily delights ; and our family-worship, the most valuable of our family comforts. This will sanc-

tify to us all the conveniences of our house, and reconcile us to the inconveniences of it. What are Solomon's gardens and orchards, and pools of water, and other the delights of the sons of men, Eccles. ii. 5, 6, 8. in comparison with these delights of the children of God?

Family religion will help to make our family relations comfortable to us, by promoting love, preventing quarrels, and extinguishing heats that may at any time happen. A family living in the fear of God, and joining daily in religious worship, truly enjoys itself; "Behold how good, and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren thus to dwell together;" it is not only like ointment and perfume which rejoice the heart, but like the holy ointment, the holy perfume, wherewith Aaron, the saint of the Lord, was consecrated: Not only like the common dew to the grafts, but like the dew which descendeth upon the mountains of Sion, the holy mountains, Psal. cxxxiii. 1, 2. The communion of saints in that which is the work of saints, is without doubt the most pleasant communion here on earth, and the liveliest representation, and surest pledge of those everlasting joys, which are the happiness of the spirits of just men made perfect, and the hopes of holy souls in this imperfect state.

Family religion will make the affairs of the family successful; and though they may not in every thing issue to our mind, yet we may by faith foresee that they will at last issue to our good. If this beauty of the Lord our God be upon us and our families, it will prosper the work of our hands unto us, yea the work of our hands it will establish; or however it will establish our hearts in that comfort which makes every thing that occurs easy, Psal. xc. 17. cxii. 8.

We cannot suppose our mountain to stand so strong, but that it will be moved; trouble in the flesh we must expect, and affliction in that from which we promise ourselves most comfort; and when the divine providence makes our houses houses of mourning, then it will be comfortable to have them houses of prayer, and to have had them so before. When sickness, and sorrow, and death come into our families, and sooner or later they will come, it is good that they should find the wheels of prayer agoing, and the family accustomed to seek God; for, if we are then to begin this good work when distress forceth us to it, we shall drive heavily in it. They that pray constantly when they are well, may pray comfortably when they are sick.

Fifthly, A church in the house will be a good legacy ; nay, it will be a good inheritance to be left to your children after you. Reason directs us to consult the welfare of posterity, and to lay up in store a good foundation for those that shall come after us to build upon ; and we cannot do this better, than by keeping up religion in our houses. A family altar will be the best entail ; your children shall for this, rise up and call you blessed ; and it may be hoped, they will be praising God for you, and praising God like you, here on earth, when you are praising him in heaven.

You will hereby leave your children the benefit of many prayers put up to heaven for them, which will be kept, as it were, upon the file there, to be answered to their comfort when you are silent in the dust. It is true of prayer, what we say of winter, “It never rots in the skies.” The seed of Jacob know they do not seek in vain, though perhaps they live not to see their prayers answered. Some good Christians, that have made conscience of praying daily with and for their children, have been encouraged to hope that the children of so many prayers should not miscarry at last ; and thus encouraged, Joseph’s dying words have been the language of many a dying Christian’s faith, “I die, but God will surely visit you,” Gen. l. 24. I have heard of a hopeful son, who said, “He valued his interest in his pious father’s prayers, far more than his interest in his estate, “though a considerable one.”

You will likewise hereby leave your children a good example, which you may hope they will follow when they come into houses of their own. The usage and practice of families is commonly transmitted from one generation to another ; bad customs are many times thus entailed : They who “burnt incense to the queen of heaven, learned it of their fathers,” Jer. xliv. 17. And a “vain conversation was thus received by tradition,” 1 Pet. i. 18. And why may not good customs be in like manner handed down to posterity ? Thus we should make known the ways of God to our children, that they may “arise and declare them to their children,” Psal. lxxviii. 6. and religion may become an heirloom in our families ; let your children be able to say, when they are tempted to sit loose to religion, “that it was the way of their family, the good old way in which their fathers walked, and in which they themselves were edu-

"cated and trained up :" And with this they may answer him that reproacheth them. Let family worship, besides all its other pleas for itself, be able in your houses to plead prescription. And though to the acceptableness of the service requisite, that it be done from a higher and better principle, than purely to keep up the custom of family, yet better so than not at all: And the form of godliness may, by the grace of God, at length prove the happy Vehicle of its power ; and dry bones, while unburied, may be made to live. Thus a good man leaves an inheritance to his children; and the generation of the upright shall be blessed.

Sixtly, A church in the house will contribute very much to the prosperity of the church of God in the nation. Family religion, if that prevail, will put a face of religion upon the land, and very much advance the beauty and peace of our English Jerusalem. This is that, which I hope we are all hearty well-wishers to; setting aside the consideration of parties and separate interests, and burying all names of distinction in the grave of Christian charity, we earnestly desire to see true catholic Christianity, and serious godliness, in the power of it, prevailing and flourishing in our land ; to see knowledge filling the land, as the waters cover the sea ; to see holiness and love giving law, and triumphing over sin and strife ; we would see cause to call your city a city of righteousness, a faithful city, its walls salvation, and its gates praise. Now all this would be effected, if family-religion were generally set up and kept up.

When the wall was to be built about Jerusalem, it was presently done by this expedient, every one undertook to repair over against his own house. See Neh. iii. 10, &c. And, if ever the decayed walls of the gospel Jerusalem be built up, it must be by the same method. Every one must sweep before his own door, and then the street will be clean. If there were a church in every house, there would be such a church in our land, as would make it a praise throughout the whole earth. We cannot better serve our country, than by keeping up religion in our families.

Let families be well catechised, and then the public preaching of the word will be the more profitable, and the more successful. For want of this, when we speak never so plainly of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, to the most we do but speak parables. The book of the

Lord is delivered to them that are not catechised, saying, Read this, and they say, We are not learned; learned enough in other things, but not in the one thing needful, Isa. xxix. 12. But our work is easy with those that from their childhood have known the holy scriptures.

If every family were a praying family, public prayers would be the better joined with, more intelligently, and more affectionately; for the more we are used to prayer, the more expert we shall be in that holy and divine art of entering into the holiest on that day. And public reproofs and admonitions would be as a nail in a fure place, if masters of families would second them with their family discipline, and so clench those nails.

Religious families are blessings to the neighbourhood they live in, at least by their prayers. A good man thus becomes a public good, and it is his ambition to be so. Though he see his childrens children, he has small joy of that, if he do not see peace upon Israel, Psal. cxxviii. 5, 6. And therefore postponing all his own interests and satisfactions, he sets himself to seek the good of Jerusalem all the days of his life. Happy were we, if we had many such. That which now remains is, to address myself to you upon the whole matter by way of exhortation; and I pray you, let my counsel be acceptable to you; and while I endeavour to give every one his portion, let your consciences assist me herein, and take to yourselves that which belongs to you.

First, Let those masters of families who have hitherto lived in the neglect of family religion, be persuaded now to set it up and from henceforward to make conscience of it. I know, it is hard to persuade people to begin even a good work that they have not been used to; yet if God by his grace set in with this word, who can tell but some may be wrought upon to comply with the design of it? We have no ill design in urging you to this part of your duty: We aim not at the advantage of a party, but purely at the prosperity of your families. We are sure we have reason on our side, and, if you will but suffer that to rule you, we shall gain our point, and you will all go home firmly resolved, as Joshua was, that whatever others do themselves, and whatever they say of you, you and your houses will serve the Lord. God put it into, and keep it in the imagination of the thought of your heart, and establish your way therein before him.

Proceed in the right method; First, Set up Christ upon the throne in your hearts, and then set up a church for Christ in your house. Let Christ dwell in your hearts by faith, and then let him dwell in your houses; you do not begin at the right end of your work, if you do not first give your own selves unto the Lord; God had respect first to Abel, and then to his offering. Let the fear and love of God rule in your hearts, and have a commanding sway and empire there, and then set up an altar for God in your tents; for you cannot do that acceptably, till you have first consecrated yourselves as spiritual priests to God, to serve at that altar.

And when your hearts, like Lydia's, are opened to Christ, let your houses, like hers, be opened to him too, Acts xvi. 14, 15. Let there be churches in all your houses; let those that have the stateliest, richest, and best furnished houses, reckon a church in them to be their best ornament. Let those that have houses of the greatest care and business, reckon family religion their best employment, and not neglect the one thing needful, while they are careful and cumbered about many things: Nor let those who have close and mean habitations be discouraged; the ark of God long dwelt in curtains. Your dwelling is not so strait but you may find room for a church in it. Church-work uses to be chargeable, but you may do this church-work cheap: You need not make silver shrines as they did for Diana, nor lavish gold out of the bag, as idolaters did in the service of their dunghill gods, (Isa. xlvi. 6.) No, an ‘altar of earth “shall you make to your God,” Exod. xx. 24 and he will accept it. Church work uses to be slow work, but you may do this quickly. Put on resolution, and you may set up this tabernacle to-night, before to-morrow.

Would you keep up your authority in your family? you cannot do it better than by keeping up religion in your family. If ever the master of a family looks great, truly great, it is when he is going before his house in the service of God, and presiding among them in holy things. Then he shews himself worthy of double honour, when he teacheth them the good knowledge of the Lord, and is their mouth to God in prayer, blessing them in the name of God.

Would you have your family relations comfortable, your affairs successful, and give an evidence of your professed

subjection to the gospel of Christ ? Would you live in God's fear, and die in his favour, and escape that curse which is entailed on prayerless families ? Let religion, in the power of it, have its due place ; that is, the uppermost place in your houses.

Many objections your own corrupt hearts will make against building these churches, but they will appear frivolous and trifling to a pious mind, that is steadfastly resolved for God and godliness ; you will never go on in your way to heaven, if you will be frightened by lions in the street. Whatever is the difficulty you dread, the discouragement you apprehend in it, I am confident it is not insuperable, it is not unanswerable. But he that observes the wind, shall not sow ; and he that regards the clouds, shall not reap.

Be not loth to begin a new custom, if it be a good custom, especially if it be a duty, as certainly this is, which while you continue in the neglect of, you live in sin ; for omissions are sins and must come into judgement. It may be you have been convinced that you ought to worship God in your families, and that it is a good thing to do so ; but you have put it off to some more convenient season. Will you now at last take occasion from this sermon to begin it ? and do not defer so good a work any longer. The present season is without doubt the most convenient season : Begin this day ; let this be the day of your laying the foundation of the Lord's temple in your house ; and then consider from this day and upward, as God by the prophet reasons with the people who neglected to build the temple, Hag. ii. 18, 19. take notice whether God do not from this day remarkably blefs you, in all that you have and do.

Plead not your own weakness and inability to perform family worship ; make use of the helps that are provided for you : Do as well as you can, when you cannot do so well as you would, and God will accept of you. You will write what is necessary for the carrying on of your trade, though you cannot write so fine a hand as some others can ; and will you not be as wise in the work of your Christian calling, to do your best, though it be far short of the best, rather than not do it at all ? To him that hath but one talent, and trades with that, more shall be given ; but from him that buries it, it shall be taken away. Be at some pains to make the scriptures familiar to you, especially David's psalms ; and then

you cannot be to seek for a variety of apt expressions, proper to be used in prayer, for they will be always at your right hand. Take with you those words, words which the Holy Ghost teaches; for you cannot find more acceptable words.

And now, shall I prevail with you in this matter? I am loth to leave you unresolved, or but almost persuaded; I beg of you, for God's sake, for Christ's sake, for your own precious souls' sake, and for the childrens sake of your own bodies, that you will live no longer in the neglect of so great, and necessary, and comfortable a duty as this of family worship is. When we press upon you the more inward duties of faith and love, and the fear of God, it cannot be so evident that we succeed in our errand; as it may be in this. It is certain you get not good by this sermon, but it is wholly lost upon you, if, after you have heard it or read it, you continue in the neglect of family religion, and if still you cast off fear and restrain prayer before God. Your families will be witnesses against you, that it was not for want of being called to do it, but for want of a heart to do it when you were called. But I hope better things of you, my brethren, and things that accompany salvation, though I thus speak.

Secondly, Let those who have kept up family worship formerly, but of late have left it off, be persuaded to revive it. This perhaps is the case of some of you; you remember the kindness of your youth, and the love of your espousals: Time was when you sought God daily, and delighted to know his ways, as families that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinances of your God; but now it is otherwise. The altar of the Lord is broken down and neglected; the daily sacrifice is ceased; and God hath kept an account how many days it has ceased, whether you have or no, Dan. viii. 13, 14. Now God comes into our houses seeking fruit, but he finds none, or next to none; you are so eager in your worldly pursuits, that you have neither hearts nor time for religious exercises. You began at first frequently to omit the service, and a small matter, served for an excuse to put it by, and so by degrees it came to nothing.

O that those who have thus left their first love, would now remember whence they are fallen, and repent, and do their first works! Inquire how this good work came to be neglected; was it not because your love to God cooled, and

the love of the world prevailed? Have not you found a manifest decay in the prosperity of your souls, since you let fall this good work? Hath not sin got ground in your hearts and in your houses? And though, when you dropt your family worship, you promised yourselves that you would make it up in secret worship, because you were not willing to allow yourselves time for both; yet, have you not declined in that also? Are you not grown less frequent, and less fervent in your closet devotions too? Where is now the blessedness you have formerly spoken of? I beseech you lay out yourselves to retrieve it in time: Say, as that penitent adulteress, Hos. ii. 7. "I will go and return to my first husband, for then it was better with me than now." Cleanse the sanctuary, put away the strange gods: Is money the god, or thy belly the god that has gained possession of thy heart and house? whatever it is, cast it out. Repair the altar of the Lord, and begin again the daily sacrifice and oblation. Light the lamps again, and burn the incense. Rear up the tabernacle of David which is fallen down, lengthen its cords, and strengthen its stakes; and resolve it shall never be neglected again as it has been. Perhaps you and your families have been manifestly under the rebukes of providence since you left off your duty, as Jacob was while he neglected to pay his vow: I beseech you at length to hear the voice of the rod, and of him that hath appointed it; for it minds you of your forgotten vows, saying, "Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there," Gen. xxxv. 1. Let the place thou dwellest in ever be a Bethel, so shall God dwell with thee there.

Thirdly, Let those that are remiss and negligent in their family worship, be awakened to more zeal and constancy. Some of you perhaps have a church in your house, but it is not a flourishing church; it is like the church of Laodicea, neither cold nor hot; or like the church of Sardis, in which the things that remain are ready to die: So that it hath little more than a name to live. Something of this work of the Lord is done for fashion-sake, but it is done deceitfully: You have in your flock a male, but you vow and sacrifice to the Lord a corrupt thing: You grow customary in your accustomed services, and bring the torn and the blind, the lame and the sick for sacrifice: And you offer that to your God, which you would scorn to offer to your governor: And though it is but little you do for the church

in your house, you think that it too much, and say, "Behold, "what a weariness is it!" You put it off with a small and inconsiderable scantling of your day, and that with the dregs and refuse of it. You can spare no time at all for it in the morning, nor any in the evening till you are half asleep It is thrust into a corner, and almost lost in a crowd of worldly business, and carnal converse. When it is done, it is done so slightly, in so much haste, and with so little reverence, that it makes no impression upon yourselves or your families The bible lies ready, but you have no time to read: your servants are otherwise employed, and you think it is no matter for calling them in : You yourselves can take up with a word or two of prayer, or rest in a lifeless, heartless tale of words Thus it is every day, and perhaps little better on the Lord's days; no repetition, no catechising, no singing of psalms, or none to any purpose.

Is it thus with any of your families? Is this the present state of the church in your house? My brethren, these things ought not to be so. It is not enough that you do that which is good, but you must do it well God and religion have, in effect, no place in your hearts or houses, if they have not the innermost and uppermost place. Christ will come no whither to be an underling ; he is not a guest to be set behind the door. What comfort, what benefit can you promise to yourselves from such trifling services as these; from an empty form of godliness, without the power of it?

I beseech you, sirs, make a business of your family religion, and not a by business. Let it be your pleasure and delight, and not a task and drudgery. Contrive your affairs so, as that the most convenient time may be allotted both morning and evening for your family worship, so as that you may not be unfit for it, or disturbed and straitened in it ; herein wisdom is profitable to direct. Address yourselves to it with reverence and seriousness, and a solemn pause, that those who join with you may see and say, That God is with you of a truth, and may be struck thereby into a like holy awe. You need not be long in the service, but you ought to be lively in it ; not slothful in this business, because it is business for God and your souls, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.

Fourthly, Let those who have a church in their house, be

very careful to adorn and beautify it in their conversation. If you pray in your families, and read the scriptures, and sing psalms, and yet are passionate and froward with your relations, quarrelsome and contentious with your neighbours, unjust and deceitful in your dealings, intemperate and given to tippling, or allow yourselves in any other sinful way, you pull down with one hand, what you build up with the other. Your prayers will be an abomination to God, and to good men too, if they be thus polluted. Be not deceived. God is not mocked.

See that you be universal in your religion, that it may appear you are sincere in it. Shew that you believe a reality in it, by acting always under the commanding power and influence of it. Be not Christians upon your knees, and Jews in your shops. While you seem saints in your devotions, prove not yourselves sinners in your conversations. Having begun the day in the fear of God, be in that fear all the day long. Let the example you set your families be throughout good ; and by it teach them not only to read and pray, for that is but half their work, but by it teach them to be meek and humble, sober and temperate, loving and peaceable, just and honest : So shall you adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour ; and those that will not be won by the word, shall be won by your conversation. Your family-worship is an honour to you ; see to it, that neither you nor yours be in any thing a disgrace to it.

Fifthly, “Let those that are setting out in the world, set up a church in their house at first, and not defer it.” Plead not youth and bashfulness ; if you have confidence enough to rule a family, I hope you have confidence enough to pray with a family. Say not, “the time is not come, the time that the Lord’s house should be built,” as they did that dwelt in their cieled houses, while God’s house lay waste, Hag. i. 2, 4. It ought to be built presently ; and the longer you put it off, the more difficulty there will be in the doing of it, and the more danger that it will never be done.

Now you are beginning the world as you call it, is it not your wisdom, as well as duty, to begin with God ? can you begin better ? or can you expect to prosper, if you do not begin thus ? The fuller your heads are of care about setting up house and shop, and settling in both, the more need you have of daily prayer, that by it you may cast your care on God, and fetch in wisdom and direction from on high.

Sixtly, “ In all your removes, be sure you take the church “ in your house along with you ” Abraham oft removed his tent ; but wherever he pitched it, there the first thing he did was to build an altar. It is observable concerning Aquila, and Priscilla, of whose pious family my text speaks, that when Paul wrote his epistle to the Romans, they were at Rome ; for he sends salutations to them thither, and there it is said they had a church in their house, Rom. xvi. 5. But now, when he wrote this epistle to the Corinthians, they were at Ephesus, for thence it should seem this epistle bore date, and here he sends salutations from them ; and at Ephesus also they had a church in their house. As wherever we go ourselves, we must take our religion with us ; so wherever we take our families, or part of them, we must take our family religion with us ; for in all places we need divine protection, and experience divine goodness. I will therefore that men pray every where.

When you are in your city houses, let not the busines of them crowd out your family religion ; nor let the diversions of your country houses indispose your minds to these serious exercizes. That care and that pleasure are unseasonable and inordinate, which leave you not both heart and time to attend the service of the church in your house.

Let me here be an advocate also for those families whose masters are often absent from them, for their health or pleasure, especially on the Lord’s day, or long absent upon busines : And let me beg these absent masters to consider with whom they leave those few sheep in the wilderness, 1 Sam. xvii. 28. and whether they do not leave them neglected and exposed. Perhaps there is not a just cause for your absence so much, nor can you give a good answer to that question, What dost thou here, Elijah ? But, if there be a just cause, you ought to take care that the church in your house be not neglected when you are abroad, but that the work be done when you are not at home to do it.

Seventhly, “ Let inferior relations help to promote religion in the families where they are.” If family worship be not kept up in the houses where you live, let so much the more be done in your closets for God and your souls : If it be, yet think not that will excuse you from secret worship : All is little enough to keep up the life of religion in your hearts, and help you forwards towards heaven.

Let the children of praying parents, and the servants of

praying masters, account it a great privilege to live in houses that have churches in them, and be careful to improve that privilege. Be you also ready to every good work ; make the religious exercises of your family easy and pleasant to those that perform them, by shewing yourselves forward to attend on them, and careful to attend to them ; for your backwardness and mindlessness will be their greatest discouragement. Let your lives also be a credit to good education, and make it appear to all with whom you converse, that you are every way the better for living in religious families.

Eighthly, “ Let solitary people, that are not set in families, “ have churches in their chambers, churches in their “ closets.” When every man repaired the wall of Jerusalem over against his own house, we read of one that repaired over against his chamber, Neh. iii. 10. These that live alone out of the way of family worship, ought to take so much the more time for their secret worship ; and, if possible, add the more solemnity to it. You have not families to read the scriptures to ; read them so much the more to yourselves. You have not children and servants to catechise, nor parents or masters to be catechised by ; catechise yourselves then, that you may hold fast the form of sound words, which you have received. Exhort one another.—So we read it, Heb. iii. 13. *parakaleite eautous*—Exhort yourselves. So it might as well be read. You are not made keepers of the vineyards, and therefore the greater is your shame if your own vineyard you do not keep. When you are alone, yet you are not alone ; for the Father is with you, to observe what you do, and to own and accept you if you do well.

Ninthly, “ Let those that are to choose a settlement, consult the welfare of their souls in the choice.” If a church in the house be so necessary, so comfortable, then be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers, who will have no kindness for the church in the house, nor assist in the support of it, but, instead of “ building this house, pluck it down with their hands,” Prov. xiv. 1. Let apprenticeships and other services be chosen by this rule, That that is best for us, which is best for our souls ; and therefore it is our interest to go with those, and be with those, with whom God is. When Lot was to choose a habitation, he was determined therein purely by secular advantages, Gen. xiii. 11, 14. and God justly corrected his sensual choice ; for he never had a quiet day in the Sodom he chose, till he was fired out of it. The

Jewish writers tell of one of their devout Rabbins, who being courted to dwell in a place which was otherwise well accommodated, but had no synagogue near, he utterly refused to accept the invitation, and gave that text for his reason, Psal. cxix. 27. "The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver."

Tenthly, "Let religious families keep up friendship and fellowship with each other, and as they have opportunity assist one another in doing good." The communion of churches hath always been accounted their beauty, strength, and comfort; and so is the communion of these domestic churches. We find here, and in other of Paul's epistles, kind salutations sent to and from the houses that had churches in them. Religious families should greet one another, visit one another, love one another, pray for one another, and, as becomes households of faith, do all the good they can one to another, forasmuch as they all meet now daily at the same throne of grace, and hope to meet shortly at the same throne of glory; to be no more as they are now divided in Jacob, and scattered in Israel.

Lastly, Let those houses that have churches in them, flourishing churches, have comfort in them. Is religion, in the power of it, uppermost in your houses? and are you and yours serving the Lord, serving him daily? Go on and prosper, for the Lord is with you, while you are with him. See your houses under the protection and blessing of heaven, and be assured, that all things shall work together for good to you. Make it to appear by your holy cheerfulness, that you find God a good Master, wisdom's ways pleasantness, and her paths peace; and that you see no reason to envy those that spend their days in carnal mirth for you are acquainted with better pleasures than any they can pretend to.

Are your houses on earth God's houses? are they dedicated to him, and employed for him? Be of good comfort, his house in heaven shall be yours shortly: In my Father's house there are many mansions; and one you may be sure for each of you, that thus, by a patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality.

S U B S C R I B E R S N A M E S.

A

WILLIAM Aird mason,
Wigton
John Aiken, Kirkland
James Armstrong, Minnigaff
Andrew Adam tailor, Wood of
Cree
John Adam, Carbynows
James Affleck, Barbuchany, Pen-
ningham
Alex. Armour weaver, Kilmaurs
William Auld, Nethertonholm,
Kilmarnock
Robert Alexander merchant Gir-
van
James Alexander labourer, do.
Andrew Andrew, Stonykirk
parish
William Affleck blacksmith, Bar-
hill Colmonell
Walter Anderson in Dowes
John Anderson, Landbreck,
Mochrum
Robert Andrew wheat miller,
Creek, Sorbie
Quintin Andrew herd to the
Countess of Crawford
Robert Alexander dier, Air
Robert Allan shoemaker, Newton
upon Air
Robert Anderson overseer, New-
ton Coalwork, 18 copies
Hugh Andrew, Pack Mill, Tar-
bolton
Adam Anderson, parish of Air

B

THE rev. Mr. William
Boyd, Minister, Fenwick
The rev. Mr. John Blair minister,
Colmonell
John Black malster, Bladnoch
— Bruce merchant, Wigton

Hugh Baron
Jas. Black shoemaker, Glenturk
John Brown Craigincalie, Min-
nigaff
Samuel Brown, Craiginell, do.
William Burnet, Kilihabbel, Pen-
ningham
James Broadfoot wright, Causey-
end, do.
Alexander Brown
James Black, gardener
Thomas Bell, bricklayer
Hugh Bone labourer Barwharren
John Blair miller, Daily
David Blair, do. do.
— Braiden, coal cutter
Hamilton Baird, Dalquharan
coal work
John Bell
William Brown manufacturer,
Kilmarnock
Rob. Bowie, Kenning, Riccarton
James Boyd, Kamsehill, do.
— Brown labourer Kilmarnock
William Brown shoemaker, do.
John Bell dier, do.
John Blair junior, Girvan
Wal. Bell blacksmith, Corsephairn
Hugh Bone, Straiton
Charles Bell, Kirkmichael
John Blain, do.
Hugh Bell dier, do.
Thomas Beggs blacksmith, Inch
James Bennoch, Inch
Tho. Baird Balncloch, Ballentrae
Andrew Baird, Auchincrosh, do.
William Baird, do.
Alexander Bruce, St Quivox
John Borland, do
David Blair miller, Newton upon
Air
Joseph Boyd sailmaker, Air
Andrew Broadfoot, Whitehorn
John Broadfoot mason, do.

- Alex Broadfoot shoemaker, do.
 David Broadfoot weaver, do.
 Alexander Bell Glasserton
 Agnes Boyd, Drumrea
 John Boyd, Kirkinner
 James Brown, Barwharrie, do.
 Charles Bell, Kirkmichael
 John Blain, do.
 Hugh Bell dier, do.
 James Beattie, Dumfries
 John Bryden, do.
 — Biggar, do.
 — Brair, farmer, do.
 James Bowman gardener, do
 George Broadfoot shipmaster, do.
 Alex. Brown, Sorby parish
 Edward Blackwood, do.
 William Broadfoot farmer in Inch
 Charles Broadfoot, Whitehills
 William Bell, Smithston
 Laurie Bryce merchant, Kirk-
 mabreck
 John Brett farmer do.
 — Bratner sailor, do.
 Matthew Brear farmer in Back-
 bie, do.
 George Bell Smith, Milton, Kir-
 kinner
 Robert Baveilie, Baldoon
 John Baeth, Annoth parish
 Patrick B. ydon, do.
 John Brown, do.
 Peter Black carrier, Kirkcud-
 bright
 Samuel Bean slater, do.
 Charles Bell, do. do.
 John Brydson buckle maker, do.
 John Brown, Rerrick
 William Brown junior, Linhins,
 do
 Ephraim Black, Port Mary, do.

C

THE rev Mr John Curtis
 Quarrelwood
 Richard Cosh tailor, Wigton
 David Christian, Hervanie

- John Costly, Glenturk
 David Chambers in Holm, Mini-
 gaff
 Mrs. Chambers, Bargallv, do.
 Robert Cunningham Whitelag-
 gen, do
 John Citherdie Path, do.
 William Clark, Killhabbee Pen-
 ningham
 William Clark, Glenriddel, do.
 David Coke, Pensioner, do.
 George Campbell, do.
 Robert Caw, do.
 James Crawford shoemaker,
 Kirkinner
 James Clark labourer, Daily
 Mrs. Card, Kirkland
 Baillie William Cumming Kil-
 marnock
 Henry Crawford distiller, bridge-
 end, do.
 William Campbell tailor, Corse-
 phairn
 James Clark, Glenhead, Straiton
 Samuel Clark junior, do.
 James Clark, Glenala, Kirk-
 michael
 Andrew Cunningham chapman
 Inch
 John Cumming, Ballantrae
 Robert Carswell mason, Col-
 monell
 William Campbell, Sorbie
 David Clumpha, Sorbie
 Peter Clumpha, do.
 John Carson miller, Whithorn
 James Cunningham tailor, do.
 Alex Cumming merchant,
 Whithorn
 Stewart Credie weaver, Down, do.
 Robert Carr, Rupin, do.
 John Carr, Crachdow, Glaserton
 Anthony Coultron, Arrock, do.
 William Cumming merchant,
 Port William
 John Cubbin merchant, do.
 Samuel Clark weaver, Kirkinner

- William Cumming, Kirkinner
 Alex Cowan, do.
 Eliz. Cowan, do.
 John Cary weaver, do.
 Thomas Cunningham innkeeper,
 Kirkmabreck
 Samuel Carson sailor, do.
 John Cresbie, do. do.
 John Crookshanks gardener. do.
 Alex. Carson weaver Creetown
 James Campbell, miner
 John Credie, Garlieston
 Sarah Cleland, Orchardtown
 William Coecheie Calscadam
 John Cunningham, Anwoth
 parish
 William Carson, Girthon parish
 John Comlin musician Kirkud-
 bright
 Al Charters joiner, Landside, do.
 Thomas Culbert labourer, do. do.
 Nath Craig, Rerrick, 2 copies
 Robert Cochran, Port Mary, do.
 Robert Carnochan, Rerrick
 Robert Collart, do.
 James Cuthbert, Ochiltree parish
 John Calderwood wright, Catrine
 Robert Campbell, Dumfries par.
 Thomas Cowan, do.
 William Clark, do.
 John Curry, Daily parish
 — Chalmers, do.
 Dav. Culbert, Kirkland, Maybole
 Andrew Crawford, Daily parish
- David Davidson tailor, Girvan
 Robert Dempster shoemaker
 Carsphairn
 Robert Dunn, Cadgerhole, do.
 Mrs. Dick Dalkarnic, Straiton
 Serjeant James Dick, do.
 Andrew Dick, Kirkmichael
 Hugh Dick, do.
 Robert Dunlop Esq. of Dalkirk,
 do.
 John Dick weaver, Lochall do.
 William Donnan Auchleach
 Stonykirk, parish
 Andrew Donnan Bilkar, Inch pa.
 William Donnan Killorpeter, do
 Archibald Dormont, Port of
 Shital do
 Adam Douglas miller, in Under-
 maiz, do.
 Andrew Davidson, Inch parish
 William Drinnan, Knockdolian,
 Colmonell
 David Drinnan dier, Kildonando.
 James Douglas, Sorby parish
 Hugh Benniston, do.
 William Dalrymple Coalnog Sor-
 by parish
 Alex. Donnan in Revans, do.
 Alex. Douglas miller in Dinnens,
 Whithorn
 John Douglas merchant Whit-
 horn
 John Donnan blacksmith, do.
 Alex Dunie in Chipperherring do
 — Dobie
 Agnes Douglass, Mochrum
 John Dunn in Corseduchan
 Mary Donald in Barwharry,
 Kirkinner, parish
 John Donnan farmer in Storiesdo
 William Dalrymple do. Kirkown
 William Dalrymple weaver, do.
 John Duncan tailor, Kirkma-
 breck, parish
 John Donaldson Anwoth
 Robert Denniston, Girthon par.
 James Douglas mason, Kirkud-
 bright

D

- A NTHONY Drinnan stay-
 maker, Wigton
 Andrew Donaldson baker
 George Dunn, Cairndarrie
 William Douglas Dramadaw
 Robert Dalrymple merchant Mi-
 nigaff
 Mrs. Donnan, Knockaffreck
 Andrew Dickie, Kilmarnock
 David Dale, Drum muir Dreg-
 horn

William Duncan merchant Newton upon Air

John Donald Glen-side, Maybole

Robert Dow, Adamton mill

James Dinnidie, Dumfries par.

Tho Dixon, Dalton parish

John Donald, Slohabert, Kirkin-
ner

Sergeant James Dick, Straiton

David Dick, Daily parish

Andrew Dick, Kirkmichael

Hugh Dick, do.

E

WILLIAM Erskine Pen-
ningham

John Earl in Mackerwhat, Bal-
lentrae

Alex. Edgar tailor, Kirkown pa.

F

ALEXANDER Fullarton
weaver, Wigton

Robert Fleming sheriff officer,
Wigton

Thos. Findlay, Holm

John Fairfool excise officer Gir-
van

Alex. Fer barber, Stonykirk, pa.
Mr. John Forty comptroller at
Lochryan

Anthony Farmer, Mount in
Craigeaf

John Frazer weaver, Kirkcolm,
Inch parish

John Findlay mason, Stranraer

David Ferguson, Ballantrae pa.

James Fallows, Daily parish

William Finlay, Sorby parish

Margaret Fleming in Billseir, do.

James Finlay dier, Whithorn

John Frizzle cartwright Morieth

Andrew Fleming, Bow of Raven-
ton

Andrew Fullarton farmer White-
dyke

Alex. Fullarton weaver, Kirkin-
ner parish

John Fergie, Ballantrae parish

James Ferish, Lochrigg

Mrs Ferguson, Little Shalloch

John Forsyth wright, Maybole

G

JOHN Gilchrist, Wigton

Thomas Gibson

Robert Guthrie, Chapman

Mrs. Gordon, Cardarken

James Gordon, Fintiloch, Pen-
ningham

William Graham shoemaker.

William Girvan malster, Dash-
wood

James Grierson merchant, Daily

Adam Grieve, Kirkmichael

Mr. William Grieve, Barlach
5 copies

Hugh Gilchrist weaver, Kilmarn-
nock

Hugh Gebbie, Dikenook, do.

Alex. Graham

Thomas Gluig, Girvan

James Gray, Ballantrae

John Galloway, Smerton, do.

David Geddes weaver, Kells pa.

Alex Gifford farmer, Barwhin-
nock, Castle Stuart

Robert Gordon, shoemaker,
Mochrum parish

Martin Gibson cooper, do.

John Gregg, Ochiltree parish

John Gordon labourer

Archibald Gibson, do.

Alex. Gowly, Anwoth

Mrs. Galloway, Girthon parish

John Guthrie, Port Mary, Rer-
rick parish

William Gowdie, do. do.

Robert Gibson, Rerrick

George Gibson, Air parish

George Girvan, St. Quivox pa.

John Green, Ochiltree parish

George Gregg blacksmith
 James Grierson, Dumfries pa.
 Robert Gordon shoemaker, Glen-
 thryplock

David Graham, Daily parish
 Alex. Grant Kilkerran, do.
 William Gowdie, Kirkoswald

H

BAILLIE John Hawthorn,
 Wigton

William Hannah carter, do.
 Robert Hannah, Redbrae
 John Heron merchant, Wigton
 William Hallowday chapman
 Alex Haiflip, do
 William Heron merchant, N. S.
 Peter Hannah Barwharran
 Mrs. Heron, Keppinock, Kirkin-
 ner

Mr. John Hunter merchant, Air
 James Henderson

Robert Hay farmer Symington
 James Henderson shoemaker Kil-
 marnock

Adam Harris smith, Riccarton
 William Hope, Girvan

William Hastings junior, Castle
 mady, Carsphairn

William Hunter Trochane, Kirk-
 michael

William Hannah tailor, Sorby pa.

John Herbert, Garlieston, do

Mrs. Hawthorn in Clauch, do.

William Hannah, Billsmith,
 Whithorn parish

Robert Hardy
 John Hannah farmer in Knock,
 Glaisteron

Matthew Heron
 Peter Heron in Castlestewart

Peter Heron farmer, Kirkmabreck

Alex. Hughan, do. do.

David Hannah joiner, do.
 John Hunter sailor, do.

Alex. Hannah, Millmoss, Sorby
 parish

William Hannah, Innerwell do,
 Margaret Hannah, Midtown, do.
 Robert Henning, Anwoth
 Hugh Hannay, do.

John Hyndson wright, Newton
 upon Air.

David Hutchison farmer, Dal-
 rympie

James Hutchison in Coilton
 John Hutchison, Greenfield, Air
 parish

Mr. James Hall, merchant White-
 haven

George Hendry, St. Quivex par.
 William Hannah, Slohabert Kir-
 kinner

John Hunter Daily parish
 Adam Hunter, do.

I

THE rev. Mr John Inglis,
 D. D. minister of Kirkma-
 breck

Andrew Ignue
 Michael ignue

— Jardine, cartwright Whit-
 horn p.

Tho. Jackson, Waterhead, Corse-
 phairn parish

Gilbert Jackson, Kirkmichael p.
 Janet Ignue, Sorbie p.

Tho. Irvine, Mochrum p. 5 cop.
 W. Jardine, Littlehills, Kirkinner

Jos. Irvine, Nockroon, Auchinleck
 Samuel Ingram, Sanquhar

Will. Ingram, chapman, do.
 James Johnston shoemaker, Kirk-
 mabreck

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See page 434.

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